Rough Sleeping & Prevention

A report from Overview & Scrutiny

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Preface

By Councillor Victoria Quinn, Chair, Housing and Homes O&S Committee

It is the role and purpose of Overview and Scrutiny to hold up a mirror that reflects 'warts and all' realities of our Council's policies and responses.

This inquiry, its findings and process should serve as a stark reality check on the way in which Birmingham is prioritising and preventing homelessness in our city, because as the numbers of people sleeping rough on our streets have increased by over 500% in 6 years and more than 20,000 households are either homeless, at risk of becoming homeless or transitioning out of homelessness each year, we have been failing.

This inquiry responded to public perceptions that more people were sleeping on our streets but reveals how preventing homelessness and rough sleeping is about so much more than numbers and housing. It is about every individual within our city systems being understood as an individual and more than just a roof.

At the geographic heart of a national homelessness crisis, this inquiry showed how Birmingham is not only at the centre of a perfect storm in the human misery of rough sleeping but through the extent of public outcry and sheer number of individual volunteers providing services with local people committed to doing their bit, this is a city that has a huge human heart.

The Homelessness Reduction Act was constructed and received Royal Assent in April 2017 during the process of this inquiry. Likely to come into force within the next 12 months, the new obligations of this Act will force all statutory partners and their wider communities to work differently. At the same time the City Council has also been developing its Homelessness Strategy for 2017-22 and the challenge for this inquiry has been to 'predict' how the council needs to be prepared for these new obligations in order to use them to best effect.

Unequivocally, this report and its recommendations intend to ensure the re-design of homelessness prevention in Birmingham, putting the muscular commitment of the size of its heart at the centre of a network that:- never walks by; knows what part they play and can ensure no second night on the street for anyone. For the Council, its partners and every person in Birmingham, this means every department and individual knowing how to answer and how they are contributing to the human question: "Help, I need a place to stay."

Everyone who contributed to this inquiry and who has taken an interest in its development knows how long overdue it has been and how in the same way that rough sleeping is just the tip of the homelessness iceberg, this inquiry must become a much more regular and continuing focus of work in order to adequately reflect or tackle the crisis of rough sleeping and homelessness.

Members of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee are committed to delivering this as the only practical means of extending our thanks to all those attending evidence gathering sessions, responding to surveys, guiding our direction of questioning, highlighting gaps and suggesting solutions – who have also vented their frustration and passion to and with us.

We also take this opportunity of extending particular recognition and thanks to Benita Wishart, our former Scrutiny Officer, for her over-and-above commitment to this piece of work before her departure from the Council in May 2017.

Councillor Victoria Quinn

Summary of Recommendations

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R01	That the Cabinet Members with the strategic responsibilities for Children, Jobs and Skills, Health and Housing each individually assess their portfolios in terms of how they, their commissioned services and partner agencies can respond to homelessness prevention with a view to joint commissioning across directorates and partners in preparation for new duties arising under the Homelessness Reduction Act and that the Homelessness Strategy 2017-2022 is framed accordingly to identify clear linkages and accountabilities between all statutory, commissioned and third sector partners across these strategic priority areas in terms of their contributions to homelessness prevention.	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homes Leader Cabinet Member for Jobs and Skills; Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Schools; Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care; Cabinet Member for Transparency, Openness and Equality; Cabinet Member for Value for Money and Efficiency	December 2017
R02	That rough sleeping is made a central part of the homelessness strategy and thus the Homelessness Strategy 2017-22 is based upon the objective of no second night on the street.	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homes	December 2017
R03	That the Homelessness Strategy 2017-22 introduces integrated, flexible and added value commissioning models involving all partners in the city with an involvement in homelessness relief and prevention (Clinical Commissioning Groups; Police; Home Office; Business Improvement Districts (BIDs); Department for Work and Pensions; Courts; Probation Services; and networks of volunteers) to include: payment by results transformation of accommodation services for rough sleepers; monthly contract monitoring and feedback mechanisms to evidence impact that can be publically published on a quarterly basis similar to the CHAIN report used by the Greater London Authority.	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homes	December 2017

R04	That in addition to monthly monitoring and feedback reports on homelessness prevention data collated by the Housing Options Centre, assessment of homelessness prevention is integrated into and shared across Benefit Advice Services, Neighbourhood Advice and Information Services (NAIS), Adult and Children's Social Care Services and taking steps to integrate data from CCGs and NHS Trusts.	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homes Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Schools Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care Deputy Leader (Benefits/NAIS)	December 2017
R05	To commit to a 'no wrong door' approach for the delivery of homelessness prevention and a no second night out objective for rough sleepers by integrating or at least contributing into a shared case management tool (such as the ICAT Intelligent Common Assessment Tool).	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homes Cabinet Member for Transparency, Openness and Equality	December 2017
R06	That partnership working to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping is strengthened through the creation of a clear functional map of all homelessness prevention and relief providers and assessors (commissioned and non, statutory and voluntary) within the city. This should be collectively updated on a regular basis.	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homes	August 2017
R07	To improve the provision and relevance of emergency accommodation and services for rough sleepers and capacity for benchmarking best practice and driving payment by results through an annual audit reported to Scrutiny conducted with the involvement of former rough sleepers. To include issues such as: • User satisfaction; • Provision for animals; • Couples; • No Recourse to Public Funds; • Substance misuse issues; • Advice provision and referral.	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homes	December 2017
R08	To ensure that the network of homelessness prevention and relief providers in the city	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homes	December 2017

	collate and regularly update information and contact details of all services including available to and required by any rough sleeper or individual facing homelessness in the city, presented as a user friendly (including graphics for non-English speakers) geographic map of services.		
R09	That communications with citizens about street homelessness is improved. In particular, a positive message is needed setting out how citizens can contribute to the 'no second night out' objective. A focus on active campaigns in collaboration with statutory partners and BIDs on how citizens can best help the street homeless, report concerns and develop other active alternatives.	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homes	December 2017
R10	That a quarterly data dashboard on street homeless is developed and shared with all key partners. That information on individual cases is shared with partner agencies as required.	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homes	January 2018
R11	That an assessment of progress against the recommendations in this report be presented to the Housing and Homes O&S Committee.	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homes	December 2017

1 Introduction

1.1 Why this report? Why now?

> "*What you see is that strata of people who really have nothing – no money, no front door key, no friend or family. That number is growing. The degree of need is much, much higher than it was even three years ago, the complex issues, the range of problems. The housing crisis, the reduction of benefits especially to younger people and austerity cuts hitting local councils, charities and mental health services … creating the perfect storm in human misery."*[1]

1.1.1 The individuals sleeping on the streets of our city are the most visible public measure of homelessness, the scale of it and what we are doing to tackle it.

1.1.2 The number of people sleeping on the streets of Birmingham **increased by 53% in the last year from 2015-2016** and by **588% since 2012**.

1.1.3 The inquiry that informs this report to Council, launched in September 2016, is based on this premise and was led by the concern of Committee Members to ensure that the Council is addressing ever growing public alarm at the considerable increase in numbers of people sleeping on our streets and what we have been, are and should be doing about it:

> "*I've never seen it so bad. The number of people we are seeing [sleeping] on the street in Birmingham is frightening*."[2]

> "*There are definitely more. It's got to be double. It's shocking*."[3]

1.1.4 During the course of drafting this report the level of public demand to respond to the needs of those who are sleeping on the streets mushroomed before the official statistics for 2016 were released, with the death of a street sleeper in freezing temperatures during the Christmas festivities of Birmingham city centre, leading to a city-wide expression of 'heartbreak', 'shame' and 'anger':

> "*It's so heartbreaking walking to work at 5 am seeing at least 5 people sleeping in shop doorways…"*[4]

[1] Howard Sinclair, Chief Executive, St Mungo's 2016
[2] Paul Atkin, Reachout Network, Guardian 14 December 2016
[3] Road sweeper, Guardian, 14 December 2016
[4] Birmingham Mail, 1 December 2016

"*It's disgusting in this day and age. No-one should be homeless, councils and government should hold their head down in shame.*"[5]

1.1.5 National estimated numbers of rough sleepers are widely agreed to have doubled since 2010[6] and this was confirmed by DCLG published statistics released 25 January 2017, recording a **132% increase in the number of people sleeping rough in England since 2010**, providing an important benchmark against which to measure and assess the equivalent 511% increase over the same period in Birmingham in terms of scale, challenge and context.[7]

1.1.6 Aware of the tragedy which this trajectory was already indicating from the **80% increase in the numbers of rough sleepers in Birmingham from 2014-15**, from the creation of a Housing and Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee in May 2015, Committee Members sought as their overriding and continued priority to ensure that the Council's statutorily required "**Birmingham Homelessness Strategy 2012-2016**" [8] was urgently and appropriately reviewed, with the Vice Chair explicitly questioning the Cabinet Member in full City Council on 13 September 2016 as to how the Council could best help:

"We were told at the last Housing and Homes O&S Committee meeting in June that the Council is having a radical look at its Homelessness Strategy. Given the growing number of people sleeping rough on our streets, can I ask the Cabinet Member to urgently review whether there are any further measures the Council can take to assist those who are sleeping rough on our streets?"[9]

1.1.7 The Committee's particular concern around this was based upon the commitment of the **2012-2016 Council Homelessness Strategy** to principles of homeless prevention and securing suitable, safe accommodation for those who are homeless where it had explicitly acknowledged: "*…the consistently low level of rough sleeping in the city [being] testimony to the effectiveness of the network of providers…*"

1.1.8 With reference to this, the Committee recognised that *"consistently low levels [of street homelessness]"* could not be further from evidenced reality since 2012 and that there was an imperative to look at and consolidate the challenges facing the *"network of providers."*

1.1.9 In addition to this and as background to the Committee's inquiry, the only other significant assessment by the Council to addressing homelessness in Birmingham, since its approval of the Homelessness Strategy 2012-2016 in April 2012, had been the Council's widely praised Health

[5] Birmingham Mail, 1 December 2016
[6] Crisis, the homelessness monitor: England 2016
[7] House of Commons Library Briefing Paper Number 02007, 27 January 2017
[8] https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/2531/homelessness_strategy_2012
[9] Cllr Matthew Gregson Oral Question to Cllr Peter Griffiths at City Council, 13 September 2016

Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) Committee's report on **Homeless Health**[10] presented to City Council in July 2015 by Cllr Sharon Thompson.

1.1.10 Progress on implementation of the recommendations within this report was 'tracked' by the Health O&S Committee in February 2017 where only 4 of 8 recommendations for action by the Council had been fully achieved.[11]

1.2 Focus and Objectives of this Inquiry

1.2.1 Against this imperative for action this inquiry sought to establish a broader understanding of the following questions:

- 'Who' is sleeping on our streets;
- How many individuals may have fallen through the net and have been led to sleep on the street;
- What anyone sleeping rough for one night, might need and require to come off the streets to avoid a second night out;
- Why and if 'the effectiveness of the network' has developed holes and how a broader more tighter-knitted network might be co-ordinated to provide a more universal offer that can **respond** to those forced to sleep on the streets and **prevent** individuals getting there in the first place.

1.2.2 The Council has a statutory duty to produce a new Homelessness Strategy for 2017-2022 to set out how it will tackle and prevent homelessness over the next 5 year period.[12]

1.2.3 To inform this strategy a **draft homelessness review**[13] was published by the Council in February 2017 drawing upon much of the public evidence gathering of the Committee in November 2016 and the rough sleeping data for the city collated by the official DCLG count exercise published on 25 January 2017.[14]

1.2.4 During the course of this inquiry period from November 2016 there have also been significant changes within the Council's budget for homelessness prevention and relief and the rapid passage of the Homelessness Reduction Bill through Parliament, which received Royal Assent and became an Act of Parliament in April this year, which introduces extensive new powers and duties upon

[10] https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/411/homeless_health_overview_and_scrutiny_report_july_2015
[11] http://bit.ly/2mauqn5
[12] Homelessness Act (2002), Section 1. "The authority shall exercise that power so as to ensure that a new homelessness strategy is published within the period of 5 years beginning on when their homelessness strategy was published."
[13] http://bit.ly/2mQCp5K
[14] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-in-england-autumn-2016

local authorities to prevent homelessness with what is mooted to be *"the singular biggest change in national homelessness legislation since 1977"*.[15]

1.2.5 Against this fast changing background the Committee has sought to ensure that this report can be as up to date and relevant as possible, with the objective of it serving to direct and complement the draft review, to ensure a relevant reflection and response to the current crisis in numbers of rough sleepers at the most visible tip of the homelessness iceberg.

1.2.6 To assist the Committee with evidence gathering, a consultation survey was set up on the City Council's BeHeard website in order to gain a better understanding of rough sleeping in Birmingham and the organisations offering services or accommodation to rough sleepers. The survey ran from 15th November to 24th December 2016 and a total of 12 responses were received.

[15] Andy Gale (Consultant, Andy Gale Housing), LGA conference on Homelessness and Housing in the West Midlands, 7 March 2017 [Committee Chair's notes]

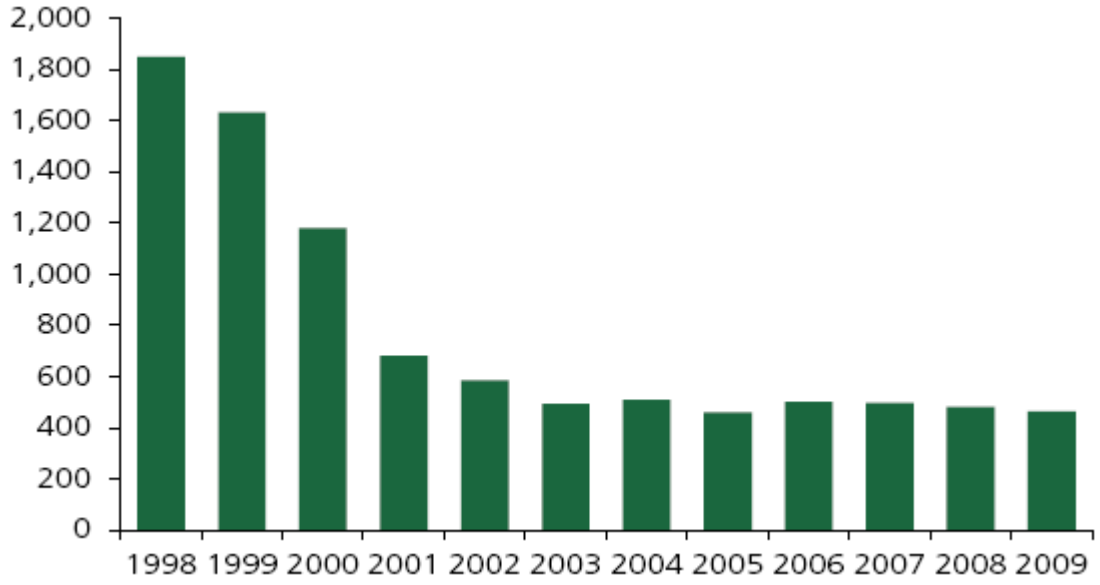
2 The Current Crisis

2.1 Background and national context

2.1.1 The Government Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) 1990-1999 introduced in 1996 a requirement on all local authorities in England to produce an annual estimate of rough sleepers linked to the potential for Councils to draw down central government financing.

2.1.2 Baseline figures from **1998 estimating a total of 1,850 rough sleepers in England** were then used by the government as a target from which to reduce rough sleeping by two-thirds by 2002[16]

Estimated number of rough sleepers, England 1998-2009[17]



2.1.3 From 2010 the government improved and updated the methodology used to compile these statistics requiring Councils to either conduct a formal count between 1 October and 30 November each year or submit estimates produced in consultation with agencies working with rough sleepers in the area.

2.1.4 The table below shows the most recent number of **4,134 rough sleepers in England in 2016** and the year on year rate of increase since 2010[18] when it is of note that the government removed the potential for ring-fenced budgets to Councils through the Supporting People programmes, to support homelessness prevention and relief in addition to other substantial budgetary challenges across all aspects of local government financing.

[16] DCLG, Rough Sleeping in England: Total street count and estimates 2010, 23 July 2010
[17] House of Commons Library Briefing Paper Number 02007 Rough sleeping (England), 27 January 2017
[18] DCLG, Rough Sleeping in England: Autumn 2016, 25 January 2017

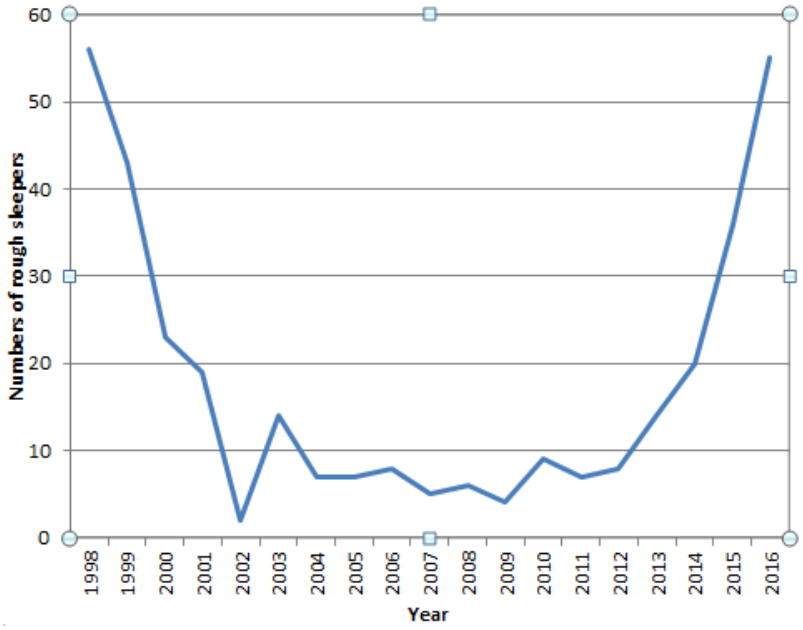
Rough Sleeping in England, 2010 to 2016[19]

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
England							
Number of rough sleepers	1,768	2,181	2,309	2,414	2,744	3,569	4,134
% change from previous year		23%	6%	5%	14%	30%	16%
% change from 2010		23%	31%	37%	55%	102%	134%
Proportion of LAs providing a count	13%	16%	13%	15%	15%	13%	14%

2.2 Birmingham and how we compare

2.2.1 The graph below evidences that from 1998-2002 Birmingham responded brilliantly to the government targeted rough sleeping initiatives mirroring downward trends nationally and all but seeming to eradicate rough sleeping in 2002.

Birmingham Rough Sleeper Count Numbers 1998-2016



2.2.2 The 2002-3 spike in numbers interestingly corresponded to the introduction of national legislation extending the categories of *priority need* homelessness that are eligible to qualify for assistance from local authorities and the duty for the Council to provide care-leavers with suitable accommodation.[20]

[19] House of Commons Library Briefing Paper Number 02007 Rough sleeping (England), 27 January 2017
[20] Children (Leaving Care) Act 2001 came into force in 2002

2.2.3 At the time of this change in 2002 homelessness organisations and Councils across the country warned that whilst this change was necessary and welcome, Councils had not been given adequate resources to cope with the need to provide and supply the appropriate temporary or permanent accommodation which this change required.[21]

2.2.4 The exponential rise in numbers of rough sleepers in Birmingham since 2009 has been widely attributed to cuts to Council budgets and other funding streams that previously enabled a network of providers to provide preventative support and adequate emergency relief to rough sleepers in conjunction with additional Council provisions beyond their statutory duties.

> "*It is really bleak because we felt as though we had made vast strides. I wouldn't say we had solved homelessness […It was tantalisingly close…], but we had got it to manageable levels and made huge progress until 2009. Then the cuts started*."[22]

2.2.5 Across other core cities it is of note that whilst all cities (with the exception of Newcastle) are currently experiencing the highest numbers of rough sleepers in many years, some of the highest year on year increases occurred in other core cities some years before they leapt in Birmingham, in 2015.

2.2.6 Some explanation for this can be attributed to the differences, year on year, between local authorities submitting figures in differing years that are based on estimates or real counts. However, there is some argument in considering when, and to what immediate effect, other cities made their first and most substantial cuts to their ring fenced 'supporting people' programmes to support homelessness prevention and relief.

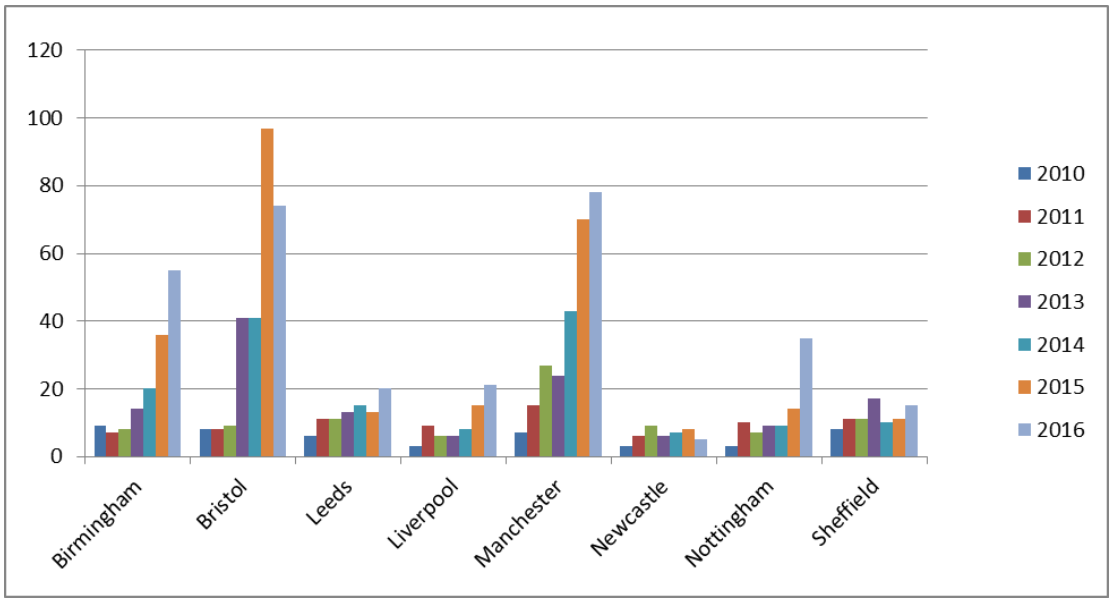
2.2.7 In terms of assessing the contribution of each city's Homelessness Strategy (2012-2016) to addressing their respective numbers of rough sleepers during this core period, it is of note that Birmingham's 588% increase during this period is the second highest of all core cities, below Bristol at 722% and alarmingly higher than the 2012-2016 increase of 98% within the London Borough of Westminster where it is widely recognised that there is the highest national prevalence of rough sleepers.

[21] ODPM: Housing Planning, Local Government and the Regions Select Committee 2004-05 Inquiry into Homelessness
[22] Alan Fraser, Chief Executive, Birmingham YMCA, Guardian, 3 December 2016

Rough Sleeper Numbers and year on year rates of increase across core cities (2010-16)[23]

YEAR	Birmingham		Bristol		Leeds		Liverpool		Manchester		Newcastle		Nottingham		Sheffield	
	No	% inc	No	% inc	No	% inc	No	% inc	No	% inc	No	% Inc	No	% inc	No	% inc
2010	9		8		6		3		7		3		3		8	
2011	7	-22%	8		11	83%	9	200%	15	114%	6	100%	10	233%	11	38%
2012	8	14%	9	13%	11	0%	6	-33%	27	80%	9	50%	7	-30%	11	0%
2013	14	75%	41	356%	13	18%	6	0%	24	-11%	6	-33%	9	29%	17	55%
2014	20	43%	41	0%	15	15%	8	33%	43	79%	7	17%	9	0%	10	-41%
2015	36	80%	97	137%	13	-13%	15	88%	70	63%	8	14%	14	56%	11	10%
2016	55	53%	74	-24%	20	54%	21	40%	78	12%	5	-38%	35	150%	15	36%
2012-2016 increase		588%		722%		82%		250%		189%		-44%		400%		36%

Core City comparison 2010-16

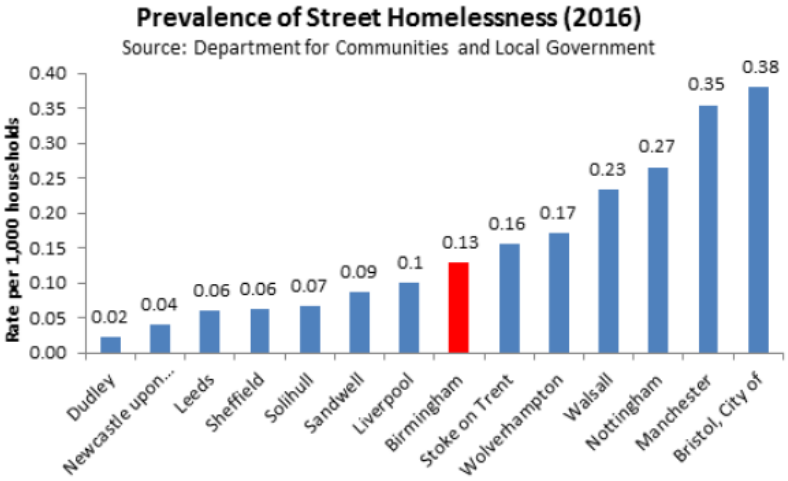


2.2.8 Most notable for Birmingham within core city comparators, is that while percentage increase in numbers of rough sleepers are broadly commensurate with those of Manchester (as might be expected), actual numbers and prevalence rates in Birmingham have always been consistently lower.

[23] Rough sleeper numbers taken from DCLG, Rough Sleeping in England: Autumn 2016, 25 January 2017

2.2.9 Whilst one explanation offered for this suggested that this difference was because the local authority area of Manchester was markedly more 'city population' concentrated than Birmingham's and 'pulled' rough sleeping populations from other neighbouring local authority areas reporting lower rates than Birmingham's equivalent neighbours, this difference does suggest that prevention and relief interventions in Birmingham may have been comparatively effective as **Birmingham has continued to rank as 182 out of all 326 local authorities in England** in terms of prevalence rates of rough sleeping per 1,000 households.

Figure 5: Prevalence of Street Homelessness (2016) (Rate per 1,000 households)



2.2.10 It is however **Newcastle** which stands out amongst core city comparators in terms of the resilience and flexibility which was built into their Homelessness Strategy and city wide budget process from 2013-16 in order to consistently retain numbers at markedly lower comparative rates.[24]

2.2.11 Active Inclusion Newcastle (AIN) adapted services to identify and prevent crisis through the creation of a new system that integrated partnerships, services, communications and commissioning to concentrate efforts upon primary prevention activities on a city wide basis.[25]

[24] Newcastle City Council presentation "Making the Prevention of Homelessness everyone's business", Inside Government Ending Homelessness & Rough Sleeping in Every Community conference, 6 October 2016
[25] Presentation: Newcastle City Council: "Making the prevention of Homelessness everyone's business" Inside Government Ending Homelessness & Rough Sleeping in Every Community conference 6 October 2016; http://www.cih.org/resources/PDF/presentations/arch2015/1Neil%20Munslow.pdf; https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/benefits-and-council-tax/welfare-rights-and-money-advice/information-professionals-and-volunteers

2.3 What is street homelessness?

2.3.1 Based on its statutory duties, Birmingham City Council's website defines anyone who is street homeless as:

> "*a person who is roofless and has no access to shelter*."[26]

2.3.2 In evidence, the Committee heard that as bleak and extreme as this definition presents, the reality is that almost anyone can find themselves in this situation and become street homeless through the simplest of twists of fate: finding themselves without keys, purse, phone or someone to turn to for a bed for a night.

> "..*homelessness is as simple as this: Those who have no accommodation and just need a roof; And those who need more than a roof because there are underlying causes of complex and multiple need."*[27]

2.3.3 For anyone sleeping on the streets, outside of the informal, non-statutory provision of emergency shelter and support which local authorities, organisations and individuals '*can'* make available at their own cost, the only legal duty which a Council has to secure permanent accommodation, and effectively provide a roof, is reserved to unintentionally homeless people with a local connection to an area who are in priority need.[28]

2.3.4 This means that **there is no duty on a council to secure housing for all homeless people**. "Priority need" is assessed as individuals with dependent children, or those who are considered as "vulnerable" [29](due to: pregnancy; old-age; being aged 16-17; or aged 18-20 and leaving care; physical disability; mental illness; time spent in armed forces, in prison or in custody; being victim of domestic violence).[30]

2.3.5 The onus upon a council to 'house the homeless' consequently rests upon the quality of its 'assessment' of priority housing need in terms of what can often be 'invisible' criteria of vulnerability unless evidence has been previously recorded or offered by an individual who presents to a local authority or a statutory partner for help.

2.3.6 There are often multiple, complex circumstances that will have arisen or converged in the life of any individual before they have had to resort to sleeping rough and those who do are often in the most precarious and vulnerable of circumstances with the greatest need of the appropriate kind of signposting and *"helpful humanity"* as one witness expressed it. The effect of rough sleeping on life expectancy for single homeless people evidences:

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[26] http://www.birminghamhousingoptions.org.uk/streethomeless.php
[27] Andy Gale, LGA conference on Homelessness and Housing in the West Midlands, 7 March 2017 [Chair's notes]
[28] Part 7, Housing Act 1996
[29] The test of vulnerability was strengthened by three Supreme Court Cases in 2015
[30] S.189 *Housing Act 1986* and *Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002*

- The average age of death of a homeless person is 47 and even lower for homeless women at just 43;
- Drug and alcohol abuse account for over a third of deaths; and
- Over 9 times more likely to commit suicide than the general population.[31]

"*This inquiry should be about 'helping' the people who are sleeping rough not 'tackling' rough sleeping as an issue […] as a member of the public I have occasionally put a rough sleeper up for a night when the weather has been really cold and I carry info on me at all times to give to people so they know where to get help."*[32]

2.3.7 Crisis, the homelessness charity, carried out a mystery shopping exercise in 2014 where former rough sleepers visited councils to ask for help, each one taking on the role of a particular character in a vulnerable situation: domestic violence, loss of employment, learning difficulties or family breakdown.

> "In well over half (50) of the 87 visits, the help offered [by councils] was inadequate. In 29 cases, [the mystery shoppers] were simply turned away without any help or the opportunity to speak to a housing advisor."[33]

2.3.8 Whilst the Committee received reassurance that Birmingham was not one of these Councils, it was widely accepted that many individuals sleeping on the streets had either made a conscious choice not to seek help from the Council or any other agency, or were likely to have had no idea how to get this initial advice or assistance in order to have been assessed in the first place.

2.3.9 Having been previously evicted or having asked for help before but given 'non-priority' status, many individuals feel the door is subsequently shut to them. The Committee heard that any form of complex life trauma also means that the right kind of support has to be accessed and made available at the right time or it is likely not to be sought again since having to present to multiple agencies, multiple times also only risks exacerbating trauma.

> "*From the point of view of a homeless person, what matters is getting quick access to services and no wrong door"*

2.3.10 These responses highlighted an important dichotomy that runs throughout the findings of this inquiry: That on one hand there is a very practical and human leadership requirement for the

[31] Crisis: 'Homelessness: a silent killer' (Dec 2011)
[32] Survey respondent
[33] Crisis, Turned Away: the treatment of single homeless people by local authority homelessness services in England, 2014

Council to act upon by actively encouraging and professionalising the need for humanity to respond to humanity, for example by knowing and searching out the more invisible signs of vulnerability and acting upon them with appropriate empathy. On the other hand, there is also a much more strategic, longer term preventative focused response, joining everything up across every agency to prevent an individual having to sleep on the street in the first place.

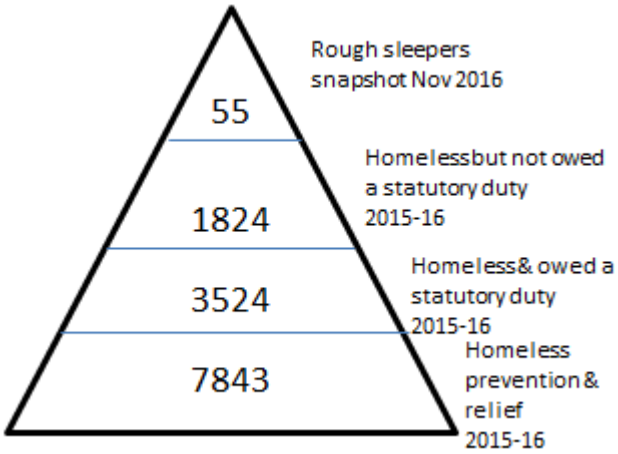
2.3.11 During the course of the inquiry, the Committee found that the only information around street homelessness that was ever readily accessible or presented by the Council was expressed and explained in terms of numbers: the numbers of individuals who had presented to the Council as homeless in any year and, of those, the numbers of people who were 'priority need' or not owed a statutory duty.

2.3.12 The numbers of individuals presenting as homeless reflects the same increasing trend as the numbers of rough sleepers in the city, with approximately 6,000 individuals presenting homelessness applications per year, an approximate 3,400 of which are being granted a statutory housing duty to accommodate by the Council.[34]

2.3.13 This indicates that the Council is providing accommodation to more people than to those they cannot. However it is those who are not owed a statutory duty, combined with the 'hidden' number of people who are not presenting to be assessed or advised that arguably represents the scale and complexity of the challenge in tackling street homelessness, and represent the "hidden homeless", most likely to rough sleep who are the tip of the housing iceberg for every local authority.

[34] Jim Crawshaw, Head of Housing Options, Birmingham City Council, to LGA conference on Homelessness and Housing in the West Midlands, 7 March 2017 [Chair's notes]

Rough Sleeping as the Tip of the Iceberg - Homelessness in Birmingham 2015-16[35]



2.3.14 The Committee heard that rising numbers of known homelessness presentations are likely to indicate swelling numbers of "hidden homelessness" and how this can contribute to a perpetually enlarging loop, trapping people at the most vulnerable tip of the housing iceberg and rendering the whole entity of housing support and relief unstable as a consequence. A witness asked:

> "*How are we providing advice, before people get to the streets? I'm seeing people going round in a loop. They end up in emergency accommodation then go back into the system. Are we not providing proper accommodation and support?*"

2.3.15 Knowledge and information that is continually fed back into the housing loop, about "who" these "hidden homeless" individuals are and the evolution of their needs and circumstances are vital to the Council's definition of street homelessness, which should be about more than just roofless-ness in order to both tackle the current crisis and sustain the city's ability to respond.

> *"It's bad news that street homelessness rates have doubled and we know how many people have been recorded on a count, but it is good news that we know this. Better news would be to know who those people are and what they need to be able to design the right support around this"* [36]

2.4 Who is street homeless?

2.4.1 The government's 2016 rough sleeper count statistics provided the first ever demographic breakdown of who was sleeping on the streets in England in terms of gender; under 25s; and foreign nationals.

[35] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness
[36] Evidence gathering session, November 2016

Rough sleeping demographics for England and Birmingham Autumn 2016

	England		Birmingham	
	Count	%	Count	%
Female	509	12%	4	7%
Under 25	288	7%	0	0%
Foreign Nationals	908	22%	5	9%
Total	4,134	100%	55	100%

2.4.2 The Committee heard in evidence from service providers across the city how the broad demographic this data reveals is representative of the individuals who are sleeping on Birmingham streets: mainly male, and growing in number in terms of EU and foreign nationalities, (with limited or no English and with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) and most notably, that there are relatively few young people (under 25) sleeping rough.

2.4.3 The inquiry process revealed that all of the organisations, voluntary groups and outreach providers working with street homeless in Birmingham all have a very personal and good knowledge of who is sleeping on the streets at any point in time, knowing names and histories, much in the same way as the Council knows the names and backgrounds of anyone who has presented as homeless for assessment and advice.

2.4.4 There is, however, no single comprehensive data system in Birmingham which can collate all of this information or allows it to be accessed, updated or even compared between different partners, agencies or providers to help build a profile of "who" is sleeping rough or is hidden homeless and most susceptible to sleeping on the streets without correct intervention.

2.4.5 In London the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) database maintained by St Mungo's and funded by the Greater London Authority (GLA) holds information about all rough sleepers in London who have ever been contacted by outreach teams, day centres assessment hubs or accessed accommodation for rough sleepers.

2.4.6 The "Street to Home" reports which are generated quarterly by CHAIN and published on the GLA website provide detailed characteristics and demographics of rough sleepers and in the absence of regional or more localised equivalents, these profiles are used to set 'trend' markers for who is sleeping rough and what has brought them or kept them on the streets elsewhere in the country. (See Appendix 1)

2.4.7 The Committee's evidence gathering process tested these predominant profiles of rough sleepers in London with knowledge in Birmingham to establish the following profile of who is sleeping rough in Birmingham.

2.4.8 Evident from this is the complexity of profiles, multiple needs, circumstances and increasing inter-relationship of triggers and reasons leading to individuals sleeping rough which providers in Birmingham agree is becoming more difficult to be able to tick one box in order to categorise, or ensure a single provider or partner can be able to address.

Gender:

- Around **90% male, but with rising numbers of women**: (one organisation reported dealing with 27 women in 2012 and 177 in 2016, a nearly 85% increase in 4 years.)

  Single homeless women in relationships with single homeless men can be more liable to sleep rough and remain street homeless because of limited availability of accommodation for homeless couples.

Age:

- **Very few under 18s**, **but** providers felt that profiles overall had been **getting younger and larger numbers of under 35s**.

  Consistently low age profiles of under 25's sleeping rough in the city has been attributed to exemplar work on youth homelessness in Birmingham, across almost all authorities nationally.

  However widespread recognition that welfare reform including changes to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA)[37] since 2011 and the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR)[38] to single people and couples without children under 35 since 2012 as well as the removal of Housing Benefit entitlement for unemployed 18-21 year olds from April 2017[39] are likely to corroborate the profile of increasing numbers of under 35s.

- **Less than 5% over 60**, (but with a reminder that life on the street visibly ages people and the only determining factor of this is pensionable age, where there can be additional help to come off of the street).

[37] This is the Housing Benefit paid to people to live in the Private Rented Sector
[38] This limits the amount of Housing Benefit that a single person or couple (without children) can claim to cover a room in a shared house
[39] July 2015 Budget paragraph 2.111 removes for those not in vulnerable or otherwise protected groups who have been unemployed for preceding 6 months

Ethnicity:

- Most rough sleepers say that they come **from Birmingham** and are **predominately White/British/Irish ethnicity** however there are **growing numbers of EU and Non EU nationals.**

  EU nationals and other nationalities who have become unemployed have greater propensity to have no recourse to public funds or assistance in addition to limited understanding of the systems that offer support and this has also been affected and compounded by housing benefit restrictions applying to EU nationals since 2014.

Characteristics:

- **Relationship breakdown and family crisis** are the single most common reason cited for rough sleeping for the first time, particularly affecting disproportionate numbers of older people and around 80% of young people, large proportions of which have formerly been children in care, or leaving the care system.
- **Domestic violence** accounts for disproportionate numbers of women sleeping rough.
- **Mental health** issues are cited by providers in relation to over 75% of their clients with numbers rising year on year.
- **Substance Misuse issues** affect 72% of all rough sleepers seen by the Birmingham Outreach Team,[40] and like mental health an issue which can be both a reason for rough sleeping and developing further the longer an individual spends sleeping rough, in turn affecting mental health, finance and ability to want to seek assistance or alternative solutions to living in a street culture which can support addiction.
- **Eviction from short-hold privately rented tenancies** account for increasing numbers of people sleeping rough for the first time because of rent arrears, debts and inability to find alternative affordable accommodation in the privately rented sector as rents increase due to increase demand in a market with limited supply or incentives to supply and benefit levels reduce or are removed.
- **End of stays in prison** as well as issues with offending are known to be both triggers of rough sleeping and heightening the complexity of finding appropriate secured accommodation, including perpetrators of domestic violence, harassment or abuse who have been removed or evicted from their homes who may in turn also present as having been victims of abuse, violence or harassment as a result.

[40] Progress Report on Implementation: Homeless Health, report to Health, Wellbeing and the Environment O&S Committee, 21 February 2017

- **Hospital discharges** account for increasing numbers of individuals who may have both been rough sleeping and hospitalised but in turn lost accommodation opportunities as a result and remain locked in a cycle.
- **Loss of job and seeking work** including individuals who have previously served in the armed forces, young people affected by the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) and Local Housing Allowance (LHA), and migrants from both elsewhere in the UK and abroad who might have lost benefit entitlements or other support mechanisms as well as genuinely transient individuals and lifestyles.
- **Need for companionship and support**. Increasing numbers of rough sleepers develop relationships with others on the street which provide support and reassurance in arguably both negative and positive respects which they feel and often in reality cannot be accommodated elsewhere. This includes:

  Network of supply and resourcing for addictions;

  Friends who cannot be accommodated at the same time or place of temporary or long term accommodation offer;

  Pets, such as dogs who can become as important if not more important than human relationships.

- **Unsuitability of emergency shelter and support** when and where provided to individuals faced with rough sleeping, can also generate and perpetuate it.

3 Relief & Prevention

3.1 The fast changing context

3.1.1 The initial inquiry process and evidence gathering process for this report began and has run apace with the progress of what began as a Private Members Bill (PMB) introduced to the House of Commons in June 2016 around homelessness prevention.

3.1.2 Where most fail, this PMB went on to become the Homelessness Reduction Act, drawing upon the work of an independent panel of experts established by Crisis and the cross-party Communities and Local Government (CLG) Select Committee to present what one former DCLG advisor has described as:

> " [..] *the biggest change to homelessness legislation since 1977, changing not just law, but importantly culture and practice within national and local government as well as the third sector cutting across all aspects of public service provision… It won't create more properties or build anything, but it will be the new way in which we deliver homeless services for anyone and everyone who ever faces homelessness, and everyone will have to be ready for it from April 2018."* [41]

3.1.3 The Homelessness Reduction Act introduces a duty to prevent and relieve homelessness for ***all***[42] homeless people who present to a local authority. (See point 2.3.4)

3.1.4 Local authorities are currently required to make enquiries to establish if, and whether a duty is owed to someone presenting as homeless and then if and when in 'priority need' find accommodation for them or otherwise for individuals categorised as 'non-priority', advise and assist them as to the directions in which they can find appropriate accommodation when it becomes available.[43] The Homelessness Reduction Act changes this to the following effect with new additional local authority duties which include:

- To assess all presenting applicants and **agree a plan** (**including that the circumstances which have caused homelessness and the housing and support needs of the applicant and their household are recorded)**, setting out steps that the applicant and the authority is required to take to ensure accommodation is secured and keep these under review until no other duty is owed under the 1996 Act.
- To take reasonable steps in reference to assessment, to provide all eligible applicants to secure accommodation and review these consistently for a period of 56 days.

[41] Andy Gale, LGA conference on Homelessness and Housing in the West Midlands, 7 March 2017 [Chair's notes]
[42] Immigration and residency status remains the principal exclusionary determinant of "all" in this respect
[43] S192(2) Housing Act 1996

- To ensure that all care leavers aged under 21 can be continued to be considered within a period of 2 years after leaving care for housing within the same area.
- For all public services to notify a local authority if they come into contact with anyone who is homeless or they think may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

3.1.5 In the latest advice from DCLG to local authorities provided at an LGA conference in preparation for these new legislative duties, the Committee heard that there would be a requirement to integrate all of the different responses currently provided by Councils to homeless individuals with priority-need; to single homeless people to whom they did not previously owe a statutory duty; and to anyone sleeping rough that is street homeless into one universal prevention service for all.

3.1.6 This will require a comprehensive re-appraisal of data, the way it is collected and used not only by the Council but together with all of its partners in order to look at all of the interconnections between multiple triggers and life circumstances that have brought an individual into homelessness so that all of these factors can be addressed to build pathways out of it.

> *"Data and the way it is compiled and used will have to focus on each individual and their situation so that it can be used across services to address factors that might be more than just a roof."*[44]

3.1.7 Considerable resource and coordination will be required to consistently revise and renew this data which arguably can only ever be best obtained or delivered through exceptionally strong partnership working across agencies and with multiple different levels of providers, where each will need to be directly responsive to an individual who is facing homelessness.

> *"Because it is outcomes based, all commissioning, across multiple sectors will have to contribute and put the voice of a homeless person at the centre of the commissioning process."*[45]

3.1.8 In evidence submitted to this inquiry the Committee heard that access to safe, accessible accommodation that is tailored to meet the needs of the individual who requires it could not just respond to the rising levels of street homelessness but also act to prevent it by addressing hidden homelessness.

> *"Having somewhere safe to be would make the most positive difference to street homelessness in the city. For some they say the streets are safer than hostels – this can't be right and needs addressing."*[46]

[44] Val Keen DCLG, LGA conference on Homelessness and Housing in the West Midlands, 7 March 2017 [Committee Chair's notes]
[45] Gill Leng, Advisor to DCLG, LGA conference on Homelessness and Housing in the West Midlands, 7 March 2017 [Committee Chair's notes]
[46] Survey respondent

"Make over-night accommodation easier for people to access: in city centre sites and treating people as humans in needs first rather than having boxes ticked and payments in place."[47]

3.2 Current provision

3.2.1 Local authorities are currently required to make enquiries to establish if, and whether a duty is owed to someone presenting as homeless and for individuals categorised as 'non-priority', advise and assist them as to the directions in which they can find appropriate accommodation when it becomes available.[48]

3.2.2 As previously stated, the success of this relies upon the quality of assessment and advice available as well as upon individuals 'presenting' for help in the first place but this has to date been consolidated and enhanced in Birmingham, through the Council's Supporting People programme which has provided additional means to develop informal and directly commissioned outreach services, and referral networks through emergency shelters, hostels and advice hubs working together across the city.

3.2.3 The Committee heard that this additional, and now entirely discretionally funded Council commitment to reputable and checked providers within a commissioned relationship with the Council, helps to direct almost 3,000 people a year who are rough sleeping into adequate, safe shelter off of the street and into personalised pathways towards appropriate sustainable accommodation.

3.2.4 In response to the inquiry's consultation survey, the Committee was reminded ahead of the Council's 2017/18 budget that the provision of Supporting People programme funding had been incrementally reduced since 2010 through the removal of government ring fencing of the programme which has significantly affected the ability of providers to respond first time, every time in providing individualised support into appropriate shelter and accommodation pathways to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping.

"[…] *the enormous cuts proposed to Supporting People contracts that are an essential part of the fabric of provision will undermine not only the infrastructure which currently exists across the city, but also the range of services and contributions to preventing and decreasing rough sleeping and homelessness as well as direct provision for rough sleepers…*"

[47] Survey respondent
[48] S192(2) Housing Act 1996

3.2.5 The first table below details the Council's directly commissioned services for anyone sleeping rough, over the age of 25, where in the Council's 2016/17 financial year there was provision for 319 immediate access bed spaces. The second table details provision for under 25s.

Contracted Bed Spaces[49]

Over 25 Provision:

Client Group	Provider	Service	Actual No Bedspaces	Average Duration	Contractual Capacity	Total
Single Homeless	Midland Heart	Immediate Access Step Down	144 213	3 months 6 months	576 426	1,002
	Salvation Army	Immediate Access	74	3 months	296	296
	Trident Reach	Immediate Access Step Down	101 96	3 months 6 months	404 192	596
Sub Total			**628**		**1,894**	
Homeless complex needs	Midland Heart	Short-term	33	1 year	33	33
	Midland Heart	Long-term	86	2 years	86	86
	Midland Heart	Places of Change	46	6 months	92	92
Sub Total			**165**		**211**	
Total			**793**		**2105**	

Under 25 Provision:

Client Group	Provider	Service	Actual No Bedspaces		Contractual Capacity	Total
Young people	**Trident**	Step Down	72	12 months (16 - 21 year olds) 6 months (22 - 25 year olds)	72	72
	Accord	Step Down	24	12 months(16 - 21 year olds) 6 months (22 - 25 year olds)	24	24
	Midland Heart	immediate access	27	3 months	108	108
	Midland Heart	Step down	80	12 months (16 - 21 year olds) 6 months (22 - 25 year olds)	80	80
	St Basils	Immediate access	88	3 months	352	352
	St Basils	Step down	254	12 months (16 - 21 year olds) 6 months (22 - 25 year olds)	254	254
Total			**545**		**890**	

3.2.6 In respect of 'directly commissioned' services for homeless young people, Birmingham's provision includes what has been referred to nationally as an *"exemplar"* [50] of national best practice in

[49] Note these places are not just for rough sleepers. "Step down" places are where support is reduced to help the individual get ready for independent living. The Places of Change project focuses on getting young people skilled up and into employment, along with providing supported housing. The time scales for individuals can be extended when this is thought necessary.

[50] LGA conference on Homelessness and Housing in the West Midlands, 7 March 2017 [Committee Chair's notes]

homelessness prevention and relief that has currently been adopted by 64% of local authorities in England through the '**positive pathway model'** delivered through the St Basil's Youth Hub.

3.2.7 **The Birmingham Homeless Outreach Service Team (HOST)** co-ordinated by Midland Heart and commissioned by the Council is the city's main measure of response, reaction and referral for rough sleepers and those seeking assistance offering a 24 hour service to join up individuals with appropriate shelter and accommodation and respond to 'StreetLink' referrals from anyone wanting to assist a rough sleeper (see Appendix 2).

3.2.8 The inquiry saw for itself the unparalleled professionalism, commitment and expertise of HOST during the annual rough sleeper count and recognised the extent of the formal and informal network it offers amongst all organisations, groups and individuals working with or wanting to assist anyone sleeping on the street. However, the capacity for such a limited team to ensure effective join up in response to every referral, was of considerable concern to the Committee.

3.2.9 The service currently comprises two staff (currently only Monday to Friday 7am - 11pm albeit including out of hours 24 hour referral mechanisms) which involves:

- Physically going out to find individuals that have been referred and look for those likely to be in need;
- Delivering an emergency response service;
- Co-ordinating this with joint outreach partners including street wardens and Changing Futures staff;
- Conducting risk and needs assessments to identify suitable accommodation;
- Communicating and updating data to accommodation providers in order to ensure individuals can be accepted;
- Allocating outreach beds, managing emergency beds and updating daily vacancy lists;
- Providing daily surgeries at SIFA Fireside to support access into accommodation and pathways towards sustainable housing;

3.2.10 In addition to the extensive list of formally commissioned providers and advice services detailed above, during the course of this inquiry the Committee learnt of an ever broadening offer of additional services and open access, self-referral emergency accommodation providers across the city provided by volunteer groups, individuals, churches and other faith groups.

3.2.11 Whilst many of these providers and services were known to and appeared to be networked into other directly commissioned providers either formally or through informal professional awareness and commitment, the Committee was struck by the fact that no single individual or organisation (least of all the Council) had any idea of "all" services or providers in the city working to relieve and prevent rough sleeping.

3.3 The challenges for current provision

3.3.1 In practice, for those who are able to access and get adequate pathways out of homelessness this is almost entirely associated with each respective provider, and not the Council, in terms of who is providing the opportunity for support within each pathway off the street and into housing. As one former street sleeper expressed:

> "*I asked Birmingham City Council for help and they told me that I was not in priority need and couldn't do anything, so I wasn't going to go back to them. It was Crisis who helped me get off the street and into accommodation with my current housing provider.*"[51]

3.3.2 While for some individuals, the different names and remit of commissioned and non-commissioned providers can reassure that there is a broad offer of options in terms of differing approaches and styles of support available through a choice of appropriate safe shelter from rough sleeping and into accommodation, as the city's core and measurable option for street-sleepers, this "umbrella" partnership approach and delivery can also have the potential to undermine widespread public awareness that there is a 'one-stop-reliable-shop' in the city. In turn, without recognition of the full breadth of partnership and differing types of relationship between the city council, irrespective of formal commissioning relationships to all offers of support and accommodation there is the potential for gaps in the network of preventative support and reactive offer.

3.3.3 It was apparent however in evidence received and sought by the inquiry process that there is no comprehensive join up between the entirety of shelter, or support into adequate and appropriate accommodation within the city; how the full breadth of this can be known about beyond the professional, informal interest and commitment of all individual provider organisations working to relieve and prevent homelessness to be able to know about, or how outreach teams work can best be co-ordinated to ensure best, "no wrong door" responses to address demand and supply.

3.3.4 The inquiry process of this report revealed the extent to which so many people in Birmingham have an opinion on the levels of street homelessness in the city and want to get involved in addressing it.

> "*[…] people living outside of the city centre say to me that they used to feel so proud about coming into the city centre of Birmingham to work, but recently that has changed, they feel afraid and worried. […] they see so many more people sleeping in doorways, sleeping out, the signs of it. No one knows what to do about it, but they see it and want, as humans and in terms of their business*

[51] Crisis fringe conference in Birmingham in September 2016 [Committee Chair's notes]

interests to help do the right thing about it – What is that? How can we best help and who is best placed to co-ordinate it?"[52]

3.3.5 This evidence from professional organisations and businesses across the city centre of Birmingham suggested the extent to which so few people knew what mechanisms are currently available in the city for help for rough sleepers: how to get someone help or support if they wanted to or even who to ask beyond referral to the emergency or public services. The extent of concern was articulated at the City Council's homelessness summit when one representative engendered widespread outrage amongst delegates by saying something akin to:

"*I don't care how it's done, just get them off of our doorsteps!*"[53]

[52] Committee Chair's notes
[53] Homelessness Summit, 12 October 2016 [Committee Chair's notes]

4 Opportunities For Change

4.1 Birmingham's Vision

4.1.1 The vision for homelessness in Birmingham is about working together towards its eradication. At the time of the inquiry, the Council is undertaking a radical and transformational review of homelessness as a whole with the aim of long term reduction. This, and the imminent requirement to publish a new Homelessness Strategy for 2017-2022, offers a framework to address the challenges of street homelessness in the city.

4.2 Recognising the 'tipping point'

4.2.1 Key to the opportunity which this framework presents will be acceptance of when and how the rate of increase in street homelessness in Birmingham has already or might yet still reach tipping point. This was emphasised by Westminster City Council in evidence that explained that their street-sleeping population was 2,857 for the whole of 2015/16[54]. Comparing street counts in the autumns of 2012 and 2016 there is a 98% increase.[55] Irrespective of where they were in their cycle of their homelessness strategy 2012-2016, they had intervened to introduce radical culture and commissioning change in order to specifically address street sleeping as the priority of their homelessness strategy.[56] In Westminster, this had been the only way that they had been able to ensure that over 53% of street-sleepers in 2016 now do not spend a second night on the street.

4.2.2 Specifically the Westminster model invested £6.2 million to 'change the conversation' between all partners introducing: payment by results, transformation of accommodation services, added value commissioning, involvement of Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), shift in contract monitoring and internal council partnerships, specific co-ordinators for migrants, provision of beds for those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) and Work First. It brought together colleagues including Business Improvement Districts, soup runs, commissioned services, police and home office and knitted together the Westminster Homeless Action Together #WHAT community of 300 volunteers with 36 languages which delivers a regular follow through of outreach similar to that covered by official annual count programmes. Crucially it also introduced feedback mechanisms to evidence impact.

[54] http://committees.westminster.gov.uk/documents/s19952/Appendix%202%20-%20FINAL%20Summary%20Westminster%20Rough%20Sleeping%20Strategyv2.pdf
[55] https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homelessness-statistics
[56] Powerpoint presentation from Inside Government Ending Homelessness & Rough Sleeping in Every Community conference 6 October 2016. The snapshot rough sleeping count figure for 2012 was 131 which increased to 260 in 2016.

4.3 Identifying wraparound support needs within Council services before homelessness occurs

4.3.1 Homelessness in its broadest terms is increasing nationally and there is widespread discussion of the structural reasons for this, which are outside the scope of this report. At the visible tip of the homelessness iceberg however, there are key structural issues such as: the reduction in affordable and social housing; increase in short term assured private lets; welfare reforms including the local housing allowance cap, the shared accommodation rate for 25-35 year olds, benefit caps and sanctions all have the effect of increasing the propensity for homelessness and perpetuating it. In response, one witness at our evidence gathering session asked:

> "*How are we providing advice before people get to the streets? I'm seeing people going round in a loop. They end up in emergency accommodation then go back into the system. Are we not providing proper accommodation and support?*"

4.3.2 Evidence from national homelessness charities suggests that the single most effective '*proper accommodation and support*' provision to prevent street homelessness is the 'Housing First' model of housing options. This works on the principle that the entire wraparound support package, that a homeless person with complex needs requires, comes with the accommodation. Described as *"the front door key with no conditions attached to the support the individual needs*," it is considerably expensive but as a long term solution to the eradication of homelessness, the Council could look at different ways of making it effective within new added value approaches to commissioning (for example exploring Social Impact Bonds).

4.3.3 It is also widely recognised that effective prevention is the key to eliminating homelessness. The Homelessness Reduction Act has confirmed the need for additional statutory prevention to address homelessness. It will place new obligations on local authorities to provide greater assistance and assessment of individuals to help secure them accommodation and somewhere safe to stay at a much earlier stage (before they become homeless) and irrespective of their priority need. This legislation places additional duties on the Council and there has been a signal from government of an additional £61 million of funding to local authorities in England to help meet these new obligations. To date however there remain concerns that the legislation will only be as effective as the supply of housing in an area and little understanding of the extent to which this funding will cover costs, especially in light of the impact of ongoing cuts to local authority budgets on funding for services that are currently provided. This concern has been voiced in Birmingham by the network of commissioned and non-commissioned providers delivering homelessness relief and prevention under Supporting People funding and the Citizens Panel:

> "*Birmingham has led the way in providing and protecting services for those at risk of homelessness and it would be unconscionable 'and' extremely costly if*

those underpinning accommodation and support services were now cut, just as the new duties of the Homelessness Reduction Bill are enacted."[57]

4.3.4 To some extent the Council has begun to prepare for these changes and improve its advice provision with the recent introduction of a worker at the Housing Options Centre (HOC) specifically funded to work with single homeless people. This is a development which offers some opportunity to provide advice before people get to the streets but there is no provision within the HOC for assessment of wraparound support needs that are necessary to identify the most appropriate and sustainable accommodation pathways and deliver effective prevention.

4.3.5 Scope to address this and provide for a 'one-stop-shop' assessment of support needs could be achieved by rolling this out within the Council's entire housing offer at the HOC. The benefits gained from being able to identify need could potentially be enhanced further by extending assessment of support needs that are required for homeless prevention into benefit advice services and adult and children's services ensuring join-up and information sharing between all Council services. This could arguably offer the opportunity for significant cost-benefit and link homelessness prevention as a core objective that works in the preventative interests of all individual Council services.

4.3.6 Further, scope to involve Clinical Commissioning Groups with this may also be of interest in addressing health and social care challenges presenting through the Sustainability and Transformation Plan. To a limited extent this is recognised within the draft homelessness strategy in terms of the strategic interests of different statutory agencies and services working together more effectively. As currently drafted, however, it stops short of explicitly recognising the need to join up these services in order to deliver more effective prevention and response, to street homelessness.

"*Rough Sleepers with multiple needs e.g. health and housing face a number of issues making it difficult for them to navigate the benefits system, book appointments with advice agencies. It was noted that some advice services such as DWP advice needed to work more closely with homelessness services*."[58]

4.4 Consolidating existing best practice to improve response to demand, earlier

4.4.1 The Council is already involved in best-practice models of multi-agency join-up to assess and provide wraparound preventative support pathways for young people who are already homeless or facing homelessness through the Youth Positive Pathway, led by St Basil's and the Youth Hub. In

[57] Jean Templeton on behalf of SP providers and Citizens panel members
[58] Birmingham City Council Homelessness Review 2016; http://bit.ly/2mQCp5K

the House of Commons debate on the Homelessness Reduction Act, Birmingham was singled out amongst local authorities because of this:

> "*We saw some good examples of local authorities dealing with homeless people. In Birmingham we saw a truly joined-up service, with housing authority, the children's service and the health service all working together. Unfortunately that is not the case everywhere*."[59]

4.4.2 The St Basil's Youth Hub provision offers an assessment centre to identify support requirements with a safe place to sleep and the potential to stay so that appropriate pathways can be prepared.

4.4.3 With the increase in numbers and complexity of need in street homelessness, Westminster City Council's No Second Night Out Project identified that assessments of need had to be taken away from the street and combined with shelter in order to design clear pathways into appropriate accommodation and best prevent a return to the street.

> "The longer someone sleeps rough, the greater the risk that they will become trapped on the streets and vulnerable to becoming a victim of crime, developing drug or alcohol problems, or experiencing problems with their physical or mental health. In response to this, the concept of No Second Night Out (NSNO) was developed. The idea behind NSNO is to ensure rough sleepers are helped off the streets as quickly as possible, that nobody lives on the streets, and that once helped, people do not return to the streets."[60]

4.4.4 On the basis of this evidence and on the back of the best practice Youth Positive Pathway example in the city, the Council secured funding in December from the Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) Rough Sleeping Trailblazer fund, an element of which was to test and evaluate an emergency assessment and triage night shelter for rough sleepers in the city centre. This could provide accommodation for up to seven nights in order to create an alternative pathway for the most vulnerable rough sleepers to assess, explore and understand their housing needs before moving into supported or stable housing. This alternative pathway would enable individuals to understand the requirements and conditions attached to living in supported accommodation, or any other tenancy, which they may not have experienced for a long time and can be overwhelming.

4.4.5 This development responds to the evidenced need for a central, easily accessible one-stop-shop for emergency relief and prevention of street homelessness and consolidates best practice. The danger is however that it is seen as an 'additional' bolt on to all existing provision, which is, as stated before, currently under threat with changes to traditional commissioning and funding

[59] Clive Betts MP 26 November 2016 Hansard
[60] http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/journals/2014/02/12/q/x/m/NSNO-England-report.pdf

frameworks. As such, continued consolidation requires built-in flexibility from commissioning in order to offer more comprehensive and sustainable solutions to relief and prevention.

4.5 Sharing what we know in clear systems for a 'no wrong door' approach

4.5.1 Formal mechanisms for sharing information and improving wider knowledge of who is street homeless and how they got there, is key to providing more appropriate responses and effective prevention.

4.5.2 Presently, however, outside the network of commissioned providers for homelessness, it seems that no one, least of all the Council, within this network knows who all of the other services, groups or organisations are that might be having discussions with rough sleepers at any one time or how they might link in with them.

4.5.3 Informal professional awareness and commitment serves to ensure that most groups, organisations and commissioned providers are likely to know of the same individual rough sleeper in Birmingham at any time, but there is wide recognition that there needs to be different layers of both informal and formal information share at different levels and layers of the wider homelessness and housing network within the city in order to best deliver a 'no wrong door' approach.

4.5.4 Formalised mechanisms for sharing this knowledge have the potential to improve ways that different providers and services are able to co-ordinate more appropriate wraparound responses. In turn this can generate cost efficiencies by minimising need for repeat intervention but more importantly it can help to build trust amongst rough sleepers requiring help and could help to break cycles of repeat return to the streets.

4.5.5 St Mungo's confirmed the importance of sharing information, whether formally or informally as the best way to address numbers of rough sleepers, by being able to know not just how many, but "who" is sleeping rough:

> "*It's bad news that street homeless rates have doubled and there are 37 people recorded on a count. But it is good news that we know this. Better news would be to know who those people are and what they need to have the right support designed around this.*
> *A clear system that lets you know who is coming onto the street means you can intervene. If people get stuck and you know them by name you can put systems in place. But if people are returning there are reasons for this and that's probably lack of appropriate wrap around support*."

Co-ordinating this is key and it really doesn't matter who does it as long as it's done and there is a clear system in place." [61]

4.5.6 Birmingham Changing Futures Together multi-agency project funded by the Big Lottery and led by Birmingham Voluntary Services Council (BVSC) is linked to the "No Wrong Door" network of agencies who are already committed to sharing information, common approaches and standards to supporting homeless people with complex needs. As part of this an Intelligent Common Assessment Tool (iCAT) is due to be launched to ensure that "individuals only have to tell their story once". [62]

4.5.7 The CHAIN (Combined Homelessness and Information Network[63]) database is used by outreach teams across London to log the details of all street-homeless presentations and referrals. It works by categorising rough sleepers corresponding to: flow (new rough-sleepers); stock (those who have been sleeping rough for at least two years); and returners (previous rough sleepers who have returned to the streets). This allows providers and outreach partners to focus intervention on addressing most urgent need, in turn allowing for funding to be best prioritised towards driving results.

4.5.8 In Westminster, and other London Boroughs with larger rates of prevalence to Birmingham, the use of CHAIN in collaboration with police reports, StreetLink referrals and co-ordinated messaging between partners of all kinds has allowed for the evidencing of impact of service provision and intervention. Such potential for feedback is vital to the design of more flexible and responsive commissioning, but it is of note that the draft homelessness strategy does not, as yet, explicitly set out for formalised feedback loops of this kind.

4.5.9 The draft Homelessness Review nonetheless references and acknowledges the benefits of CHAIN, proposing that an alternative for introduction in Birmingham could be "a contact log shared across agencies."

4.5.10 The potential for this in Birmingham could however already exist as the inquiry heard, through the Birmingham Changing Futures Together multi-agency project (as mentioned above).

4.5.11 The potential for acknowledging the importance of improving knowledge and data share around complex needs to prevent and relieve street homelessness and how to best exploit and join up what already exists presented within the inquiry as one of the most basic and striking of concerns and namely:- that there is no comprehensive list or single source of comprehensive information of all the variety of agencies working with street homeless in Birmingham.

[61] Evidence submitted at November 8th evidence gathering session.
[62] https://www.bvsc.org/about-project
[63] http://www.mungos.org/chain

4.6 Mapping the totality of provision and outreach for street homelessness in Birmingham

4.6.1 The Homeless Outreach Service commissioned by the Council, is not the only route into support or shelter for the street homeless and during the course of the inquiry the opportunities from a number of small and voluntary organisations for self-referral into accommodation or support came to light. While the professional commitment and interest of providers and volunteers means that most do know of each other, there was no singular point of reference to provide a comprehensive understanding of where, why, when and how, each organisation or volunteer could engage with each other.

> "*There seems to be so many groups, it's almost impossible to get a grip of them all.*"[64]

4.6.2 This perspective was echoed by the Council's principal partners at its Homelessness Summit in October 2016 with a key message to the city being that the current landscape is very confusing for both individuals and agencies. Changes to and discontinuation of pilots, trials and initiatives introduced by the Council since the Homelessness Strategy in 2012 have only served to compound this confusion as the inquiry process heard in particular in relation to the accreditation scheme launched in 2015 and Gateway service launched in 2012.

4.6.3 In respect of these two Council initiatives, it appears that responses and funding challenges have now rendered them either obsolete or significantly changed, but as the recent consultation exercise around the Gateway scheme demonstrated in 2016, without some wider map of the entire homelessness prevention and relief landscape the challenge of assessing usefulness or how things can be done differently is next to impossible.

4.6.4 The sheer number of differently commissioned and funded services, involving differing arrangements of partners and locations, such as drop in services providing food, showers and advice; hospital discharge schemes; emergency cold weather provision and police responses renders difficulties for any stakeholder to keep abreast of changes or challenges in a very fast changing landscape. Moreover, without comprehensive and up to date mapping of who provides and pays for what, where, for who and when, there is very limited opportunity for effective assessment of what is working well. This is fundamental for appropriate feedback to ensure consolidation and flexible timely responses to change.

4.6.5 The diversity of different names of groups and services working on street homelessness in Birmingham is so impressive and multiplying at pace with new and different individual volunteers and interested individuals coming to public awareness all the time that it also merits mapping as evidence of the support and capacity commitment that exists within Birmingham to work together

[64] Survey respondent

to eradicate homelessness. In turn this is capable of providing public reassurance about what is and can be done to tackle street homelessness as well as a baseline for assessing how it can be done differently.

4.6.6 In the most practical sense, mapping is a pre-requisite for organisations to be able to make any attempt to co-ordinate any clear system for sharing information about who is rough sleeping but also for being able to provide informed reaction as to as why and how change is required:

> "*It is very important that the totality of provision is mapped, but also the ancillary and supporting services which contribute to tackling rough sleeping and homelessness are included*."[65]

4.7 Signposting for improved awareness of and referral to street homelessness services

4.7.1 In a similar vein, the provision of a simple, comprehensive and regularly updated list of all available shelter and support services which could be accessed by anyone who is rough sleeping, facing homelessness or is concerned to provide appropriate support to someone who may be, would empower, enable and inform everyone's ability to tackle street-homelessness in the city, directly corresponding to the Council's aim of "a city working together to eradicate homelessness"

> "*Years ago I remember there was a little booklet that did just that called 'help, I need a place to stay'. Anyone could look at that. Something that says just that is what is needed now to tackle rough sleeping and be the right signposting for homelessness prevention*."[66]

> "*Provision of a constantly updated internet directory of services for homeless and potentially homeless people that all agencies can tap into could be extremely useful in co-ordinating and optimising take up*."[67]

4.7.2 The inquiry heard that there is a list of services and providers on the Council website, but this was not up to date. In Manchester this was being addressed with an interactive map of services that is also distributed to homeless organisations across the city in waterproof pouches on lanyards as a go-to-guide for volunteers and organisations.[68]

4.7.3 When service provision in Birmingham is based on partnership between many different agencies, with their own names and identities, it is important that there is the possibility for "common"

[65] Survey respondent
[66] Birmingham Homelessness Summit, 12 October 2016
[67] Survey respondent
[68] www.roughsleepers.org/manchester

signposting so that anyone has the opportunity to know what to do and where to go with a common "city" assurance This need not involve the creation of anything new but just widespread simple promotion of 'help for homeless in Birmingham' under a common banner for external facing signposting in every agency.

4.8 Harnessing public concern into a co-ordinated 'don't walk by' response

4.8.1 Rising levels of public concern about the numbers of rough sleepers in Birmingham has been paralleled in the growth and number of individuals and voluntary groups springing up across the city to regularly offer outreach support, run soup kitchens and any form of help to help alleviate, document and deal with the challenge. The Trinity Mirror's Wigan Pier Project is a recent example of highlighting the challenges and capturing the public's concerns.[69]

4.8.2 The scale of this mobilisation serves to underline the requirement for improved signposting, mapping, and communication. This is best channelled if it can be co-ordinated into the right responses where people feel able to help and that their efforts are doing something. As one witness told us:

> "*How can we harness this humanitarian goodwill of Birmingham people in terms of time, heart and effort? Everyone wants homelessness to end and volunteers can help but we need to bring them all together*."

4.8.3 The inquiry heard that appropriate co-ordination of services, volunteers and interest is all about identifying appropriate balances between bureaucracy, safeguarding and maximising resources so that everything going in can be seen in terms of the differences it produces coming out. Examples of where this had not worked were given in terms of the Council's accreditation scheme, where despite some organisations coming forward, many others preferred to remain independent and outside of what was perceived to be "red-tape and form filling". Equally however the inquiry heard repeatedly about how volunteer outreach with street sleepers needed to be able to realise the complex needs of those individuals who the public want to help and ensure appropriate ways that responded first time and the right time not only to rough sleepers but also validating the concerns of the public in terms of gaining trust and providing the right pathways to support services. The inquiry was told:

> *"The conversation needs to strike the balance between individuals wanting to support rough sleepers and allowing the city to function effectively in providing that appropriate support through deeper understandings of why individuals aren't already engaged with services."*

[69] http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/hard-road-wigan-pier-follow-9718166

"*From a rough sleeper perspective why would you want accommodation when you are given a tent, soup kitchens and food banks can feed you every day of the week, free showers, foot massages? I don't have all the answers and I really think these offers are caring and supportive, but I suspect it doesn't encourage rough sleepers to come inside*."[70]

4.8.4 There are many opportunities for meeting this challenge through improved join-up and universal city-wide co-ordination for people to donate volunteer hours across all number of different groups. These could be banked and used to develop skills through initiatives such as the Birmingham Changing Futures Together Programme and its empowerment programme which trains, supports and facilitates anyone with any experience of homelessness to become experts and peer mentors. Similarly, through join up of outreach events and activities in different locations by different groups providing food or clothing, tailored and individual offers can be made more universal, without waste or doubling up of effort.

4.8.5 The Big Change Campaign in Manchester has been an attempt to co-ordinate people wanting to contribute financially to the needs of anyone sleeping rough and asking for money to get shelter through a centralised Just Giving opportunity for the city. A similar mechanism to this is currently being explored in Birmingham by the Colmore Business Improvement District with other partners in order to respond to the fact that none of the accommodation opportunities provided by the Council for rough sleepers ever needs an individual to have to pay for it. When approached and wanting to help, few people know this and rarely have the opportunity to consider how or where their money could help. This could be in terms of assisting charities provide additional assistance to individuals without recourse to public funds or those with often very short term housing benefit; or in service charge shortfalls leading to homelessness, all of this contributing to ensuring that help, when offered or available only ever helps to best relieve and prevent street homelessness.

4.8.6 Comprehensive joining up of what everyone is doing, being clear about what services exist, and appropriate mechanisms for pulling things together in such ways that do not perpetuate contributing factors to street homelessness, can demonstrate that the street homeless are not a forgotten group of individuals.

[70] Evidence gathering session, November 2016

5 Conclusion

5.1 Fanning the flame in a perfect storm

5.1.1 Birmingham is currently seeing a strata of people who to all intents and purposes can and might look to have been forgotten and ignored by the Council, in terms of the increasing numbers of people sleeping rough on Birmingham streets.

5.1.2 The degree of the need of people sleeping rough in Birmingham and the requirement on the Council to respond to them is much higher than it was even three years ago. It is twenty years ago (in 1998) when numbers were last at similar levels.

5.1.3 The complexity of issues and range of problems leading to people having no alternative but to sleep on the street is greater both for individuals to cope with and for Council resources and their partners to be able to address by means and approaches hitherto used.

5.1.4 The housing crisis, in terms of: lack of available and affordable accommodation from the Council, social housing partners and the private rented sector; the changes and reduction in benefits to offer support for rents (especially in terms of how it is hitting younger people and those without any alternative means than shared accommodation); together with austerity cuts which year on year have hit local councils, charities, mental health services and addiction services all collide to produce the perfect storm in human misery, where, as recently reported:

> *"… against the brutal assault of austerity, Britain's second city is tending its humanity like a flame*".[71]

5.2 From vision to reality for "a city working together" for "the eradication of homelessness"

5.2.1 The council has endorsed housing, together with children, health and jobs and skills as one of its four strategic priorities for the city, to which all of its resources and capacities better work together to address. The forthcoming homelessness strategy is one strand through which it will begin to do so.

5.2.2 This inquiry and report has set out the extent to which tackling street homelessness can be and should be uppermost in terms of being a strategic and joined up commitment within the council across all services, in terms of responding to need and adopting a preventative approach.

[71] Birmingham Mail, 31 January 2017

5.2.3 Whilst numbers and rates of street homelessness have increased, there are existing measures of best practice and opportunities within the city that need to be consolidated, assured and exploited to join up and properly orchestrate a strategy that also might be able to unlock other resource opportunities. This not only needs to be approached in terms of demand and response opportunities but also as a mechanism which can and should be used, if properly evidenced, to approach government and to exploit the full scale of statutory and third sector partner join up and commitment.

5.2.4 Sadly, these opportunities look as though they have not yet been best exploited in terms of the increasing rates and prevalence of rough sleeping in the city or opportunities within the forthcoming homelessness strategy and how it might sit within a strategic council priority for housing. This may be because the city has previously managed to respond to such scales of street-homelessness challenges brilliantly and has not yet accepted that the same methods and culture cannot withstand current challenges as they now need to do.

5.2.5 Arguably now, addressing and tackling street homelessness needs to sit as a separate and more imperative challenge cutting across the whole of the homelessness strategy.

5.2.6 This report has demonstrated that addressing street homelessness, its prevention and relief, offers opportunities which extend across the board within the broadest definitions of homelessness, and as a consequence, to be able to address almost all of the most prevalent reasons for homeless, within both housing and other city priorities. Yet to date, this is still not adequately reflected within priorities – to the extent that street homelessness, its prevention and relief, should be leading all of the other aspects of homelessness. None of these important requirements are adequately joined up within a flexible strategy for commissioning and prevention.

5.2.7 Now, in terms of our need and ability to respond to street homelessness we should be able to ensure that our response is not just always about firefighting, but all about being more strategic and measured, within the context of our much more limited funding opportunities as a council:

> "*We simply can't allow the crisis of rough sleeping numbers right now let the system become all about firefighting crisis. – we have to reach out to people sleeping on the streets, whether that be from when they first present to the Council or as part of more intensive work and support that looks both towards CSR [Corporate Social Responsibility] or external opportunities for funding from health, and the DWP recognising that unless the Council is leading the public debate and response here, there will be a consistent and necessary challenge to us all across the board that will only worsen to the detriment of all interests and needs for collaboration right now.*"[72]

[72] Comment from an elected Member to Committee Chair

"*all of this is about fundamental human need – and there is no place for street homelessness in our civilised society, let alone my city of Birmingham*."

5.2.8 The need and priority to address and effectively demonstrate mechanisms for tackling street homelessness has never been higher on the public agenda for a Council response.

5.2.9 Some and many of the reasons for street homelessness are because of a "total bureaucratic failure to prevent or address the right alternatives." These failings may be able to be addressed through the new allocations system and other housing measures, however the simple challenge must remain that the complex need requirements and situations leading to street homelessness need to be addressed as a matter of priority.

5.2.10 In many respects where the Council may not always be the most appropriate partners to respond to the extent of this challenge alone in terms of what needs addressing and how we can improve upon it. There is general and widespread recognition that the Council is part of a much wider system that needs to better present and explain the demands and opportunities they face. The onus for flexible responses is and remains upon us to co-ordinate. The inquiry was told:

"*Don't look at street homelessness as individual rough sleepers as being troubled, the entire system to support individuals in need is troubled and the Council's part or non-part within it, is simply just the most visible part of it to most people*."[73]

5.2.11 As such, once again, Birmingham and our Council has such important and imperative requirements to respond to homelessness by protecting what works; consolidating and expanding it; and joining everything up to best and most resilient effect.

Motion

That the recommendations R01 to R11 be approved, and that the Executive be requested to pursue their implementation.

[73] Evidence gathering session, November 2016

Appendix 1: CHAIN Annual Report, Greater London 2015/16

New rough sleepers' reasons for leaving their last settled base prior to first being seen rough sleeping.

Reason for leaving last settled base	No.	%
Asked to leave or evicted		
Asked to leave	422	15.2%
Evicted – arrears	202	7.3%
Evicted – ASB	44	1.6%
Evicted – other	131	4.7%
Asked to leave or evicted subtotal	*799*	*28.8%*
Employment and education		
Seeking work – from outside UK	337	12.2%
Seeking work – from within UK	201	7.3%
Financial problems – loss of job	243	8.8%
Study	1	0.0%
Employment and education subtotal	*782*	*28.2%*
Relationships		
Relationship breakdown	298	10.8%
Death of relative/friend	31	1.1%
Move nearer family/community	11	0.4%
Relationships subtotal	*340*	*12.3%*
Financial		
Financial problems – debt	24	0.9%
Financial problems – housing benefit	16	0.6%
Financial problems – other	99	3.6%
Financial subtotal	*139*	*5.0%*
End of stay in short or medium term accommodation		
Evicted – given non priority decision	18	0.6%
End of stay – asylum accommodation	19	0.7%
End of stay – hostel	16	0.6%
End of stay – other	79	2.9%
End of stay in short or medium term accommodation subtotal	*132*	*4.8%*
Victim of violence, harassment or abuse		
Domestic violence – victim	42	1.5%
Tenancy hijack	4	0.1%
Harassment/abuse/violence – racial	3	0.1%
Harassment/abuse/violence – gang	2	0.1%
Harassment/abuse/violence – homophobic	1	0.0%
Harassment/abuse/violence – other	47	1.7%
Victim of violence, harassment or abuse subtotal	*99*	*3.6%*
End of stay in institution		
End of stay – prison	79	2.9%
End of stay – hospital	14	0.5%
End of stay in institution subtotal	*93*	*3.4%*
Housing conditions		
Housing conditions	24	0.9%
Perpetrator of violence, harassment or abuse		
Domestic violence – perpetrator	16	0.6%
Transient		
Transient/travelling around	26	0.9%
Other		
Other	321	11.6%
Not recorded	2505	
Total (excl. not recorded)	**2771**	**100%**
Total	**5276**	

Note: Total excluding not recorded is used as the base for percentages.

Appendix 2: StreetLink

At the most comprehensively accessible level nationwide, StreetLink is a national, government funded organisation that can receive and pass referrals via app, phone and internet out to local outreach teams in response to anyone seeing or wanting to assist any rough sleeper. As such, this can, has and continues to provide a 'one-stop-shop-reception' in Birmingham

StreetLink
Report details welcomed here: http://www.streetlink.org.uk/tell-us-about-a-rough-sleeper
For people unable to use the website the reporting line is 0300 500 0914

Since the StreetLink service was established in 2013, up until August 2016, there has been a steady increase in StreetLink reports and referrals of street sleepers in Birmingham totalling 2025, and what has been an increase of 126% in numbers of referrals since 2014.

This shows not only the interest in wanting to provide help to rough sleepers in the city, but also reflects to some extent the scale of the rising occurrence of rough sleepers. As the inquiry process heard however, these statistics should be seen in context in terms of the fact that they only refer to the number of referrals and not numbers of individual street sleepers, because as the inquiry heard, at any one time up to 30 separate referrals have previously been made in respect of any one street-sleeper.

Similarly, whilst the SteetLink system offers a feedback loop in terms of being able to advise anyone about what action has been taken in terms of their referrals and support offered to the individuals that they refer thereafter, there is general recognition that this referral service should not be seen as a one-stop-shop, but an integral part of a local system which encourages and ensures a system of "don't walk by" and the need for a city wide "no wrong door" response and feedback loop which encourages the same.

> "*StreetLink is not perfect, it is a charity and to work, it is dependent upon not only the information it ever receives but the feedback it can provide, which is dependent upon those local services it links up with. There are thousands of cases where it does really work and overall, whether it is StreetLink or anything else there needs to be a system and way of reporting concerns and not walking on by. StreetLink has worked brilliantly in Brighton [ ] working with commissioned and non commissioned services and it can be vital intelligence, especially outside of the city centre where other services work every day.*"[74]

[74] Chair's notes from St Mungo's and Birmingham Providers

The significance of the StreetLink referral mechanism and the data it provides can and does provide a very important gauge of public concern and willingness to be involved with helping relieve and prevent street-homelessness. Equally there is some scope to use the StreetLink referral barometer to measure the effectiveness of local outreach provision in terms of its feedback loop, in comparison to year on year data around rough sleeping to assess the degree and to measure the extent to which demand for support is being relieved by provision in terms of public concerns and responses to it.

Appendix 3: Witnesses and Contributors

The Committee would like to thank all those who have taken time to contribute to this inquiry whether by attending a committee meeting to provide evidence, advising or completing the survey.

Name	**Organisation**
Alan Fraser	CEO, YMCA
Alana Gooden	Network Co-ordinator, No Wrong Door Network
Amanda Nicklin	Homeless Services Centre Manager, Midland Heart
Cath Gilliver	Chief Executive, SIFA Fireside
Cllr John Cotton	Chair, Health, Wellbeing and the Environment O&S Committee, BCC
Cllr Peter Griffiths	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homes, BCC
Cllr Sharon Thompson	Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Ambassador, BCC
Chris Bates	Birmingham Rathbone
Edward Dixon	Service Manager, Birmingham Homelessness Services, Salvation Army
Emma Neil	Housing Justice
Fuad Mahamed	Chief Executive Officer, Ashley Community Housing
Hyacinth Blackburn	Housing Services Director, YMCA Birmingham
Jean Templeton	Chief Executive, St Basil's
Jennifer Travassos	Senior Manager of Rough Sleeping, Westminster City Council
Jim Crawshaw	Head of Housing Options, BCC
John Hardy	Commissioning Manager, BCC
Jonathan Bryce	Projects Maker, Colmore Business District
Matt Green	Director of Skylight Birmingham and Coventry, Crisis
Natalie Allen	Programmes Director, Birmingham Changing Futures Together
Pam Higginson	Have a Heart Help the Homeless
Paulina Colomby	Operations Manager, Midland Heart
Petra Salva	Director of Outreach Services, St Mungo's
Reb Kean	Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust
Rob James	Service Director, Housing Transformation
Shirley Mallon	Secretary, Birmingham Christmas Shelter
Vicky Hines	Shelter Hub Manager, Shelter
Yassar Taj	As Suffa