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Title:	Rough Sleeping
Report of:	Barbara Brownlee, Executive Director of Housing and Regeneration
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Portfolio (as listed at www.westminster.gov.uk/cabinet)
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	Better City Better Lives Priority
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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee on issues related to rough sleeping in the City of Westminster alongside an update on the recently published 2017-2022 Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- 1.2 Westminster sees the highest number of rough sleepers in the UK, which last year totalled just under 2800 individuals encountered by outreach services. Reducing rough sleeping and addressing the associated behaviours of the day time street population is a priority for the council in a time where many local authorities are seeing an increase of people on the streets.
- 1.3 The new strategy will operate in the context of the national focus on reducing numbers of people finding themselves on the streets following a tenancy ending and implementing the new Homelessness Reduction Act from the 1st April.

2. Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to consider the following points:
- 2.2 Given approximately 95% of new rough sleepers do not originate in or have a local link to Westminster, does the Committee wish to support our supported

reconnection working policy or are there alternative approaches that we should consider?

- 2.3 There are a multitude of messages about rough sleeping and the associated behaviours that have been developed over the years to inform business, visitors/tourists and residents of how they can help; this includes Street Link as the key mechanism to report people sleeping rough, the police for anti-social behaviour and WCC's 'Report it' on our website to report detritus left behind. Does the Committee have any recommendations on how we can align our messaging to the public about what help is available and how to support our work?
- 2.4 The Strand sees up to 80 independent soup runs operate each month and this provides a range of challenges from sustaining people in their street based lifestyle to significant complaints around environmental issues. Northbank BID is particularly affected and we are in regular communication about an appropriate response. In the past we have tried to enforce against some of the negative behaviours such as parking breaches, poor waste disposal and the ASB associated with large groups, however, these have had limited impact. We have also sought to bring them around the table using faith based groups such as Housing Justice, again this has had minimal impact. Does the committee have a recommendation or suggestion for soup run operations in Westminster?

3. Background

3.1 Rough Sleeping Team

The Rough Sleeping Team sits within the Prevention Team in GPH and consists of 2 Commissioning Managers, an accommodation pathway manager, a police officer and a project management and evaluation officer. The team commission just over £6m of support services for rough sleepers that includes:

- 414 bed spaces in specialist accommodation
- 10 (soon to be 20) Housing First flats
- Street based outreach
- Homeless Health Coordination Project
- Joint Homelessness Team (provides mental health support and assessment)
- Other added value services

3.2 Street Population and Rough Sleepers

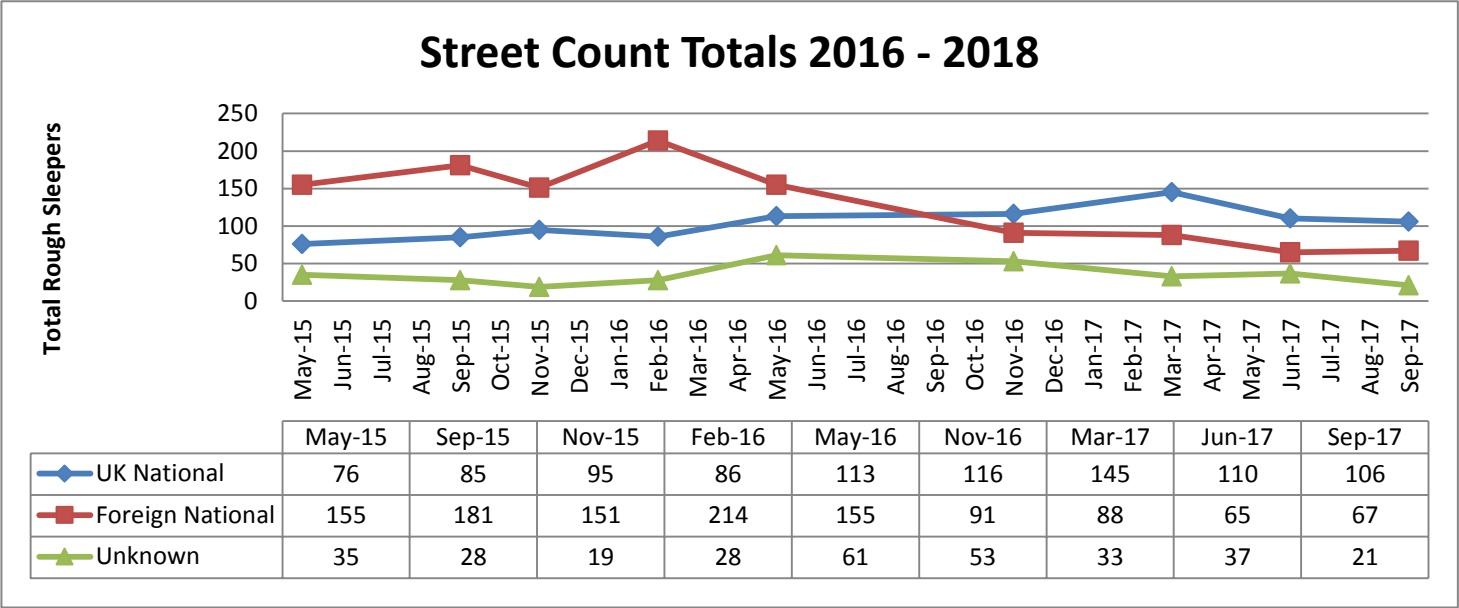
- 3.2.1 There is a common misconception that the people who are seen during the day engaging in begging, on street drug use and other forms of anti-social behaviour are *all* rough sleepers; in fact, we know from our interactions that many are housed in hostels/flats both here and in other boroughs.
- 3.2.2 The rough sleeping figures shown in the next section (Section 4) show the numbers of people who were found bedded down at night by outreach workers.

- 3.2.3 To address the issues of the day time street population, officers in Public Protection and our team have worked in partnership to develop the social care and enforcement model which has resulted in a number of initiatives;
- 3.2.4 Regular operations in 'hot spot' areas - outreach, City Inspectors and police officers' conduct intelligence led operations. Each person's social care records are checked to ensure that they are engaged with services and ensure communication with the area where they live, alert our commissioned hostels to the behaviour of some of their residents in order to form an action plan and where people are rough sleeping we work to ensure they are offered a route away from the street
- 3.2.5 A police officer becoming embedded in the team – this has enabled a close link to the police, numerous training sessions for dedicated ward officers and support on complex issues involving drug dealing and supply. He also runs an early intervention model within the hostels to divert people away from serious crime
- 3.2.6 Street Population Action Groups (SPAG) - the main forum for the discussion and problem solving oversight of those that are considered part of the 'street population' and associated problematic hot spot locations across Westminster. These meetings fall under the 'Locations Board' of the Safer Westminster Partnership governance structure. The SPAG has consolidated existing forums where street population issues were discussed to ensure that partnership approaches are consistent, action-focused, and social-care is balanced with enforcement as required
- 3.2.7 The Leader has recently announced funding towards the Westminster Integrated Streets Engagement (WISE) team which will conduct regular day time shifts to engage with the street population, manage cases of persistent offenders and use enforcement tactics where needed. Most importantly, the team will aim to replicate success of outreach teams in implementing the same social care focus and partnerships for the day time street population
- 3.2.8 To address the day time issues, officers worked in partnership with Members to develop the award winning campaign, Real Change which was aimed at supporting members of the public and businesses to make informed choices about whether to give to people begging. Within the new strategy, there are plans to review the campaign materials and run it again at strategic points throughout the year.

3.3 Picture of Rough Sleeping in Westminster

- 3.3.1 In 2016-17, our services found 2767 individuals sleeping rough; of which 63% didn't spend a second night out. This is an extraordinary achievement given the volume and shows the interventions and rapid response approach is working.

3.3.2 The street outreach team, WCC officers and the Met conduct a snap shot street audits every quarter with volunteer independent verifiers and the numbers have remained comparatively similar over the more recent counts:



3.3.3 Of the 273 **new** individuals rough sleeping in Westminster during July- Sept '17, 77% had no second night out and 96% had no more than two nights out, with 68 individuals being referred to the three No Second Night Out hubs across London, the Connections at St Martin's Night Centre, Passage House Assessment Centre or the newly opened Green Room run by St Mungo's for female rough sleepers. Many new rough sleepers simply do not return to the street after they have been encountered and return to accommodation in their home area.

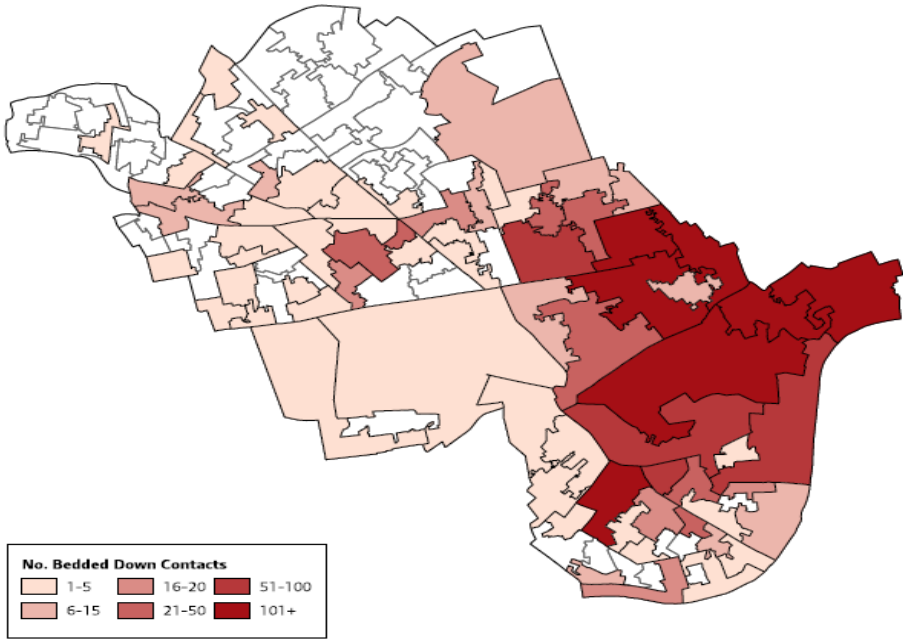
3.4 **Why do people rough sleep in Westminster?**

3.4.1 There are a number of reasons why people find themselves on the streets and when service users are asked, we suspect the answer you receive depends on who you ask and when. The recurring issue we have is that very few rough sleepers originated here and understanding reasons why people come here can be difficult. In the main, the feedback we get from professionals and rough sleepers is that:

- Availability of drugs (this is a key issue) in Central London
- Availability of services such as day centres and outreach workers
- Tourists and businesses who provide food and money freely
- A very large number of independently run food/clothing offers ('soup runs') in key areas
- High rates of night time activity which helps people to feel safe when sleeping
- An established rough sleeping community that can and does become a 'family'.

3.5 Locations of Rough Sleepers found in Westminster

3.5.1 From the map below, the Committee may note that there are concentrated areas where individuals are found to be bedding down at night. These tend to be areas that have transport hubs, high levels of footfall and where the night time economy is prominent.



3.6 Partnership working to reduce rough sleeping in Westminster

3.6.1 We are pleased to have been successful in securing £600,000 from the DCLG to support the opening of the Passage House Assessment Centre and further secured £180,000 to open a service called the Green Room which is specifically designed to be a safe space for female rough sleepers who are at risk on the streets from domestic and sexual violence.

3.6.2 We have worked closely with the GLA to support the delivery of the new Social Impact Bond. We have negotiated 149 nominations for SIB which will see each identified long term rough sleeper receive dedicated support from a member of St Mungo’s or Thames Reach SIB worker. We estimate this to have an added value of at least £100,000 a year (on top of the £1.1m/ year we spend on street outreach) and are working alongside the Mayor’s Office and the providers to ensure the individuals get the support they need to sustain a route away from the streets.

3.6.3 A new service called Safe Connections was recently awarded to Thames Reach by the GLA and will see a dedicated team deliver enhanced reconnection support to individuals on the streets of London. Again, Westminster supports this initiative and will benefit from additional support from the team and we are currently looking at how they may co-locate with the Westminster Assessment Centre at Passage House.

3.6.4 We are a member of the Mayor's No Nights Sleeping Rough Taskforce and attend the GLA Rough Sleeping Leads group, thereby giving us a leading voice in shaping pan London rough sleeping strategies and provision.

3.6.5 We have recently formed the West End Partnership Board to work with colleagues in Camden to address shared street population based challenges.

3.7 The 2017-2022 Rough Sleeping Strategy

3.7.1 The strategy was released in late 2017 and outlines our 3 key priorities for reducing rough sleeping:

- Priority A: Where it is possible for us to do so, prevent people from rough-sleeping in the first place
- Priority B: Supporting people to rebuild their lives
- Priority C: Rough Sleepers who refuse to engage and pose a danger to themselves or others are subject to enforcement action with a view to changing their behaviour

3.7.3 We have already made some great strides in meeting our commitments in the strategy, some of which are highlighted below;

3.7.4 Launched the new Assessment Centre which has seen over 160 people through the door in 9 months of operation; 64% of the individuals have been successfully assessed, offered a route away from the street and accepted into alternative accommodation.

3.7.5 Key pieces of work with Central London CCG to reduce the amount of people both frequently attending A&E and those who self-discharge back to the streets have included a monthly Multi-Disciplinary team meeting with the 2 specialist GP practices, a frequent attenders meeting with Imperial Trust and better links with discharge teams in both the Gordon Hospital and St Mary's.

3.7.6 Implemented the on-line Westminster assessment and referral form (WARF) on CHAIN (the pan-London database) which enables on-street referrals to be made into accommodation, tracking of individuals through the pathway and the person's history and support needs to travel with them through services. The final point is hugely supported as it stops our service users having to repeat their 'story' at each point.

3.7.7 Implemented 10 units of Housing First flats in partnership with Sanctuary Housing Association and will be adding 10 additional units in 2018

3.7.8 Opened a new service called the Green Room, run by St Mungo's. This service is for female rough sleepers a 'safe space' to escape domestic or

sexual violence. It offers a therapeutic respite space for vulnerable women to make decisions on what steps they would like to move away from violent or manipulative relationships.

- 3.7.9 We commissioned a new service called Hopkinson House for people who are serially excluded from our other services due to behavioural issues. They take couples, dogs and singles with multiple and complex needs – this has enabled them to break down perceived barriers to moving in and focus on stabilisation

4. Health and Wellbeing Implications

- 4.1.1 Rough Sleepers and vulnerably/temporarily housed people experience some of the poorest health outcomes. Often, service users experience multiple complex health needs (physical, mental and substance misuse). The ever changing landscape of the healthcare system, housing service providers and staffing teams means it is important to maintain a high standard of joint working to ensure service users receive the best health outcomes.

5. Financial Implications

There are no financial considerations in the report.

6. Risks and Mitigations

There are no risks or mitigations to consider in the report

If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers please contact Jenny Travassos x6572
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