

Rough Sleeping in the West Midlands

Autumn 2011

A snapshot of the scale, trends and future of rough sleeping in Dudley, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Sandwell, Solihull, Stratford-on-Avon and Walsall.

Produced by Midland Heart on behalf of West Midlands Homelessness Forum



1. Introduction

The West Midlands is a diverse region, covering areas of relative prosperity and deprivation, developed urban centres and stretches of rural landscape. In addition, it has areas of high, low and unaccounted rough sleeping.

Nationally, some of the historic drivers of higher numbers of people sleeping rough, such as unemployment, benefit changes and a harsh housing market, have been on the rise. Locally however, little is known of how these factors impact on rough sleeping in the West Midlands.

Rough sleeping is one of the most visible indicators of inequalities in our society and is evidence that there is a need for greater support for the most vulnerable people in our society. Failure to address the issue can result in costly outcomes to both the individual, and the community.

This report has been commissioned by the West Midlands Homelessness Forum (WMHF) to determine what the picture is in the West Midlands, provide an overview of the good practice that is going on, identify gaps in provision and highlight some of the concerns both providers and local authorities have.

The WMHF were founded from the development of the Regional Homelessness Strategy in 2005. Their role has been the implementation of that strategy, its subsequent update in 2008 and, for shaping the future direction of strategic decisions relating to homelessness in the region. WMHF are made up of representatives from Local Authorities and Providers from across the region. In order to make a sound decision on the allocation of limited cross boundary funding, they have commissioned this report to accomplish the following:-

- To outline the current scale of rough sleeping in areas of the region without dedicated outreach services.
- To make appropriate recommendations as to how funding could be most effectively utilised by the Forum in the future.

The Local Authorities of Dudley, Solihull, Stratford, Sandwell, Walsall, Warwick, Nuneaton and Bedworth were all identified as part of this report as they do not have rough sleeper outreach services. Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton were not approached for this reason. The other region that the WMHF cover is Warwickshire, who were not able to take part in the research at this time.

This report has been compiled by an experienced research team within Midland Heart, the largest provider of outreach services in the Midlands.

2. Summary of Key Conclusions

- Rough sleepers in the region are in the main white British males, and services tend to cater for this majority. This excludes what is seen as rising numbers of young people, women, and migrant rough sleepers.
- There is a universal lack of Direct Access Hostels, and other housing move on options, without which it is impossible to effectively tackle rough sleeping in the region.
- The current economic climate is now pushing more people into homelessness. This is particularly as result of welfare reform, support service cuts, and rising personal debt.
- There are issues that all authorities must address independently. It is often difficult to compare a densely urban population such as Sandwell, to a rural one such as Stratford, and this could mean that Black Country local authorities group more naturally.
- There are synergies that can be addressed though across WM6, especially in tackling the relatively low numbers of entrenched rough sleepers in each area where local authority's interventions have failed.
- There are not sufficient numbers of people in each authority sleeping rough at any one time to justify a separate outreach team in each area- especially as this number fluctuates. However, there is scope to having floating outreach that covers all WM6 areas, based from a central hub.
- There needs to be more effective use of the existing strategic links between these areas. These are key in sharing best practice and in exploring future funding opportunities that would not be achievable independently.

3. Aims and objectives

This report aims to provide WMHF with a snapshot of the current scale of rough sleeping across identified areas of the West Midlands with no dedicated rough sleeper outreach services.

It will show:-

- What the national picture is for rough sleeping and how this translates to the West Midlands.
- The underlying trends and numbers of people sleeping rough in the West Midlands and to what extent the profiles of rough sleepers have changed.
- What the main routes into rough sleeping are in each area, and identifying common themes.
- The nature and extent of any cross - local authority boundary migration.
- The difference in numbers and experiences of entrenched and new rough sleepers and how solutions need to fit each.
- Best practice solutions in reducing rough sleeping.
- Provide overall recommendations on how these could be implemented across the different local authorities.

4. Background:

4.1 Defining Rough Sleeping

Rough sleepers represent a small fraction of the total number of people who are homeless; they are a group which is at greatest risk of victimisation and the most visible and yet the hardest to support due to complexity of the issues they are facing. The Government defines Rough Sleepers as:-

“People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or “bashes”).”¹

It is important to note the difference between someone who is Homeless, someone who is a rough sleeper, and someone who is a “sofa surfer.” Whilst the same person could fall into all 3 groups, each carries a specific set of circumstances which must be addressed separately. Each council has a legal duty to provide housing to certain people, who are classed as Statutory Homeless:-

“where local authorities have defined a household as homeless within the terms of the homelessness legislation. Where they are found to be in priority need and not intentionally homeless then local authorities will have a duty to offer accommodation. This can include families with dependent children, pregnant women and adults who are assessed as vulnerable.”²

There are many people who are one step away from becoming a rough sleeper, and “sofa surf” between their friends and family. *“Hidden homelessness is highly prevalent... In fact, to be single and homeless in England is, in the main, to be hidden.”³* Rough sleepers are often referred to as the ‘hidden homeless’ as they frequently do not make themselves known to services and usually do not meet the priority statutory homeless definition above. As such, there is little understanding of the true nature or scale of rough sleeping nationally. Non-Statutory homelessness can be seen as:-

“where households or individuals are not found to be eligible, do not fall within the definition of priority need or who are deemed to be ‘intentionally’ homeless or have not gone through the legal application for housing. Many people living on the street, in hostels and other forms of temporary accommodation will fall into the category of non-statutory homeless. Consequently, many agencies in the voluntary sector tend to support those who are non statutory homeless. However, the division between the two groups is becoming increasingly blurred.”²

¹ Communities and Local Government, *Notes and Definitions*
<<http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/homelessnessstatistics/notesdefinitions/>> [accessed 1 November 2011]

² Homeless Link, *About Homelessness*, <<http://www.homeless.org.uk/about-homelessness>> [accessed on 28th October 2011]

³ Crisis (2011), *The Hidden Truth about Homelessness*

Homelessness can be seen as a wider group of people who live in temporary or unstable accommodation, hostels and shelters, or are no longer able to live at their family home. As a group, people who are homeless face many difficulties and are often only a step away from living on the street. Throughout this report, rough sleeping, “sofa surfing” and homelessness will all be discussed, but it is important to make clear that despite significant overlaps in experiences, in practice these terms are not interchangeable. For the most part we will look at the direct situation of rough sleepers in the area, but it will also be necessary to include an examination of the steps leading up to this and the wider issue of homelessness in the region.

4.2 Who are “providers”?

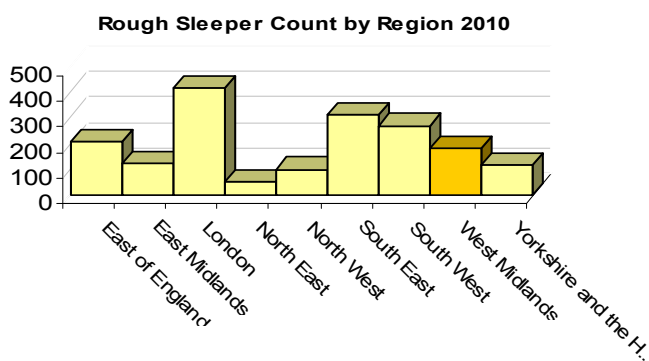
This report uses ‘providers’ and ‘services’ as generic terms to refer to an agency or organisation who give some form of support to people who sleep rough. The term will therefore include local faith groups, substance abuse services, housing associations, local authorities, hospitals, probation services, police and other statutory, voluntary or private organisations that interact with people who sleep rough.

4.3 The geography

The West Midlands region covers a vast area, with a differing range of issues within and between the boundaries of local authorities. Leads in the local authorities of Dudley, Nuneaton & Bedworth, Sandwell, Solihull, Stratford upon Avon and Walsall (collectively to be referred to as **WM6**) were identified as being willing to be included in this research as there is no existing outreach service in place to identify and support Rough Sleepers.

The table below show the most recent national analysis of the numbers of rough sleepers by region in the UK. The West Midlands as a whole is in the middle of these estimates, with London having the highest reported numbers of rough sleepers in the UK and the North East some of the lowest.

The cities of Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton have the largest rough sleeper populations, and as such, have sufficient resources to fund dedicated hostel and outreach services to support people.



4.4 Issues in the West Midlands

There are a number of factors which indicate that the region has fared worse in the recent recession and mean that there are specific challenges that could influence rough sleeping. For instance the West Midlands have been affected by

higher than average unemployment⁴ and have a growing number of some of the most deprived areas in the UK⁵.

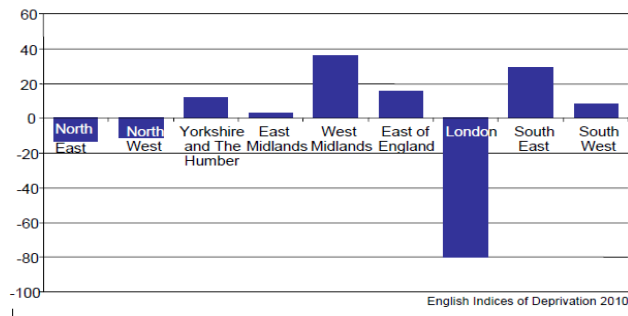


Figure 1- Change in the number of most deprived areas in each region between 2007-2010

The region has a number of more rural areas, as well as the metropolitan and urban centres listed above. This necessitates a mix in the services that are needed.

⁴ Office for National Statistics (2011) *Regional Labour Market Statistics October 2011* <<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tc%3A77-226710>> [accessed on 23rd October 2011]

⁵ Communities and Local Government (2011) *The English Indices of Deprivation 2010*, <<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/indices2010>> [accessed 2nd November 2011]

5. The National Context

5.1 A summary of rough sleeping as a history in the UK 1997-2007

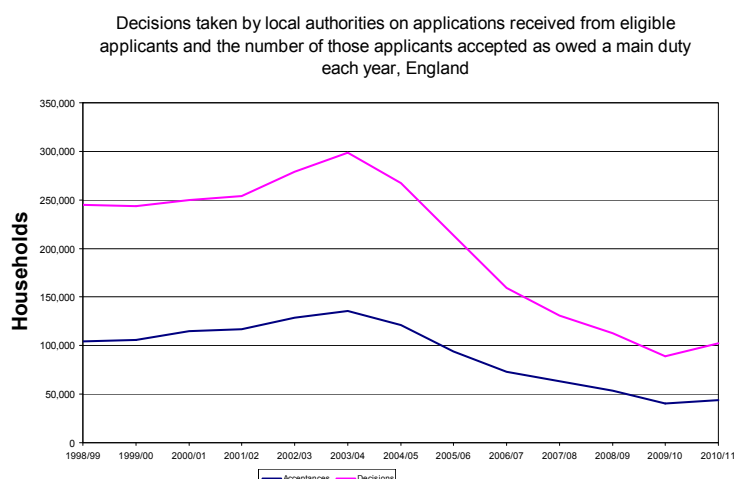
Between 1997 and 2007 under successive Labour governments, there had been a focus on addressing the issue of homelessness and recognition of the duty the state has to support people who are made homeless. There was the development of a number of strategies, for example:-

“Local homeless strategies, Supporting People funding and Hostels Capital Improvement Plans” have had a notable success in reducing the numbers of people we see on the street. This has been through encouraging a strategic approach locally, and through more flexibility in the services which are available.⁶

These policies saw a significant drop in the number of people made homeless during this period and were put in place through national strategies and targets imposed by central government. This was a time of relative prosperity in the UK economy, and the number of funding streams available, especially in regard to preventative measures, led to positive and visible results.

During this time, other notable changes included:

- Increased diversity in the single homeless population, with a notable rise in the number of people from Black and Minority Ethnic groups (BME)- especially from central and eastern European countries.
- There were some concerns that preventative measures were focused on reducing homeless acceptances rather than preventing homelessness.
- The lack of insufficient affordable housing was a constant barrier to reducing homelessness further, and meant that more people lived in temporary accommodation for too long.
- There is evidence that health outcomes became far poorer for people who are homeless, despite progress being made in developing ties with health services⁷.



8

⁶ Crisis (2011) *The Homelessness Monitor- Tracking the Impacts of Policy and Economic Change in England 2011-2013*

⁷ Crisis, University of York (2010), *A Review of Single Homelessness in the UK 2000-2010*

⁸ Communities and Local Government (2011) *Live Tables on Homelessness*
<<http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/homelessnessstatistics/livetables/>> [accessed on 21st November 2011]

5.2 2007-2011 Economic Recession and Coalition Government

The recent recession and continued economic uncertainty has led to a rise in the number of people made homeless in the short term. This is likely to have lasting long term repercussions as well, but which are not yet being felt. There are various components to this with research showing that:-

- Support workers seeing rises in the numbers of rough sleepers, whilst bed spaces are being lost, mental ill health, relationship breakdowns and domestic violence are the rising causes of this ⁹.
- Unemployment is currently at its highest since 1994 ¹⁰.
- The largest overhaul of the Welfare system since its inception is expected to impact on housing supply to people who are receiving benefit support, and make renting unaffordable¹¹.

5.3 Removal of services:

As part of the comprehensive spending review initiated by the coalition government to reduce the UK's national debt, departments have been required to make significant cuts to their budgets. It is feared that many of the successful homeless funding streams discussed earlier are now being disproportionately effected by the cuts, with research showing that:-

“The amount by which councils are planning to reduce their Supporting People budgets varies widely, with funding reductions ranging from 1% - 45%.”¹²

As more people are being put at risk of homelessness through external pressure, there are fewer services available to meet short term housing needs. These cuts can also be seen as a false economy, for example, as “Research in 2008 by the New Economics Foundation indicated, an annual cost to the state of £26,000 for each homeless person, which included the cost of benefits, hostel accommodation, and care of children.” ¹³

5.4 The National Rough Sleeper Count:

One of the first problems when looking strategically at levels of rough sleeping is the difficulties faced quantifying a transient and hidden population. Since 1998 the National Rough Sleeper Count has provided a snapshot of the number of people sleeping rough on any one night across all authorities who *believe* they have rough sleepers in the area. Analysis of these figures shows the number of rough sleepers has reduced significantly, reflecting the investment and changed initiatives that were explored above.

⁹ St Mungos (2011), *Battered, broken, bereft- Why People Still end up Sleeping Rough*

¹⁰ Office for National Statistics (2011) *Regional Labour Market Statistics October 2011* <<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcM%3A77-226710>> [accessed on 23rd October 2011]

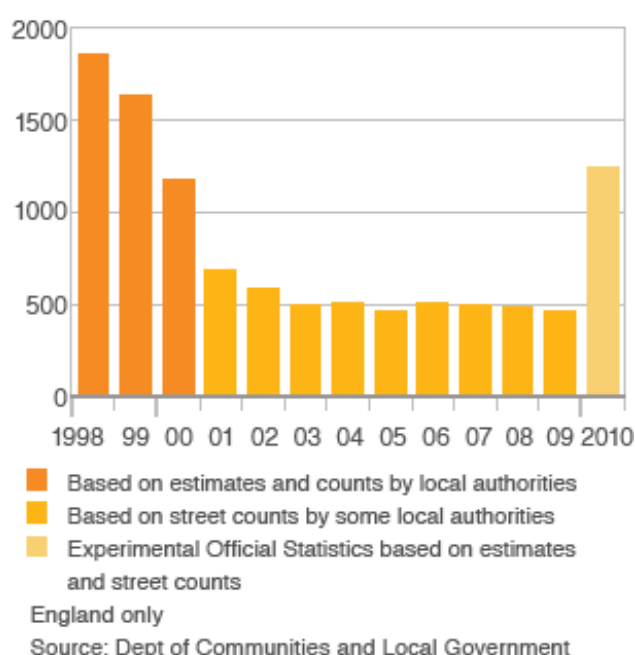
¹¹ Shelter (2011) *The Impact of Welfare Reform Bill measures on affordability for low income private renting families*, <http://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/334726/Impact_of_Welfare_Reform_Bill_measures_on_affordability_for_low_income_private_renting_families.pdf> [accessed 1st October 2011]

¹² Homeless Link (2011) *Cuts risk undermining progress in tackling homelessness in 4 in 10 areas* <<http://www.homeless.org.uk/news/future-proofing/cuts-risk-undermining-progress-in-tackling-homelessness-in-4-in-10-areas>> [accessed on 22nd October 2011]

¹³ New Economics Foundation (2008), *Work it out- Barriers to employment for homeless people*

However, it is argued that these statistics can be misleading, as the definitions of rough sleepers are restrictive and unrealistic. It is felt that these numbers are easily manipulated, and that the true figure is far greater. For example, London declared 440 rough sleepers in 2010, but the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (Chain) had a total of 3,673 seen sleeping rough over the year¹⁴. The Chain database records every rough sleeper that services come into contact with to enable the sharing of information and it is intended to provide an accurate picture of levels of rough sleepers in the capital.

The current Housing Minister was a vocal critic of the Count approach whilst in opposition and has said that he is committed to overhauling the current system. Indeed, last year it saw a leap in numbers, and this is also expected for 2011. Whilst many providers say that the current system is still not accurate, it does force each local authority to address the problem locally, and give a benchmark figure for levels of rough sleeping in their area.



15

5.5 The current national Strategy:

There are a number of strands that can be described:-

a) National No Second Night Out agenda Launched

The governments headline strategy for ending rough sleeping in London in 2012 is being rolled out across the country. The core principles of No Second Night Out (NSNO) is that the longer someone stays living on the street, the harder it is for them to break that cycle¹⁶. Typically, services focus on a 'stepped pathway service' that progresses people through a housing and benefits system, building up as they reach milestones of stable living.

¹⁴ Broadway (2011) *Street to Home Bulletin 2010/11*

<http://www.broadwaylondon.org/CHAIN/Reports/main_content/S2H_201011.pdf> [accessed 22nd October 2011]

¹⁵ BBC News (2011) Who, What, Why: How do you count rough sleepers?

<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-10929761>> [accessed on 3rd September 2011]

¹⁶ Broadway and No Second Night Out (2011) A review of the first three months of the project

b) The Governments 5 point pledge

- New rough sleepers can be identified and helped off the streets immediately.
- The public can alert services if they see anyone sleeping rough so they receive help.
- Rough sleepers can go to a place of safety, where their needs can be assessed and they can receive help.
- Rough sleepers are able to get emergency accommodation and other services they need.
- Rough sleepers from outside the area can be reconnected with their community, where they can be near family and friends and get housing support.

The London trial has shown significant success in increasing the number of first time rough sleepers who found an alternative to rough sleeping from 12% to 68%¹⁷. It focuses on:-

- A 24/7 office 'hub' which cuts down on bureaucracy and referral times. It has no bed spaces and distances itself from traditional Rough sleeper hotspots. This prevents new rough sleepers forming links with the existing rough sleeper population.
- Dedicated outreach workers and promotion of a referral line to identify Rough sleepers quickly.
- Reconnecting to support people to access services in their home area, through putting pressure on the local authority.
- Partnership with other organisations who are able to provide specialist support quickly and effectively in order to meet the specialist needs of that area.

5.6 Commitment in London to eliminate it by 2012

Running alongside NSNO is the ambitious aim within London to eliminate rough sleeping completely from the capital by 2012. Significant funding has been drawn into making NSNO work, and through the CHAiN database¹⁸ and the creation of the London Delivery Board (very publicly headed by London Mayor Boris Johnson) there is a political will to see it succeed¹⁹.

As part of the NSNO pledge, there is a recognition that the needs of rough sleepers is about more than just housing. Nine government bodies have made a commitment to meet and give strategic lead to the agenda, including the Ministries for Justice, Health, Work and Pensions, Education, Business, Innovation and Skills, the Home Office, and also the Ministry for Defence²⁰

5.7 Examples of Best Practice and developments in Rough Sleeping

There are a number of examples of best practice that can be highlighted:-

a) Personalisation

The culture change within health and social care over recent years has been toward personalisation of services - fitting the service to the person rather than vice versa. This has led to the usage of direct payments and personal budgets which place the responsibility on the service user to manage their own care. It can

¹⁷ Broadway and No Second Night Out (2011) A review of the first three months of the project

¹⁸ Broadway (2011) *Street to Home Bulletin 2010/11*

<http://www.broadwaylondon.org/CHAIN/Reports/main_content/S2H_201011.pdf> [accessed 22nd October 2011]

¹⁹ The London Delivery Board (2009) *Ending Rough Sleeping*

²⁰ HM Government (2011) *Vision to End rough Sleeping: No second night out nationwide*

empower people to find solutions to their care which fall outside the traditional responses to typical need. In addition, it can often come at a much lower cost.

Personalisation has been successfully trialled within one scheme in London, where there is evidence to suggest that personal budgets could be the way to establish a relationship with rough sleeper support workers, and provide an incentive to move into/stay in accommodation, as well as providing a resource to manage crisis and plan for the future ²¹.

A study of Broadways project by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation showed that key to the projects success was the provision of personalised one-to-one support. The coordinator needed to be able to make an 'intensive and consistent approach' to working with the rough sleeper and given the ability to cut through red tape and access funds quickly on a case-by-case basis.

b) Traditional Hostel provision

The stereotypical image of hostels in England is not always the most positive. Research into the effect that the environment a former rough sleeper is supported in, has shown that a change in this mindset could illicit a greater success rate in maintained tenancies. An award winning project ran in conjunction with the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG), Places for Change and St Mungo's. It demonstrated that through being in a 'hotel' environment, individuals are placed in a calmer, more settled situation, in which they are better able to find move-on options ²²

c) The CHAiN database

As mentioned earlier, Broadway in London operates a Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) database which collects and collates data on rough sleepers across the capital²³. Over 80 organizations feed into the database, which has practical applications for mapping service need, recording changes in characteristics of rough sleepers, and also measuring good practice of successful support.

d) Skills and training

Research by the Salvation Army ²⁴has shown that 96% of homeless people were unemployed, while Westminster City Council ²⁵ have revealed that as many as 40% of hostel residents have poor reading skills. The latter research has demonstrated that literary screening could provide an answer to better future employment, understanding tenancy agreements and benefit forms. Social enterprises are another innovative way to train and employ people who are/have been rough sleeping, and could potentially draw enough income into a service to enable it to sustain itself outside of funding. In addition, it creates a focal point for a project and can bring continued positivity and purpose to a scheme. Examples include the award winning Frost and Snow Bakery, which assists people who were homeless into apprenticeships ²⁶.

²¹ Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2010) *Providing Personalised Support to Rough Sleepers*

²² Homeless Link (2011) *The Lodge* <<http://www.homeless.org.uk/alternative-models-the-lodge>> [accessed on 23th November 2011]

²³ Broadway (2011) *CHAIN* <<http://www.broadwaylondon.org/CHAIN.html>> [accessed on 3rd November 2011]

²⁴ The Salvation Army (2009) *The seeds of exclusion 2009*

²⁵ City of Westminster (2011) *Central London Literacy Programme for Rough Sleepers Scoops Award* <<http://www.westminster.gov.uk/press-releases/2011-10/central-london-literacy-programme-for-rough-sleeper/>> [accessed on 28th October 2011]

²⁶ Midland Heart (2011) *Birmingham cupcake company triumphs at national training awards* <<http://www.midlandheart.org.uk/default.aspx?id=430510>> [accessed on 1st December 2011]

6. Methodology

The research undertaken by Midland Heart has been conducted through speaking first hand to a wide range of stakeholders on a local and regional basis, as well as collating best practice and reviewing the national policy context from other leading research groups.

- There has been a detailed desktop review of key literature releases in the last five years relating to homelessness and rough sleeping specifically. This has included, but was not limited to, reports from Crisis, St Mungos, Shelter, and the CLG, which have all highlighted the national policy picture. These studies have shaped the direction of the research, providing examples of best practice and recurring themes around England. However, this review revealed that there is very little existing research into rough sleeping in the Midlands.
- In addition to the desktop study, there was also a review on a number of rough sleeping issues, including the annual rough sleeper count, homeless presentations and a range of other factors likely to impact on rough sleeping.
- Members of the Midland Heart research team also attended the national “No Second Night Out” conference in London to gain a further understanding of this core agenda and insight into its success. The team also attended a Health and Homeless networking meeting in Dudley to discuss issues with providers, and a Rough Sleeping Working Group meeting in Stratford to assess examples of multi-agency groups working effectively.
- Contact was made with the homelessness lead in each local authority. Key contacts, procedures and local information were shared which allowed the research team to build up a broader picture of the specific influences on rough sleeping in each authority. Discussions were made to complete a questionnaire for local authorities, and this acted as a baseline for which all other provider feedback could be measured against.
- The research team contacted the agencies most involved in rough sleeping within each local authority via an online questionnaire. Some of these were conducted in more depth by telephone where necessary. A total of 46 agencies/providers were contacted, with at least 5 for each local authority area. As well as a standardised version, each agency/provider was asked to complete a questionnaire which was slightly amended according to the type of agency - police, substance abuse, hospitals. These were then followed up with another email and by telephone. The response rate to this was approximately 50%, which we believe is sufficient to be statistically reliable and provide a consensus of opinion on levels of rough sleeping.
- From this data, the team compiled an area summary document for each local authority. (also see Appendix: 2) This highlighted the specific picture within each area, and enables each local authority to target and address specific local issues as well as the broader regional dimension that this report will describe.

- From this the team were invited to interview former rough sleepers in two direct access hostels in Dudley and Walsall. Eight interviews were undertaken, involving six male and two female former rough sleepers, and covering a range of ages and experiences. Further details are provided in Appendix: 1. The interviews offered very honest accounts of the often complex story behind the numbers and headlines associated with rough sleeping. Quotes from these interviews will be used throughout the report, and all names have been changed to protect anonymity.
- Initial findings and conclusions were discussed with experienced senior members of the Rough Sleeper Outreach Team in Birmingham, the West Midlands Homeless Forum, and other members of the Homelessness team in Birmingham.

7. Research Findings:

7.1 Introduction

It is the intention of this report to present evidence of how the research has answered our initial queries and provide a picture of rough sleeping in the WM6 region. The findings address the following issues:-

- Actual levels of rough sleeping
- Geographic and provider differences
- Profile of the rough sleeper population
- Reasons and routes into rough sleeping

7.2 Actual levels of rough sleeping:

Due to the nature of working with rough sleepers, situations can be chaotic and information collection is rarely a high priority. That said, all agencies had a good understanding of how many people they work with and who have slept rough, which indicates good support planning and local knowledge. Because agencies do not always share data, referral processes are sometimes loose, and for reasons explored below, this can be used as a baseline figure for rough sleepers in the WM6 region.

Local Authority	2010 Count ²⁷	Initial Local Authority estimated max	2011 Estimated Total	Approx Variance between 2010/2011	Entrenched Rough Sleepers
Solihull	3	10	9	+6	3+
Walsall	8	20	15	+7	Unknown
Dudley	3	4	5	+2	3+
Stratford	8	10	16	+8	3-5+
Sandwell	2	20	18	+16	16
Nuneaton & Bedworth	2	2	6	+4	1+
Total	26	66	69	+43	28+
Birmingham	9	13 (57 between July-Sept)			
Coventry	5	20			
Wolverhampton	9	8			

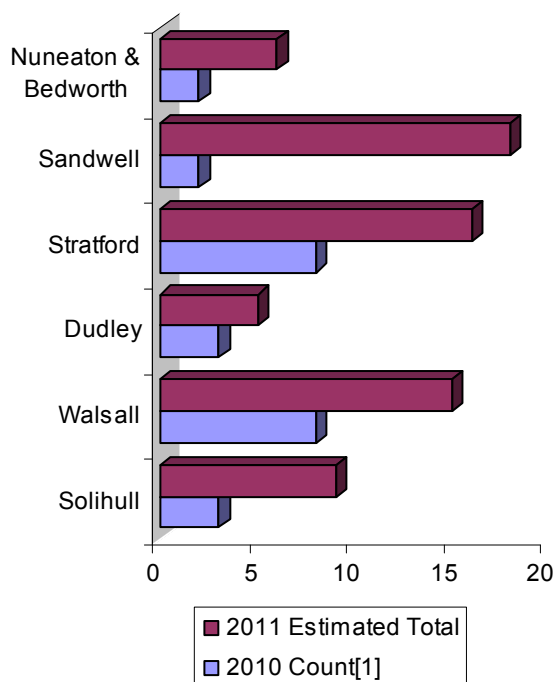
(data Collected by Midland Heart)

Before the research began, local authorities were asked for their best estimations of rough sleeping, and this has been compared with the most recent 'count' data (which were estimates) and a summary view of the information has been collated. It reveals that most local authorities have a broadly accurate understanding of numbers within their area and that the 2010 estimate was far lower. Stratford and Solihull's 2011 estimated total is seen to be accurate as these have been undertaken with strong support, with the local authority engaging in a number of services, and, in Stratford, collating a smaller scale 'CHAIN database'.

²⁷Communities and Local Government (2011) Rough Sleeping England- Total Street Count and Estimates 2010

<<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/roughsleepingcount2010>> [accessed on 22nd November 2011]

The figures indicating the numbers of entrenched rough sleepers is calculated on the estimated minimum of rough sleepers identified in the area as being unwilling to engage in services, and not currently being able to be supported into accommodation - although this may be for a number of reasons. It should be emphasised that these are conservative estimates and are likely to be higher in Nuneaton & Bedworth, as there is little tracking of rough sleeping within these authorities. The number of entrenched rough sleepers is also higher in Sandwell. This is due to the number of migrant rough sleepers, who are not eligible for public benefits, are unable to be supported and therefore continue to live on the streets even after being identified.



Explanation of data:

The figures for each local authority are a best estimation based on the responses to questionnaires, and best estimations about the true picture of rough sleeping in each region. There was a range of estimated total rough sleepers for each area, which would depend on the specific client group worked with, the geography their client group slept rough in, and the time of year. Some providers have good records of the total number of people they have worked with in the last 6 months and who have been sleeping rough, but not on a night-by-night basis. The approximate variance column aims to mitigate this, providing the boundaries to the more extreme ends of the predictions. Some estimates are also more accurate than others due to the response rates for that particular area, and it should be stressed that this is an educated estimate based on providers feedback. A full summary for each local authority can be found in Appendix: 2.

7.3 Key observations

There is a noticeable difference between the 2010 count and the current level of rough sleeping in some areas. This highlights two possibilities which are not mutually exclusive:

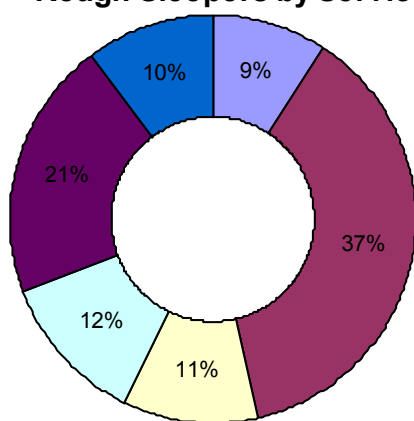
- That the 2010 count data was a poor representation of the true picture.
- The number of rough sleepers has nearly tripled in the last year.

7.4 Differences between providers

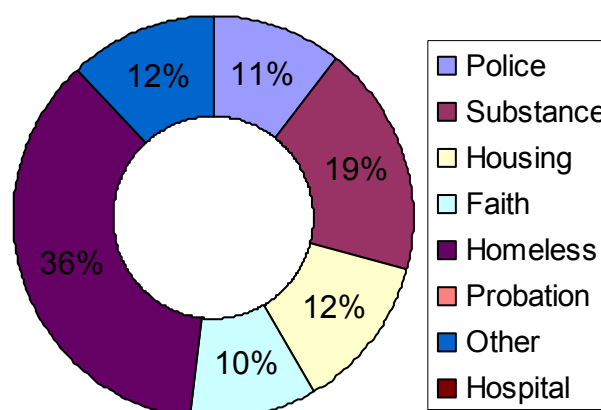
Most providers only work with a fraction of the total rough sleeper population for each area and their involvement is usually centred on a specific issue such as

alcohol addiction, or a local geography. Figures that were provided to the research team were generally formal records that had been collected over the last 6 months and were required for funding purposes. Smaller voluntary, faith or local providers understandably have less reason to focus on this, and as such records are more anecdotal. Whilst during this research there has been no evidence of providers inflating statistics - and this is partly substantiated through low prediction rates and estimates are confidential - this cannot be ruled out, as many are often keen to demonstrate the importance of their service. The reliability of people who self report must also be considered, as individuals are not identified through outreach workers finding people who sleep rough, there could be a minority who exaggerate circumstances to access services.

Total Interactions with Rough Sleepers by Service



Average numbers of rough sleepers seen by each service type



7.5 National Count Data

The national Count data has been widely discredited by the majority of the providers that we have spoken to, including local authorities who recognise its limitations. This is reflected in the statistics collected, which show the count to be roughly a third of the estimated 2011 figure, although in some areas the reality could be much higher. The research suggests that Nuneaton & Bedworth have much higher figures than initially recognised, whilst updated estimates from areas such as Sandwell and Stratford match with our research.

The official 2011 count is likely to be more representative than previous years in some local authorities, as all areas are required to provide an estimate. Between 1998 and 2009 only 7 counts took place in the entire WM6 region, which makes it problematic in assessing trends.

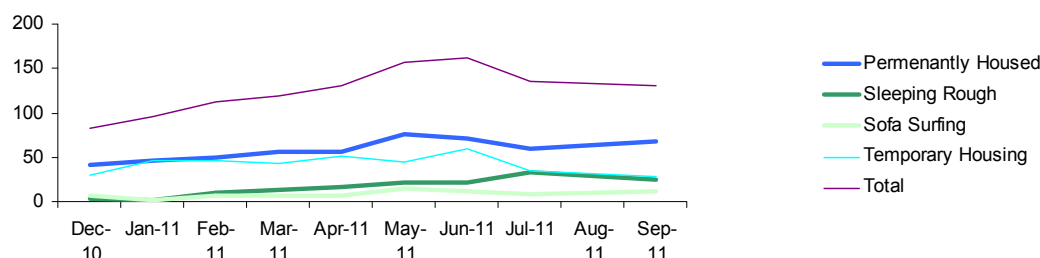
Without a CHAiN database similar to that in London, it is difficult to put a more accurate figure for rough sleepers in each area, although smaller scale versions in Stratford have been able to achieve similar results. A longitudinal study of numbers of interactions with rough sleepers gives a more accurate picture of how that area is affected over the year, as opposed to a best guess of numbers on any one night. This provides comparable data on age ethnicity and gender, and is more easily transferable across local authority boundaries.

7.6 Allowance for Seasonality

Many authorities were unable to put a figure to fluctuations in the number of rough sleepers they see at different times of year, largely as they were each dealing with low numbers generally. However, during the summer months, when the weather is much milder, numbers do increase. As both this research and the count data is over

those summer months, this is likely to mean that we are seeing slightly higher numbers from providers than during the winter.

One Providers analysis of service demand

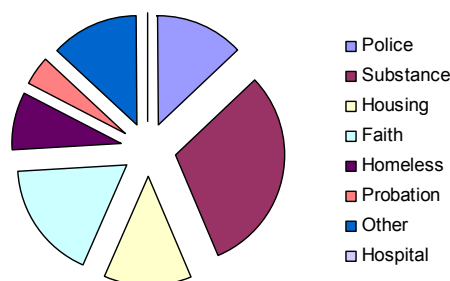


The graph above demonstrates how this looks for one service, which saw a noticeable spike during summer months (Note that the service doesn't run in the month of August, where this is expected to be the peak). There is a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) in each area, which acts to find emergency housing when the temperature for 3 consecutive nights is forecast to be below zero. This is vital in ensuring that people do not freeze to death when on the streets²⁸. Examples of good practice in Solihull show that under such circumstances emergency beds can be found and vulnerable people supported. Providers said that this was also a vital opportunity to engage with more entrenched rough sleepers, and greater sharing of capacity across the regions in such circumstances could stop preventable deaths.

7.7 Building on regional understanding

There were many providers that the research team were unfortunately unable to engage with for various reasons, and it might be the case that local authorities should concentrate efforts on building and maximising links. Most local authorities have a database of key contacts in their areas, but the difficulty in persuading people to engage highlights that these links could be stronger. The research suggests that each area can build upon this initial data from their attached summary documents (Appendix 2). The following are the two main groups which have been difficult to engage with:-

Number of Returned Questionnaires by Service Type



a) Health

The research team were keen to access various tiers of the NHS to assess their perception of the issue, and understand what impact their discharge procedures have for rough sleepers. However, we were not able to obtain this information. As

²⁸ Homeless Link (2011) *Severe Weather Emergency Protocol and Extended Cold Weather Provision* <http://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/SWEP%20and%20extended%20cold%20weather%20provision_with%20cover.pdf [accessed on 6th November 2011]

a result, we feel that this research could be furthered locally through working with health leads to ensure that people are not discharged back onto the streets. As a result of the government's proposed health reforms, there are various changes currently taking mooted within the NHS, and this includes proposals for GPs to have far greater influence over commissioning services.

7.8 Police and Probation

In most areas both the police and probation services were keen to engage, especially in Dudley and Sandwell. However, cases were often passed around various staff, indicating that there is rarely a lead within each for homelessness, and where there was, they were only loosely tied into wider rough sleeper discussions. We feel that both services would be willing to engage further with work into rough sleeping, and that they would be crucial to any solution. However, more time is needed in finding the right contact to pursue this issue.

A selection of Call logs from one Police force
"Caller security at [shopping centre]...they have had an IC3 female -appears to be 16 years old- sleeping on site, she has just been discovered by a cleaner. She has now made her way out onto the high street- caller believes this female may be a misper."
"Caller reporting an IC1 female has been sleeping in her car for the past week or so at the bottom of his lane."
"My children are playing and have found a man asleep- I have tried to wake him up- he is lying in the bushes- he is breathing- snoring- I cant wake him up."

7.9 The profile of the rough sleeper population.

The overwhelming majority of people who sleep rough in these areas are single white British males, with an average age of between 36 and 45. This is a very similar picture across the WM6, but there are some exceptions. This profile matches with expected national averages and also the typical perceptions of rough sleepers.

Nationally in the last decade there has been a reduction in the dominance of white male rough sleepers and a greater diversity in the population²⁹. This is not yet reflected in a more diverse range of services available across WM6.

7.11 Gender issues

There are a small number of women who sleep rough in all these areas, though many local authorities do not have a single service which would accept them. It follows that while there are no services on offer, there will be fewer women identified at all. One area which does have a women's hostel, Walsall, has had 4 people in the last 6 months alone. If this is broadly representative of other areas, it would equate to a larger group who are receiving no or little support.

Often women are more vulnerable when rough sleeping, and would have a higher eligibility as statutory homeless. With the exception of Walsall, most providers had just one or two women who were rough sleepers accessing their services. With a predominantly male culture in some services, this situation might be preventing some woman accessing services. Ensuring that services for women are promoted is important. Indeed, the most common reason for female homelessness is domestic violence. Lindsey's case study below shows the importance of effective referral

²⁹ Crisis, University of York (2010), *A Review of Single Homelessness in the UK 2000-2010*

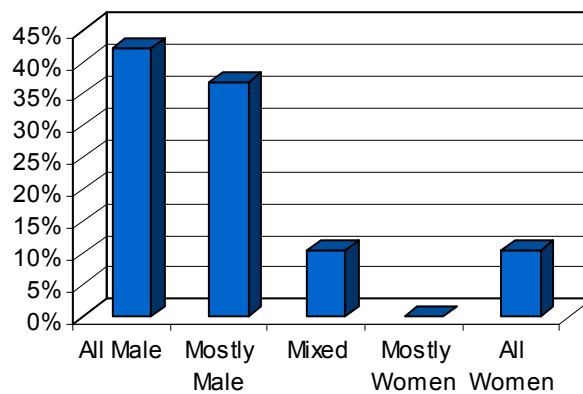
procedures being known and understood by all agencies who might come into contact with rough sleepers.

“I was hiding to keep myself safe. I had only £4 on me at the time. I do not want to go back to it. It was an eye-opener.”

Lindsey was suddenly made homeless one evening after experiencing domestic violence. She had no idea of what services were available to help her, and neither did the police that she spoke to. The next day she went to the local authority and they were able to find her a space in a women’s hostel - one of only a very few in the WM6 region. Of the support she received there, she said:

“I like the staff here...I’ve stayed here ever since.”

Services by Gender they work with

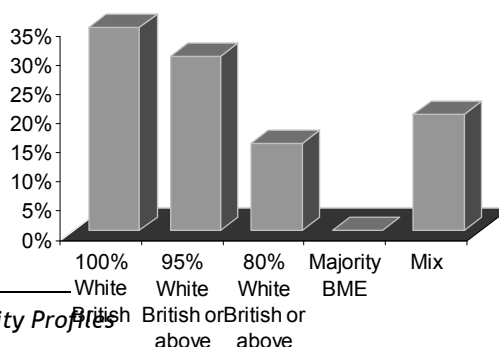


7.12 Ethnicity/Migration

Unlike gender, services did not exclude based on ethnicity where the individual was a British citizen. However, there are a growing number of rough sleepers from outside of Britain who are often not eligible for financial support from the state.

Services were asked what ethnicities they typically worked with, and the responses are on the table below. For nearly two thirds of services, the vast majority of people were white British (95% +), while 20% had a broad mix of ethnicities. The 2001 census suggests that 89% of the population of the West Midlands region are white British³⁰, which verifies the majority of rough sleepers fitting these criteria. However, Black Country local authorities and Nuneaton & Bedworth have a much higher percentage of rough sleepers from non-white backgrounds. All the providers who stated there was a more even mix, were from these areas.

Percentage of services whos client group are:



³⁰ Census 2001- Local Authority Profiles

Sandwell in particular has highlighted a significant number of people who are from central and eastern European (CCE) countries. The difficulties in supporting these people are examined in the table below. One service in particular is recording 16+ rough sleepers at any one time, with many being from CCE countries.

Other areas in the Black Country, such as Walsall and Dudley, also saw this as a rising need. With limited resources, providers work with those who they can give some support to and Birmingham homeless service centre have advised that they see a number of migrant rough sleepers from across such neighbouring authorities who have no recourse to public funding. This suggests that cross-boundary migration is certainly prevalent among non-British groups.

The main issues with supporting customers Central and Eastern European (CCE) Countries:

- There is a complicated legal process when dealing with rough sleepers from a CCE country, as they have the right to be admitted to the UK, and an initial right to reside for 3 months.
- People need to have been in employment for 12 months in order to be eligible for welfare and housing benefits- therefore people are not able to access hostel provision, or privately rented accommodation accepting HB payments. Though they *are* able to access NHS services.
- People are often not willing to go back to their country of origin, down to number of reasons such as: feeling embarrassed that they failed to success in UK, having relationship broke down in their country of origin, often having no support from friends or family in the country of origin, having debts or difficulties with obtaining employment in country of origin.
- In some instances there are communication barriers between migrants and services- there are few translation services available.
- In some cases substance misuse might make it difficult to communicate with migrant rough sleepers and prevent options available to them. Although this is not limited to customers from CEE countries as there is strong evidence of connection between homelessness and substance misuse.

The number of rough sleepers in other areas could be higher than stated, as there are no specific services in some local authorities. Migrants are less likely to have firm ties to one area and thus more likely to head to central metropolitan areas such as Birmingham, Coventry or Wolverhampton where there are some services available.

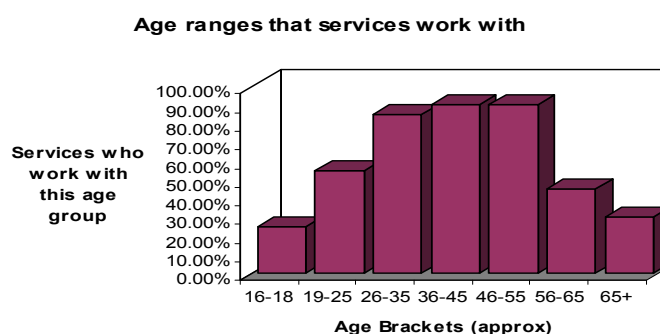
7.13 Age

Most services worked with a broad range of age groups and are not tailored to meet the needs of specific age groups. Ninety percent of services worked with people who were between the ages of 36 and 55. Only 25% of services regularly worked with 16 to 18 year olds, with many saying that there are a number of “sofa surfers” between 16 and 25 year olds.

There were generally fewer rough sleepers below 25, but of the former rough sleepers we spoke to, we found that they would generally rather “sofa surf” than rough sleep, and they had had increased opportunities to do so for a limited time with family and friends. Despite fewer services seeing younger people, this group was one of the major concerns for many providers and local authorities. With over

one million young people unemployed in Britain today, and rises in young people classed as not in education, employment or training (NEETs) there is a possible rise in young people becoming homeless in the coming months. As there are few housing options for young people, then many of these could also be forced to sleep rough.

The majority of services are still geared towards single males, as this is still the largest demographic within the rough sleeper population. Unsurprisingly, there were few people above mid-fifties that services were working with, as the average life expectancy for rough sleepers is just 42 years old³¹.



Anecdotally it was suggested that across many areas older rough sleepers *tend* to be those who are entrenched. This suggests that there ought to be a distinction between the services tailored to older rough sleepers compared to younger ones. Younger rough sleepers tended to have less knowledge of the system of accessing support, and rely on family and friends to “sofa surf.” However, older rough sleepers have tended to become homeless through the breakdown of such relationships, so did not have this limited ‘safety net’ available.

Jay had been rough sleeping for about 8-9 months when he was 17. He used to live with his Dad and Brother, but had to move out after arguments with his older brother. He said that they used to get into fist fights, and decided that it was best for his dad if he moved out.

After he moved out, he sofa surfed with a few friends, but ended up rough sleeping when he could stay no longer. He said that he would break into sheds, bus stations, or sleep on the back seat of the a bus, which is on a circular route. He described the experience as ‘Horrible’.

As he was under 18, he wasn’t applicable to receive Housing Benefit, or Job Seekers Allowance. He had to steal to get by.

7.14 Routes into rough sleeping:

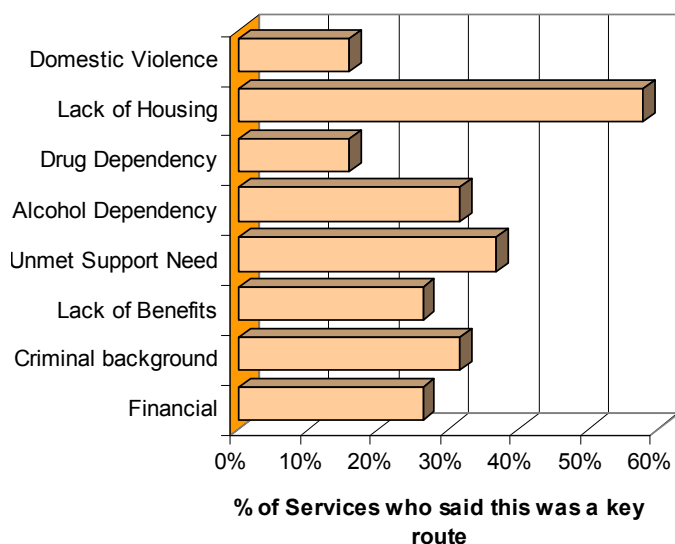
As well as understanding who rough sleepers are across WM6, the study has also posed the ‘why’ question to providers. Answers proved difficult, as it was hard to attain a reliable data analysis of each rough sleeper that services have worked with, as they were often not recorded. As a consequence, instead, this report charts the concerns and insights from the people who manage these services, and who have an expert local understanding of the specific circumstances that lead people to sleep rough in that area.

³¹Crisis (1996) *Still dying for a home*

The graph below shows the percentage of reasons for why people sleep rough cited by those who work with this group. Though themes were similar across the WM6, some local authorities having a different central route:

- 66% in Dudley cited financial/debts
- 100% said it was just a lack of housing in Nuneaton and Bedworth, with
- Solihull and Stratford also rated lack of housing high, especially for young people.
- Given Sandwell’s high migrant issues, ‘No recourse to public support’ was highest.
- In Walsall, Half said past convictions had an impact, and two thirds said it was a lack of housing.

Routes into Rough Sleeping



7.15 Economic Climate

There are no shortages of national indicators that show that the recent economic recession has had a lasting impact on the most vulnerable in our society. It almost went without saying for many providers, but has also had an influence over the drivers of rough sleeping now, and there are fears that it will increase over the coming months. Specifically, the poor economic climate can be seen to impact in two areas:-

- Removal of public funded services and fewer welfare benefits.
- Higher unemployment and eviction rates among private tenancies/mortgage repossessions.

As part of the national deficit reduction programme, there have already been - and will be more - deep cuts to Supporting People funded projects. In some areas, what little supported housing and substance abuse support exists, is now under threat of a reduction or removal of funding. Services need greater support in demonstrating the importance of the work they do. This was more of a concern for local authorities, who rely on specific projects, such as Stratford and Solihull. Other areas such as Walsall and Sandwell are more reliant on voluntary or faith groups, and as such have been less dependent on external funding.

There is a tightening of the criteria for accessing welfare benefits, with housing benefit being particularly relevant for many areas. The drop in 'shared room rate'³² will reduce the number of private properties available that homeless people will be able to afford. Given that a lack of affordable housing is already a significant concern, homelessness may rise considerably in areas where average rent is already high such as Stratford and Solihull. As the Government continues with these cuts, the welfare cap could place a further 20,000 people on the street - a 32% increase nationally³³.

Many areas, notably Dudley and Walsall have seen an increase in the number of people whose private landlord shorthold tenancies have ended. Whilst mortgage repossession have risen slightly - 3% in the last year (31) - the ending of tenancies where people have no planned move on is more difficult to quantify.

Paul in Dudley was recently evicted from a private rented flat; he had to sleep in his Van for 6 days. This was his first experience of sleeping rough. He had been suffering with Mental Health issues at the time, and had to stop working- whilst he had been behind on his rent once before, he was given his 2 months notice of repossession.

Housing Benefit couldn't make up the difference in rent. He said that he was shocked as he is 59 and always been in private accommodation- he'd never considered that he would ever be homeless.

"I knew the area so know where I could park and sleep without being disturbed." He felt safe as doors were locked, "-but [with rough sleeping] the first thing you lose is your dignity."

With many younger couples unable to obtain a mortgage to get on the property ladder, the rental market has become more competitive and private rents have risen. In addition, there has been a steep drop in new affordable properties being built during this period, especially by social landlords as funding has been cut by central government and new financial mechanisms are being introduced.

As a result, this has led to a static housing market, which makes a planned move on when someone's financial situation difficult. Mortgage repossessions should rise when the interest rate rises from its current 0.5% historic low.

As well as people being evicted for failing to pay private landlords and personal debts, there were a number of people, especially in Dudley but to a lesser degree in other Black Country authorities, who advised that people owing money to the local authority meant that they were not eligible for council housing. The individual circumstances will vary on a case by case basis, and may be an issue of perception, but it has been consistently flagged by providers as a barrier.

³² Homeless Link (2010) Policy briefing: Shared Room rate restriction extended to everyone under 35 years of age
<http://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/HomelessLinkBriefing_SharedRoomRate_Dec2010_0.pdf> [accessed 27 October 2011]

³³ BBC News (2011) Eric Pickles office warned number 10 on benefits cap plan
<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-14004551>> [accessed 1st November]

With the average rough sleeper costing £26,000³⁴, there is an opportunity for reassessing how rent arrears are tackled early to prevent homelessness.

Throughout this research, unemployment was not always a common route into rough sleeping, but it was a near universal feature of rough sleepers. The rise in rough sleeper numbers can be more accurately correlated with the welfare reforms over the last year and that have seen the poorest squeezed. That is not to undermine it as an issue, as identifying employment and training opportunities is the only way to end the cycle of homelessness.

When Natasha was 15 she ran away from home and slept rough for 3 weeks. 8 years later she was trapped in a violent relationship, and couldn't see a way out. Eventually she left, and was forced to sleep rough for a night, despite having severe injuries at the time.

"I had my own place, but I couldn't cope. Now I have a support team helping me and can work towards getting me a new place as things stabilise. I take things day by day."
She still fears her ex-partner who "Held me back. I was scared."

She got little support for her mental health and homeless issues, and felt there were gaps between services, and people needed better training.

7.16 Relationship breakdown

This is the most common reason for rough sleeping nationally and has been partially reflected in the research. Though rarely given as the direct cause for rough sleeping, some of the reasons for this breakdown are:

- Domestic Violence: Research has shown that during recession's couples argue more³⁵, and this is linked to a rise in domestic violence. There are few women's hostels, and even fewer providers and staff who know about them.
- Young people rough sleeping as a result of being thrown out by family members (See Sofa Surfing).
- The large number of single male rough sleepers: Often the reason for sleeping rough is that they have "...blown their last chance with family". This is likely to be due to a number of contributory factors, such as drink or drugs.

7.17 Unmet Support needs

A number of issues can be identified here:-

Alcohol and Substance abuse:

For many providers, alcohol and drugs are synonymous with rough sleeping. Substance abuse services had the highest response rate to the questionnaire, showing that the link is certainly there. It also shows that services are well aware that in order for individual to be successful in recovery appropriate housing needs

³⁴ New Economics Foundation (2008), *Work it out- Barriers to employment for homeless people*

³⁵ Relate (2009) A Quarter of Couples Argue more because of the recession
<<http://www.relate.org.uk/press/7/index.html>> [accessed 1st December 2011]

to be available prior or simultaneously to offering support with substance use. Where people have no stable accommodation, they live in a chaotic environment, unable to address the underlying addiction. There is a form of alcohol or substance abuse service in every area, but not all of them have a supported housing/floating support element. It is also crucial to mention that people increase their substance use while sleeping rough as it is one of coping mechanisms, helping them to survive, block out emotions or stay warm.

The longer that someone is sleeping on the street, the more dependent they can become on drugs and the people who supply it to them. This is a perpetual cycle that can drag people into becoming 'entrenched'. It also poses the most danger to people sleeping rough, as the obvious reduction of inhibitions and relationships with dangerous people to obtain drugs can put people at the greatest risk.

"Whilst Jay was rough sleeping he spent money on 'dry heroin, weed and pills'. The only time that people would find him, or he would have any trouble, is if he was looking for drugs. "That was when it got dangerous."

Alcohol was a more significant issue and it is services catering for alcohol abuse that are now most threatened due to budget cuts. They require specialist staff and training, in addition to services and advice that cannot be carried out by voluntary groups.

Mental Health:

Nationally, it is well established that rough sleepers are more likely to have a mental health issue³⁶. Responses to this research did not always specifically cite mental health issues as a reason for people sleeping rough, but of the people who we spoke to who have slept rough and the more in depth discussions with providers have shown that this is indeed an issue. This highlights the lack of knowledge for front line staff in knowing signs of mental health and being able to refer to services who can deal with this.

Indeed, we were unable to obtain a single response from a health service. This leaves an obvious hole in our understanding of what the NHS procedures and knowledge is of rough sleeping, but conversely demonstrates that this is not a priority issue for the NHS, and that there are weaker ties between them and other agencies who work with rough sleepers.

Sofa surfing:

Throughout this study, when providers were asked about rough sleepers in the area, one of the first responses was to inform us that "sofa surfers" were the much bigger problem. What statistical analysis there is, shows that this is indeed a larger issue, but anecdotally it has been suggested that it is at least four times higher in many areas.

As the focus of this report has been very clearly to define the picture of rough sleeping, it cannot accurately determine the full scale of "sofa surfing." Nationally there is little research into the issue either, as by its nature, being 'hidden homeless' means that people are usually not known to services! It was felt that "sofa surfers" are predominantly younger people, and intermittently sleep rough

³⁶ St Mungos (2011), *Battered, broken, bereft- Why People Still end up Sleeping Rough*

when friends can't offer space. This can fuel dangerous, dependent and negative relationships with "undesirable" friends, especially for young or female homeless people who are typically more vulnerable.

There is a current gap across the WM6 region in identifying people who could be "sofa surfing," as well as on working on preventative measures to signpost to services and warn of dangers and risks.

Prison or Probation services:

Whilst the Probation Service were not able to provide numbers of people working with them who sleep rough, Sandwell Probation were able to demonstrate that there are a high number of people who will be homeless when released. Their research indicates that 17.51% have a housing need related to their offending i.e. NFA or unsuitable accommodation.

Housing Need relating to Offending		
Tier 1 (Low risk)	14 offenders have a housing need	4.05%
Tier 2	107 offenders have a housing need	11.3%
Tier 3	177 offenders have a housing need	21.72%
Tier 4 (High Risk)	111 offenders have a housing need	48.54%

People being released from prison with no accommodation were a common theme throughout, and this data shows there is a correlation between the severity of the crime, and the likelihood of homelessness. This is especially concerning as there are significant budget cuts expected to such services, and in an area which is already currently overstretched.

Graham was recently released from prison, and the place he had been arranged to move to fell through at the last minute. He was not supported to find anywhere else, so was forced to sleep rough. When he was released from prison he slept at different parks and houses, sometimes 'drug dens' as there was nowhere else to go. Some hostels wouldn't accept him because of his criminal record

He said that he did not feel safe, and sometimes suicidal. Because there was no way to get a house, he told us that he was tempted to deliberately break the law so that he could go to prison as "...at least there was a roof there."

Migration:

As discussed earlier, this is particularly an issue in Sandwell and other Black Country local authorities. This is a concern and follows a national pattern of being concentrated in urban areas. Where there is no recourse to public funding, agencies can be aware of a problem but unable to solve it, and many are relying upon charities to support people.

Cross Boundary Migration:

Prior to this study taking place migration across local authority boundaries was identified by WMHF as a potential issue. The research team therefore discussed

this with local authority leads and a range of providers. Very few had evidence of rough sleepers moving between different authorities in order to access services, however, there was clear feedback that councils and providers refer away from their area. Broadly, Stratford, and Nuneaton & Bedworth will direct people to services in Coventry and the other authorities to Birmingham.

It was noted by many that 'reconnections policies', which only allow people to access services in an area that they can demonstrate ties to (such as a next of kin) are becoming tighter as resources are being cut within these areas. Some areas currently have informal arrangements in place to provide bed spaces for particularly vulnerable rough sleepers.

7.18 What works and what's missing from services in WM6?

The study asked providers and local authorities what they saw as good practice in their area, and many signs of this in action were observed or identified throughout the course of the research. Areas of concern were also noted, and have been compiled. The more specific concerns for each local authority are included in Appendix 2. Some feedback related to how services operate in a specific area, some on how the WM6 region operates strategically, and some were on the changes in demands as a result of national influences.

- **Local Knowledge:** Almost every local authority has a good knowledge of the services in their area. There is a designated lead, and work goes into assessing the number of rough sleepers in that area at least annually. This has largely been developed in the last 18 months and shows that the WM6 areas are in a much better position to begin forming and delivering local procedures and guidance.
- **Severe Weather Emergency Protocol:** Whilst all areas fulfil their statutory duty to provide support to rough sleepers during potentially fatal cold weather, some were more effective than others. An example of good practice with this is Solihull, who have conducted a comprehensive Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) which details clear responsibilities and capabilities of providers to give essential support during the extreme weather which rough sleepers are vulnerable to. This has been developed over a number of consultations with agencies and is well publicised.
- **Stratford's ProMPT questionnaires:** This was carried out recently to give the council comprehensive data on profiling characteristics and support needs for rough sleepers. It has identified 69 rough sleepers in the region in the last 12 months. This has been achieved through support from Homeless Link, and a strong multi-agency working group. It has been a concern levelled by providers, that some authorities underestimate the problem, and 'brush the issue under the carpet'. This project is a clear demonstration of how to engage with rough sleepers.
- **Rough sleeper Database:** Stratford have also developed a database that tracks all referrals that come through their services, and agencies that they work closely with. This can be seen as a smaller version of the earlier discussed CHAiN database in London, and is a model that can be adopted elsewhere.
- **Health and Homelessness working group:** This is a monthly network and best practice sharing event organised through a public health lead in Dudley. This provides an informal forum for discussions between groups who often work

independently. There are many working groups across the region, but few specifically involve health, which is an identified weakness in the region.

- Third Sector Involvement: Many areas, especially across the Black Country, have a well established network of small voluntary and faith groups who support people who are sleeping rough within their local communities. This is unpaid, and often without formal assistance to deliver this support. These services are often able to provide local flexibility to meet needs. An example is Centrepoint in Sandwell, who are regularly working with high numbers of rough sleepers three times a week, but rely on the goodwill of their congregation to fund it.

7.19 Service gaps to be developed:

- Reliance on Charities: Whilst it is a strength that there is a raft of front line organisations willing to carrying out these services, they are often reactive and not strategically linked to the needs of the locality. Areas would benefit from a strategic lead across WM6, and between local authority boundaries that have strong connections, and similar concerns - most notably the Black Country authorities. This would enable sharing of resources and mitigate any cross boundary issues that might be identified. As noted earlier, referral processes and identification of further mental health issues is not currently taking place. This is not through the fault of third sector organisations, but further support for these in training and putting in systems would be a cost effective way to support services for rough sleepers.
- There is a fundamental lack of Direct Access Hostels in these areas: Despite the good work of many people and providers, without the ability to find a roof to put people under, there is little chance of solving underlying issues. In each region there are often only a few beds as part of supported housing schemes, many of which will be at risk of Supporting People cuts. Some areas have arrangements with local housing providers, and are able to access more beds under the cold weather protocol. This shows that there is often a way of solving the problem once there is a statutory duty to do so. Funding the development of new hostels has obvious cost implications. Funding could be used to upgrade existing smaller projects that are tailored to specific need, or arrange better relationships with neighbouring authorities to better share capacity and relax local reconnection requirements.
- Outreach: As there are no rough sleeper outreach services in these areas, there are many people whom this study has not identified at all. The lack of a dedicated lead on the issue in some local authorities, and core services such as police, probation and health is often a problem. Because the issue is split over quite a wide geographic area, so each agency is only working with 2-3 rough sleepers over a long time. This means that it is not a major part of their role and services do not have the time or resources to dedicate to further support.
- People don't know what is out there: Rough sleepers that we spoke to - and indeed some local authorities - did not always have a strong knowledge of where people could be referred to, and what support was available. There are some good networking groups and strategies, as listed earlier, that show that this can be done. Development of concise marketing, and a regularly updated web portal would also allow for services or people who are about

to be made homeless to search for options in their local area and that fit their criteria.

- Sofa Surfers: Many people who are hidden homeless will often never be known to the authority at all. This is because the authority is not known to them! Simple solutions such as developing 'marketing' leaflets to potential rough sleepers containing numbers and useful information, highlighting notices in free papers and local supermarkets where people are likely to see them would increase awareness and an earlier request for help. However, there is limited merit to this if there is no support to access anyway.
- Specialist service provision: The majority of rough sleepers in the region are male and services tend to be orientated towards this. There are many areas (Solihull, Sandwell, Stratford, Nuneaton & Bedworth) that have no hostel provision for women and limited spaces for younger people. This does not encourage people who could be rough sleeping or sofa surfing to engage with services.
- Areas have had limited success in supporting their entrenched rough sleepers off the streets: Most have at least three that they are aware of, and the services on offer have not been appropriate to meet their needs. In many cases these are seen as 'lost causes' as there is little more that can currently be done. Given the high costs that are associated with rough sleepers for hospital discharges, police Intervention, crime and also welfare support over a number of years, there is very little currently being done to support these entrenched rough sleepers.

8. Conclusions

- Rough sleepers in the region are in the main white British males, and services tend to cater for this majority. This excludes what is seen as rising numbers of young people, women, and migrant rough sleepers.
- There is a universal lack of Direct Access Hostels, and other housing move on options, without which it is impossible to effectively tackle rough sleeping in the region.
- The current economic climate is now pushing more people into homelessness. This is particularly as result of welfare reform, support service cuts, and rising personal debt.
- There are issues that all authorities must address independently. It is often difficult to compare a densely urban population such as Sandwell, to a rural one such as Stratford, and this could mean that Black Country local authorities group more naturally.
- There are synergies that can be addressed though across WM6, especially in tackling the relatively low numbers of entrenched rough sleepers in each area where local authority's interventions have failed.
- There are not sufficient numbers of people in each authority sleeping rough at any one time to justify a separate outreach team in each area- especially as this number fluctuates. However, there is scope to having floating outreach that covers all WM6 areas, based from a central hub.
- There needs to be more effective use of the existing strategic links between these areas. These are key in sharing best practice and in exploring future funding opportunities that would not be achievable independently.

9. Recommendations

Introduction

As a result of the outcomes from this study, but bearing in mind the limited budget options that the WMHF have available, the following recommendations have been proposed to reduce the number of rough sleepers across WM6, and improve the level of service for those who do sleep rough.

The recommendations are independent of each other, and include a rough costing for their implementation. Figures are not intended to be conclusive, and may require deeper feasibility studies. Given the WMHF's brief to cover a number of areas in the West Midlands region, there could also be a case for including further areas to reduce costs and increase the scope of outcomes.

Developing Outreach		
Cost: High	Impact: High	Target group: All
<p>The research team have assessed how No Second Night Out (NSNO) could be applied within WM6. The conclusion is that it is relevant, but that a carbon copy is not able to be lifted and implemented. NSNO works on the principle that people need to be matched to services immediately once they find themselves sleeping rough. It does not provide beds, and where it has been a success in cities such as London, staff have been working with much larger numbers of rough sleepers on a daily basis, and there are more beds to refer to.</p> <p>This can be tailored best to the needs of rough sleepers in WM6 though funding a small outreach team to cover the whole region, and a NSNO structure including single phone number, referral base and strategic lead.</p> <p>An outreach team would be responsible for;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - initiating contact with Local Authorities and agencies working with individuals affected by homelessness, substance misuse, relationship breakdown etc - initiating contact with hospitals in the region to ensure that no one is discharged back to sleeping rough - Initiating contact with police and probation services to ensure that individuals are not released from prison back to the streets. <p>The Outreach Team would have to work closely with current accommodation and support providers in the area to establish clear referral route from the streets, into accommodation. As the team would be working across huge geographical area it would be necessary to create 'hot line' that people who are concerned about rough sleepers can use to report individuals who sleep rough.</p> <p>The research team estimate that this would require up to 3 support workers based in a central hub, and working on rotation to cover the region.</p>		

Personalisation for Entrenched Rough Sleepers		
Cost: High	Impact: Medium	Target group: Entrenched Rough Sleepers
<p>There is a clear need for more intense work to be carried out with the minimum 28 entrenched rough sleepers who have been identified across WM6. Creative approaches to this, such as that seen in the Broadway pilot discussed earlier could have a serious impact on reducing the number of Entrenched rough sleepers across the region. Though the WM6 group is larger in size to the Broadway pilot, and split across a more diverse geography, the same principles applied, a similar project could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 full time coordinators (£40,000 approx) to work 1-1 • with a £3000 personal budget available (£794 was actually spent on average, so approx £21,438) • 13-17 of the identified 27 entrenched RS could be supported into accommodation (£61,438- £3,614 per rough sleeper). <p>Using the estimated cost of £26000 (New Economics Foundation) on the local authority per entrenched rough sleeper, this could save £338,000- £442,000 long term.</p>		

Promotion and Prevention		
Cost: Medium	Impact: Low	Target group: Sofa Surfers and people at risk
<p>A consistent concern is that people and providers do not know what services they should refer people who are sleeping rough to. This could be tackled via two ways;</p> <p>Development of existing Black Country Homeless Link Web page (to represent entire WM). Due to information constantly changing, and the need for universal access, keeping a referral list online is the most accurate way to ensure that it is remembered and used across the region</p> <p>The portal for this is already set up, meaning that there is little extra expense; however this is currently very out of date, and would require work done on from a range of services to make it relevant. This would be open to people who are at risk of being homeless, or more likely used by services when they are able to refer someone else.</p> <p>Creative marketing for targeting Sofa Surfers and Young people who could be at risk of rough sleeping. Greater work with schools across the region, and informing them of the dangers and risks attached to rough sleeping or sofa surfing, as well as promoting services they should contact.</p> <p>Evidence gathered through the research also shows great need for multi agency meetings involving police and health authorities. It is crucial to raise awareness of services available to rough sleepers and try to share intelligence on rough sleepers population across the sector.</p>		

Strategic lead		
Cost: Low	Impact: Medium	Target group: All
<p>Part of this would be increasing WMHFs presence across the region as few providers are currently aware of its role. Whilst clearly work is already being done to promote the interests of WM6 regions, the level of investment required to develop enough hostel capacity across the region to meet need, is beyond the budget of the WMHF currently- greater lobbying for funding of bed spaces is the only means of generating sufficient investment in the future.</p> <p>More support to enable leads in different Local Authorities to discuss cross border opportunities, through wider panel and networking events also improve natural developments in service. Greater sharing of information and best practice would also be generated, and act as the link between typically smaller WM6 regions and the larger authorities in the region.</p>		

Appendix 1

Interviews with Former Rough Sleepers

Qualitative Interviews Concerning Rough Sleeping

Venue:

Interview 1-2: a women's hostel situated in Walsall
3-8: a direct access hostel situated in Dudley

Date: 1-2: 6th October 2011, Danny Booth, Mel West
3-8: 5th October 2011, Danny Booth, Matthew Kemp

Number of in-depth Interviews: 8

(all names have been changed to protect anonymity)

Interview:1

Natasha

There were two occasions when N was rough sleeping. The first time was when N was 15 and had gone into care (she lived in a care home). She slept rough for 3 weeks in Walsall. At the time she had been close to suicidal and on one occasion nearly jumped off a bridge.

N is now 23 years old and had a more recent experience of rough sleeping. This was for just one night in Blakenhall. She was out until five in the morning. She was with "a mate" who stayed with her.

She described the recent occasion as, "It was horrible. It was raining, I was cold, I had broken legs and I was in a lot of pain." She added: "I flagged a police car down and they took me away. They dropped me off at a block of flats and left me there to call an ambulance, I was there until about 5 when one arrived."

The first occasion was longer. It, "was cold and I don't know how I done it." N said that on that first occasion, she lived in sheds, fields and wherever. Her overriding memory was how cold it was.

She was found by Social Services after the three weeks - "They tracked me down and put me in a hostel until I was 16. I was then moved to Sandwell House, which is run by Caldmore."

There had been an argument with her boyfriend, and she had had a history of such relationships- she spoke of how she had given up her children for adoption as a result of this, which added to her feeling trapped in the situation, and her

continuing mental health issues. It was partially her initial experience of rough sleeping that had kept her trapped in this relationship as she didn't know where else she could go.

During the time she was sleeping rough - "People tried to contact me but I avoided them. I didn't want to go back into a care home. I did not sleep well and I was in a daze."

When asked what could have been done - "There is a gap in mental health. Avon House do not have specialist staff. The domestic violence (I experienced) triggered the mental health problem. They can't deal with the mental health (issues) that results."

Of the recent occasion: "I had my own place, but I couldn't cope. Now I have a support team helping me and can work towards getting me a new place as things stabilise. I take things day by day.

On those who helped her during her experience - "The bloke at the Civic (Walsall Civic Centre) was brilliant." She went on to say that she was given a lot of help and advice on options. N said that she wanted to be close to her friends in Walsall, and would have been isolated and could have slipped back into old patterns, and not attended Health care appointments were she not nearby.

Future Issues: "I wanted to stay in Walsall due to my support worker and the appointments I now have for treatment (ie, broken legs), etc" She added that she still fears her ex-partner who "Held me back. I was scared."

N confirmed that she found the second experience of rough sleeping easier as she was more experienced. She knew what to expect, but also that she really did not want to be there- it was a last alternative and a low point.

Interview 2

Lyndsey

L had only one night of rough sleeping, which had been about 4 months ago.

She had been living with family, but was drinking. They threw her out one afternoon with her bags. It was completely unexpected for L, and it had never crossed her mind that she would have to sleep rough one day.

L said that in response she went to the town centre and approached the police. They gave her names of hostels in Birmingham, and some phone numbers- they then let her use their phone to call them. None of these had any vacancies, and whilst the Police were polite, they said that they couldn't help further.

L did not know where to go, or what to do, so she walked around Walsall to keep warm. After a taxi driver spotted her at two different places, he picked her up and took her to the local Sainsbury's and bought her a sandwich and a hot drink and then left her in the car park there. She decided to hide in the car park. She said that she didn't sleep but stayed awake all night (this was summer time). She had been walking for some time now, and wanted to rest her legs. She said: "I had

never experienced this before. I was very tired the next morning.”

The next morning she washed in a public toilet, and attended a course that she was booked onto, to try and maintain some normality. After this she went to the (Walsall) Civic Centre, “where the council gave me this place’s (the hostel) number. There was a room. They were good and helpful.” She added: “I like the staff here. I have stayed here ever since.”

L said that she had had no immediate plans on what to do next after the rough sleeping experience, other than to stop drinking, and keep going to the doctors). She has attended a number of training course (eg: Food hygiene, first aid, etc) and she is currently being trained to complete questionnaires for residents living in properties that are being upgraded.

When asked what could be done for people who experience what she did:-
“The police should have more information. They were helpful, but did not have any information. They did not hold a list of hostels who could (accommodate) me.”

On looking back on the experience: “I was hiding to keep myself safe. I had only £4 on me at the time. I do not want to go back to it. It was an eye-opener. I had to get that low to get better.”

Towards the close of the interview L said that she had been experiencing DV and that this had triggered the drinking. This in turn led to the one night rough sleeping.

Looking forward: “I would now like to volunteer and get more experience of other things. I want to do more positive things.”

Interview 3

Mike

M was rough sleeping for about 2 months about 3 years ago, this was for a constant period of time.

This was because of a relationship breakdown, and due to a previous breakdown with the rest of his family, he had nowhere else to go. He didn’t know that there were homeless hostels available, so he was left to go onto the street.

He stayed around the Cradley Heath Area, around Tesco and Somerfield area. This was because he had some friends and family in the local area, who were able to give him some financial support. Sometimes he had to go ‘on the rob’ to get food to survive, there was a chip shop who gave him free left over food after 11pm.

M told us that he never felt safe there, even though where he stayed was pretty quiet. There were a few other people there, and some had squats that they stayed in during the winter. All he had was ‘the clothes on his back’.

M went from Highland Road- Dudley Council- Gibbs Road. Need local connections to live there, and because his mum and nan lived nearby, he was able to be here. Whilst he was rough sleeping, he didn’t know about any other services- “if I knew what I know now

then, I wouldn't have been in that situation."

When he was rough sleeping, the only people that approached him were the police who "offered me a cell" - they weren't informed about the services available, and could have intervened to stop him sleeping rough.

M suggested that there needs to be more advertising that says "look, this is what's out there" in places that people would be likely to see when rough sleeping, and also generally- ie job centre, Housing associations, supermarkets and newsagents. He said that it was frustrating being passed from one agency to the next- they should all know about each other.

But, he said that some people were just "used to the way of life" and wouldn't have wanted to leave.

Interview 4

Brendan

B was sleeping rough for 5 or 6 months recently. Over this time he had spent a few nights with some friends on and off, but didn't like being a burden to them. He'd had experience of Rough Sleeping over the last 30 years.

He said that the experience was "very tough" and he would find a corner somewhere to try and get about 3-4 hours sleep a night. He had stayed in some B and B type places before around the Bearwood and Harborne area, but said that they were so expensive that he couldn't afford it. He had been sleeping underneath walkways, and kept a sleeping bag with him "I'd just find a quiet bit in the bushes, and try and stay where nobody could see me". He stayed in these places for a little while at a time, until his face "started getting recognised" where people would ring the police or challenge him. He said that the police were "no trouble" but they didn't help him find accommodation, just move him onto someplace else.

He told us that "I used to be a drinker, but just stopped 8 years ago" however he does still take heroin and painkillers after a serious Car Accident to block out the pain. He says that he "doesn't inject, and I'm basically off that now anyway"

B told us that he had no knowledge of any Hostels or services which he could access until a member of staff at 'Fireside' took him to one side and told him about Gibbs Road. It was a place where he could go get some food, clean clothes, and have a shave (which was something very important to him). When he moved he was able to have food, a bed and a bath.

B felt angry with how he perceived the allocations procedure and policy to work, and felt that he (a white British national) was being discriminated against. It was a topic which he returned to several times. He also felt that the way hostels charge is unfair, and they take too much of the benefit away, not leaving room to live on. He said that this forces people into criminality as "they keep getting less and less money".

He said that he would have to be involved in criminal activity to be able to afford the £200 deposit to move on to a bedsit.

Graham
Interview 5

G went to prison recently, and the place he had been arranged to move to fell through at the last minute. He was not supported to find anywhere else, so was forced to sleep rough.

G used to live in Wolverhampton with his wife and family, had a owned his own home, and ran his own business. When he divorced from his wife his 'life fell apart' and he ended up going to prison- at the time he had various drug and alcohol problems.

When he was released from prison he slept at different parks and houses, sometimes 'drug dens' as there was nowhere else to go. Some hostels wouldn't accept him because of his criminal record, but his friend and sister managed to get him a place at Gibbs road. Because he owes the council money in rent arrears, he cant get back on the council house register.

He said that he wanted to get a job, and that that was the key to getting his life back- but he's not ready, and needs the support to do this.

He said that he did not feel safe, and sometimes suicidal.

He said that there was an issue with paying peoples Housing Benefits directly to them, and said that this was just offering temptation to spend it, which creates a vicious circle. If this went straight to the landlord then they wouldn't be tempted to take it.

Because there was no way to get a house, he told us that he was tempted to deliberately break the law so that he could go to prison- as there was at least a roof there.

Before he went to prison, he had slept rough a couple of times, but not for this long. He said that the only other service he knew of was P3 in Wolverhampton, but they wouldn't let him in.

Jay- 21
Interview 6

J had been rough sleeping for about 8-9 months when he was 16-17. He used to live with his Dad and Brother in Birmingham, but had to move out after arguments with his older brother. He said that they used to get into fist fights, and decided that it was best for his dad if he moved out.

After he moved out, he sofa surfed with a few friends near Cradley/Merry Hill, until rough sleeping when he could stay no longer. He said that he would break into sheds, bus stations, or sleep on the back seat of the 222 bus, which is on a circular route around Dudley. He described the experience as 'Horrible'.

In this time he travelled around to some friends in Digbeth and Handsworth.

As he was under 18, he wasn't applicable to receive Housing Benefit, or Job Seekers Allowance. He got some money from his Dad, but had to steal to get by. Whilst he was rough sleeping he spent money on 'dry heroin, weed and pills'.

He said that "I slept in dirt, where you can catch diseases...it was rough." The only time that people would find him, or he would have any trouble, is if he was looking for drugs.

He didn't know what services he could access, and only recently heard about the Salvation Army and different shelters who he now thinks would have been able to help him. He said that the Police just used to move you on, and not give any advice or help.

He said that there should be more places like this, and that the people, staff and residents have been good. He said that the support workers have helped him, but he wasn't ready for that intervention initially- 'people have to realise it for themselves'.

There could be more advertising of services in places where rough sleepers are likely to see it- such as in free papers like the Metro, and on radio/TVs where friends will hear about it. Also, people like the Police should do their job better to help advise people.

Paul

Interview 7

P was evicted from a private rented flat, he had to sleep rough in his Van for 6 days a few months ago. This was his first experience of sleeping rough. He told us that for medical reasons (Mental Health) he had to stop working, and whilst he had been behind on his rent before, he was given his 2 months notice of repossession "as is the right of the Landlord."

His house was in Wordsley, and had the previous arrears because of illness to his mother and father. His HB couldn't make up the difference in rent. When first notified of landlord repossession order went to citizens advice. Was advised to ignore letter as "it was better to wait until bailiff made me homeless than voluntarily moving out and making myself homeless. This way I would be given priority on the housing list."

However this was not the case, and there was no property for him. [after 6 days] "when they offered me a room in Lye or Birmingham "is that all they can offer?" He said that he was shocked as he is 59 and always been in private accommodation- he'd never thought about being homeless.

For these 6 days he slept in his commercial vehicle- "I knew the area so know where I could park and sleep without being disturbed." He said that he felt safe as doors were locked, but [with rough sleeping] "-the first thing you lose is your dignity."

He said that he was not sure what I would of done if wasn't housed at Gibbs. There

are loads of void properties around here (Birmingham)- if it was in a fit condition I could rent a room.

When evicted the bailiff was very formal was interested in nothing more than getting keys back. Didn't offer advice. The landlord didn't care - wasn't offered any advice or sympathy from landlord. This could have been a step to signpost him on.

Stuart

Interview 8

SB slept rough for 2 months about a year ago. Before sleeping rough he had lived with a friend, but they had a 'bust up' so he had to leave. Before sleeping rough he had been sofa surfing with some other friends for a while, but felt like he was putting on his friends.

When he was sleeping rough, it was mostly round the 'Cradley Heath' area, sleeping in doorways, stairways and in blocks of flats- anywhere that "I could get my head down." When it was warmer he slept in the open air, but this wasn't as often.

When he left his home, he had no supplies or equipment. He tried to go back there later, but the landlord had put the house up for sale, so he had no choice- but he would rather have a home.

He said that his friends were unhappy with him sleeping rough, but he didn't like to get in peoples way, and there was no alternative.

He said that in this time, he didn't meet or know any other rough sleepers. There was no advice or help from any other agencies, and he didn't know of any services to contact. He eventually self referred to Gibbs Road as a 'last resort', but hasn't had much support since he started there- he had only just met his support worker.

He said that the worst thing about sleeping rough was the Cold mornings- he was rough sleeping in Winter. He felt safe, as no one would approach you.

It's a long process to get housed or put on a waiting list. There are no shelters in the area to go to, and as he cant afford a place, he was stuck.

male- though there is a Womens Hostel in the area who have seen a number of rough sleepers recently. They are more likely to be British, but there are a small but growing number of migrant rough sleepers in the area. Very little is known about how entrenched these are, and people are not tracked through a system.

Typical routes again are Sofa Surfing, with relationship breakdown being a repeated reason. There are also a high number of rent issues, where people owing the council money are not able to get support- this was apparent in Walsall in more areas than most. Effects of the recession have exasperated this. Alcohol dependency is high, with every agency citing it as the main addiction.

Providers say that there needs to be emergency accommodation, and greater financial support to people who are homeless (sofa surfers) as just too many people slip through the net- especially with no outreach. Walsall's estimate is accurate, but there is little knowledge of how many of these people are entrenched- and in need of continuous support.

Dudley	2010 count):	4	LA's Estimation:	4
			Local Homeless group:	2
			Local Faith Group:	3
			Local Faith Group:	10
			(Stourbridge)	
			Police :	3
			Direct Access Hostel	20*
			(since 1/04/2011)	
			Local Food delivery:	21
			34 sofa surfing	
			(Last 6 months. Including Walsall)	
Entrenched 3+	Statutory Homeless Households: 159, 9.3% (09-10)			

Rough sleepers are typically in their 20-50s, mostly male, with drug dependency issues, with a similar make up of ethnicities to Walsall.

There are a number of smaller groups in Dudley, much like Walsall who are providing local support to people. The police and public health are involved in recognising rough sleepers, and referring to what services there are. There is a more fragmented geography in Dudley however, with groups in Lye, Stourbridge and Dudley Town working quite independently.

Figures are likely to be higher than suggested, and there are a number of entrenched rough sleepers- 3 at the minimum. Dudley's direct access hostel has had 20 former rough sleepers in the last 6 months alone. Dudley have had some success in working with entrenched rough sleepers, delivering multi agency intensive support.

Typical routes in are through financial exclusion, probation or crime, sofa surfing, and alcohol. Interviews with rough sleepers showed that when people do rough sleep, they do not get offered support, and agencies do not refer well. Financial causes were higher in Dudley than other areas.

There are much larger numbers of sofa surfers in the area, and there is a demand from services and the local authority to develop services which support these people who are at risk of becoming rough sleepers- as well as through emergency accommodation already provided by the Direct Access Hostel.

Stratford	2010 count: 8	LA Estimation: 10
Entrenched 3-5	<p>Recent Work conducted by Stratford has shown that there have been 80 people sleeping rough in the last 12 months.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Homelessness support (in last 6 months): 32 Alcohol Service: 5 Local Provider: 6 Probation: 1</p> <p>Statutory Homeless Households: 60, 41% off applications made (09-10)</p>	
<p>Stratford have a detailed understanding of their rough sleeper population through carrying out PrOMPT questionnaires many people who have been known to be sleeping rough. All information from contact with rough sleepers is logged on a database, which allows for analysis and understanding of the numbers and needs of rough sleepers in their area. There is a working group in place, who meet regularly and are best utilising funding they have, which includes a former rough sleeper. Rough sleepers in the area are White, the vast majority are male, and across a range of ages- typically younger homeless people are sofa surfing, with 3-5 older entrenched rough sleepers.</p> <p>Information collated through Stratford's Rough Sleeper interactions database: <i>"Out of 69 rough sleepers in last 12 months where support needs known, we estimate that from information we have 37% had alcohol issues, 31% mental health issues, 20% offending, 23% drug issues. Other support needs included learning difficulties, domestic abuse, care leaver, elderly, no social skills, debts, young and associated with being entrenched rough sleepers."</i></p> <p>The routes into rough sleeping are through the lack of affordable housing available in the area, which pushes people to sofa surf, and subsequently sleep rough. The most urgent concern recognised is with vulnerable 16-24 year olds- and single homeless people.</p> <p>Stratford have a few supported housing beds in place, but these are under threat of removal of funding. With no hostel provision nearby, people are often referred to Coventry- there are fears also that reconnections policies in the future will restrict people further, especially as Stratford typically have a transient population due to their tourist focused economy. Better strategic links with neighbouring areas would allow sharing of resources, rather than high capital investment.</p>		

Sandwell	2010 count: 2	LA Estimate: 20
	<p style="text-align: right;">Small local Hostel: 2 (since 1/04/2011) Local Faith group: 16 (approx at any one time)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Probation: 17.5% of offenders have a housing need relating to offending- <i>409 people with NFA</i></p>	

16 Entrenched	Statutory Homeless Households: 455, 71.7% (09-10)
<p>Sandwell have to most marked contrast where there are estimations of 16 rough sleepers- most of which are migrant. Whilst this is a small issue in most LA's, it is the major issue in Sandwell, and there is a reliance on a local charity to provide some support to these people who have no recourse to funding. There have been reports of families with young children sleeping rough- this is only expected to rise. The local charity who work with these people are planning to develop a more formal strategy with a local Housing Association to increase the capacity and service- it is currently run through contributions from congregations and volunteers.</p> <p>Whilst there is a strategy in place being ran by the LA, there were few agencies willing to engage with the research, so findings are most likely over representing the thoughts and concerns of Centrepont, the Local Authority and the Probation service.</p> <p>There is also a high number of ex offenders in the area, with funding possibly being removed from a successful project ran by probation services. Other routes in are similar to other Black Country areas, and the issue has been intensified as a result of the wider economic climate with a number of shorthold tenancies ending, and mortgage repossessions on the rise. The nature of the geography means that many rough sleepers sleep in derelict buildings. Proximity to Birmingham also means that cross border migration is an issue.</p> <p>With no availability of direct access hostels or overnight shelters agencies feel that they are limited in how they can refer people on.</p>	

Nuneaton & Bedworth	2010 count): 2	LA estimate: 2
	Supported Housing provider: 6 Local Support provider: 7 approx Police: 1 Local Homeless service: 21 (since April) (5/6 at any one time)	
Entrenched: 1 known	Statutory Homeless Households: 58, 45.7% (09-10)	
<p>Rough sleepers are of all ages, and the vast majority are White British Males- there was only one person who did not fit this, but that could be because there is no outreach, services are not geared towards this, and there was less information available.</p> <p>However, it is clear that there are far more people sleeping rough in the area than the councils estimates, and in reality people are often referred outside of the area to Coventry as there is such little provision for non priority homeless- it is feared that this is not an issue taken seriously by the Local Authority.</p> <p>Routes in are typically through drug and alcohol, there has been a rise in numbers of mortgage repossessions and there is also a high number of mental health issues. There is a loose referral process within the area, but this is more informal, and there is a focus from the Local Authority on targeting only the 'hidden homeless'. Whilst this is an issue that needs to be addressed, there needs to be a plan in place for actual rough sleeper too, and support from providers.</p>		

With thanks to:

- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
 - Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
 - Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
 - Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
 - Stratford-on-Avon District Council
 - Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
-
- Black Country Foodbank
 - Brierley Hill Project
 - Centrepoint
 - Chapter 1
 - Citizens Advice Bureau
 - Cyrenians
 - Dudley Public Health
 - Fry Housing
 - Further Outlook Ministry
 - Hi and Lows
 - Home Group
 - Lantern House
 - Midland Heart Substance Misuse Floating Support Team
 - Safer Solihull Partnership
 - Salvation Army
 - Sandwell Probation
 - Stonham Housing
 - Stratforward
 - Swanswell
 - The Glebe Centre
 - Warwickshire Police
 - Welcome
 - West Midlands Police

