

South East London PrOMPT analysis report January 2011

1. Introduction to PrOMPT

1.1 PrOMPT is a toolkit developed by Homeless Link in partnership with DCLG. The toolkit allows Local Authorities and their partners to build a profile of rough sleeping in their area. Working with partner agencies a number of rough sleepers are interviewed to map their routes into rough sleeping, finding out about their experiences throughout. It also tracks the agencies and services they came into contact with whilst being street homeless.

1.2 Between September and November 2010, a PrOMPT audit was undertaken in the South East London sub-region. This report presents the analysis of the data from the 5 South East London boroughs namely Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich, Lewisham and Southwark. Each Local Authority working with partners, assigned staff, former service users and also outreach workers to undertake the interviews using the PrOMPT tool.

1.3 Tackling the flow of rough sleepers on to the streets is a priority in No One Left Outⁱ, DCLG's strategy to end rough sleeping by 2012. In London, when an individual is contacted by outreach teams or other services working with rough sleepers, their details are entered onto a database known as 'CHAIN'ⁱⁱ. Chain figures track the level of street homeless activity in each borough. (Southwark and Lewisham are two of the fourteen London boroughs with the highest reporting of rough sleepers in 2010). The SELHP PrOMPT planning group (consisting of Local Authority rough sleeping leads and partner agencies) agreed to use the Chain figures for 09/10 as a guide to the number of PrOMPT interviews to be undertaken by each borough.

Local Authority	2009/10 chain figures	Projected number of interviews 50% of chain figure (minimum 4)	Actual PrOMPT Interviews undertaken	Actual PrOMPT Interviews Undertaken for CEE clients
Lewisham	46	23	24	
Greenwich	1	4	8	
Bexley	13	7	7	
Bromley	16	8	15	
Southwark	250	125	39	19

Figure 1 - PrOMPT interviews

2. Summary of the key findings

This report presents the findings for the sub-region and considers the factors that led to individuals sleeping rough. The summary of key findings from the responses of 93 interviewees in South East London is as follows:

- Of the 93 respondents 80% were male and 18% female. The most common age band for both males and females was 36 – 45 years. 70% of respondents were White or White other and a further 25% were either of Black African or Black Caribbean ethnicity.
- According to CHAIN dataⁱⁱⁱ 2009/10 of the 3673 rough sleepers reported in London 38% had been in prison at some point, 11% in care and 5% in the armed forces. Albeit a smaller sample this was not mirrored in the profile of rough sleepers interviewed in the South East London sub-region. 11% percent of respondents lost their accommodation due to imprisonment however there was no evidence of people leaving armed forces within the profile and only one person identified as a care leaver. There is evidence that some ex-offenders were able to access resettlement services at the latter stages of their journey.

- 39% of respondents had lost their last settled accommodation due to relationship breakdown. 25% of this group indicated that violence was the reason for the breakdown and 23% advised it was due to their drug/alcohol use. 42% of the individuals becoming homeless due to their drug use indicated they accessed support services prior to leaving their settled accommodation but none approached Local Authority housing departments. This highlights the role and responsibility of agencies to take a holistic approach to intervention that takes into consideration the prevention of homelessness.
- Where individuals became unemployed or were employed on temporary contracts, they found maintaining a tenancy challenging as they could not pay the rent consistently. Individuals indicated that they were given very little guidance or time period to adjust when HB entitlement changes occurred and this led to the loss of accommodation. This identifies the potential for developing targeted information and signposting for people identified at risk of homelessness by departments such as Job Centre Plus, Housing Benefit etc.
- 20% of respondents advised that 'nothing' could have prevented them from losing their accommodation (some of these individuals had received a custodial sentence). 25% of respondents advised they approached their local housing departments before leaving their settled accommodation. 9% of respondents made a further approach after their initial visit. Although 25% of individuals had approached the LA housing departments this did not prevent these individuals becoming homeless. This indicates that early intervention is required to stem the flow of rough sleepers onto the street. Far more resources are required to support individuals to find accommodation before they begin to sleep rough. Feedback suggests they become harder to engage after long periods of rough sleeping and support/re-housing at this point can be more costly.
- A number of individuals (20%) were involved in drug and alcohol misuse and some spoke about their lifestyle as a reason for being entrenched in rough sleeping. Recognition that access to accommodation to preventing rough sleeping is vital for some people but not always wanted by others especially when challenged by chaotic lifestyles.
- Approx 54% of individuals chose not to access or engage with any services during the initial stages of their rough sleeping. The analysis indicates that outreach and resettlement services were key to engaging with and assisting rough sleepers into accommodation. Respondents indicated they needed this support to access accommodation and for most this made the biggest difference to ending their rough sleeping.
- Feedback from individuals advised they did not know where to get assistance or advice to help them with their problems. Respondents also indicated that they needed help with different issues that arose for them and would have liked to access services such as family mediation and support during relationship breakdown. This suggests that some individuals did not have the knowledge, access to information/services which provide such advice and assistance. With the predominant male rough sleeping population, an opportunity exists to increase publicity in places frequently visited by men. E.g. Public toilets, pubs, betting shops, cafes and corner shops.
- There was inward migration as 48% of respondents sleeping rough were from outside of the sub-region. 55% of these respondents advised there was no particular reason why they had moved to the area. Although 14% said they moved into the sub-region as they had family/friends in the area. This information also allows us to look at the process for reconnecting individuals to their home boroughs/areas.
- 20% of respondents indicated they did not access any accommodation during their overall period of rough sleeping. However this audit highlighted that 86% of individuals experienced repeated instances of rough sleeping after they had lost their settled accommodation. 24% of individuals were able to access emergency accommodation (direct access hostel or night shelters) or made informal arrangements with family and friends, squats etc however these offered short term respite, when longer term accommodation was required to provide stability.

- 8% of individuals advised that had been sleeping rough for between 1 to 4 weeks but a further 16% advised they had been sleeping rough for 10 years or more. 63% of respondents had been sleeping rough for one year or more. One individual advised that he had been sleeping rough for 36 years. 80% of the individuals interviewed have now accessed accommodation.

3. Characteristics of respondents

3.1 The data looks at the experiences of 93 individuals interviewed, who are people who are currently street homeless or have slept rough in South East London within the last year or so. 18% of those surveyed were female, 80% male and for 2% no answer was provided. Whilst their ages spanned between 18 and 65 years, the most common age band was 36-45.

Figure 2 - Age Profile

Age	Count	Percentage
18-25	5	5.38%
26-35	20	21.51%
36-45	33	35.48%
46-55	27	29.03%
56-65	6	6.45%
No answer	2	2.15%

3.2 PrOMPT asks for data on the country of origin and ethnicity of each individual. The profile shows that 69% of respondents were either White British or White other and that a further 25% were Black African or Black Caribbean. There was no representation from anyone of Chinese origin, and only one person from an Asian origin.

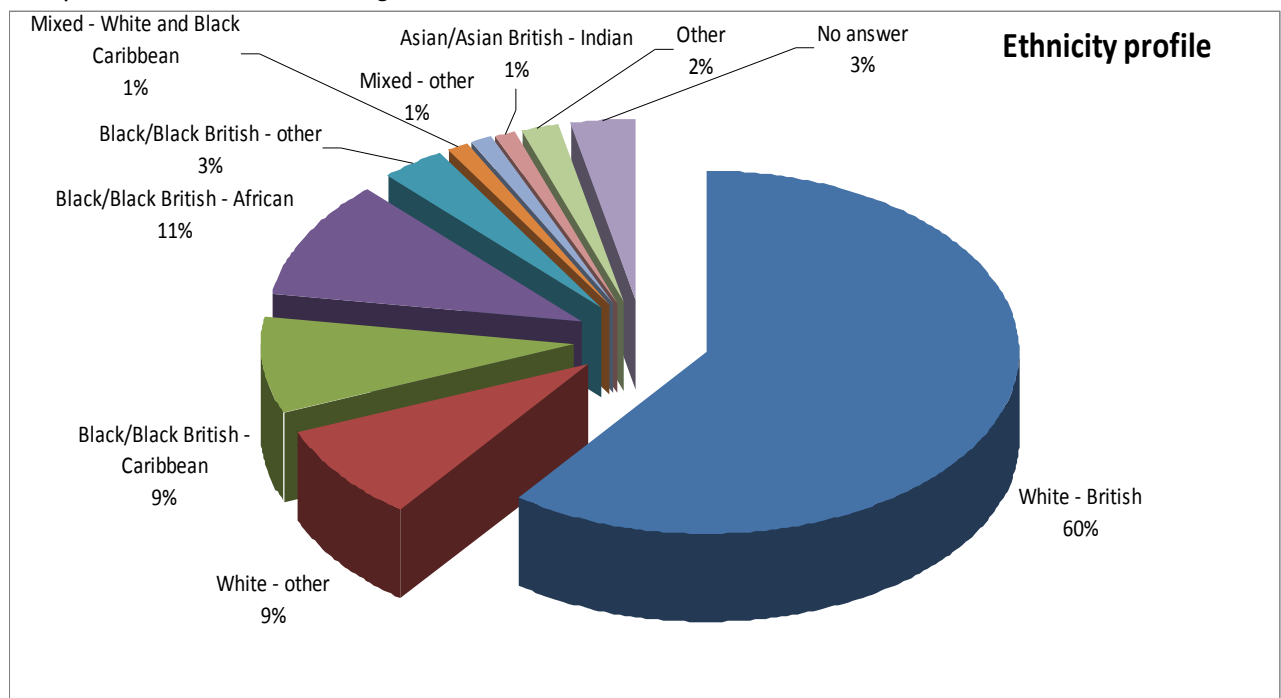


Figure 3 - Ethnicity Profile

3.3 There is a higher level of Central and Eastern European (CEE) Nationals rough sleeping in the Borough of Southwark. Therefore an additional PrOMPT survey was developed and undertaken for this specific group in Southwark only. A total of 21 surveys were undertaken and evaluated. A copy of the report is available upon request. Within the main survey 8 respondents identified themselves as 'White Other' which would suggest that CEE's are represented in the rough sleeping population of the other four boroughs.

3.4 The most common country of origin is the United Kingdom at 70 records (72%). There are a number of other countries recorded showing the diverse range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. As well Ireland, people originated from Guyana, Jamaica, Kenya, Nigeria, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Sweden, Trinidad and USA.

4. Last settled accommodation

4.1 The responses show that at least half of those surveyed from within South East London and the other 48% were from other London Boroughs, Kent, Essex, Hertfordshire and as far as the North of England. Some respondents last settled accommodation was outside of the UK in Ireland, Cyprus and Ethiopia.

Main reason for leaving last settled accommodation	
1.	Relationship breakdown 39.8%
2.	Went into custody 11.8%
3.	Relatives/parents no longer willing to accommodate 7.5%
4.	Breach of tenancy/rent arrears 8%
5.	End of tenancy / mortgage arrears 2.1%

Figure 4 - Main reason for leaving last settled accommodation

4.2 The main reason for people leaving their last settled accommodation was due to relationship breakdown (40%). Factors leading to relationship breakdown included violence/domestic violence, drug and alcohol use, financial difficulties and also bereavement. The second highest specific reason was going into custody at 11%. (It would have been useful to capture some further information from these respondents about the length of sentences etc). 25% gave 'other' personal reasons for leaving their last settled home. Some instances recorded as 'other' were due to a variety of experiences including threats of violence, mental health issues or unsuitable accommodation. Two individuals cited political reasons and others gave common reasons such as being asked to leave, seeking independence from parents or problems at home.

'Individual had 2 bed flat. Worked and paid rent. Hurt his back and then couldn't work. Initially Housing Benefit paid rent but then wouldn't pay all the rent as it was a two bedroom flat. Therefore was forced to give up flat because he could not pay for it.'

Extract from PrOMPT interview.

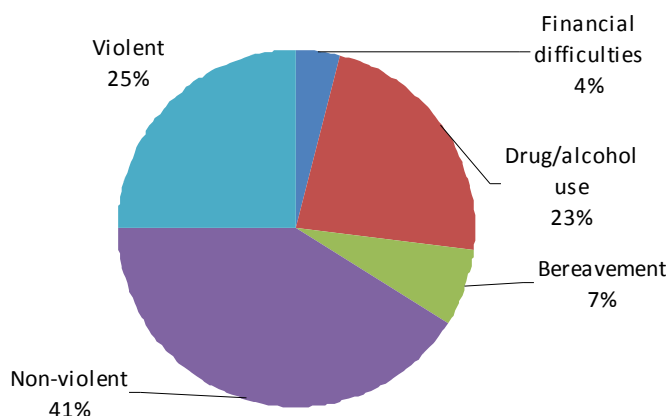
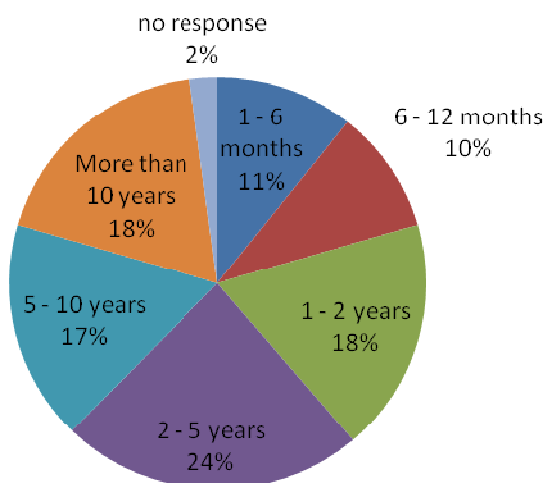


Figure 5 - Factors leading to relationship breakdown

4.3 41% of respondents had resided between 1 and 5 years in their last settled accommodation and 36% had resided for over 5 years or more. 18% had been living in their last formal home for more than 10 years.



4.4 The survey went on to establish what type of settled accommodation/tenure the respondents had been residing in. Most commonly 30% were living with parents or extended family and a further 23% with a partner. However 25% became homeless from the private rented sector and 12% from Local Authority or housing association property.

Figure 6 - Length of time in last settled accommodation

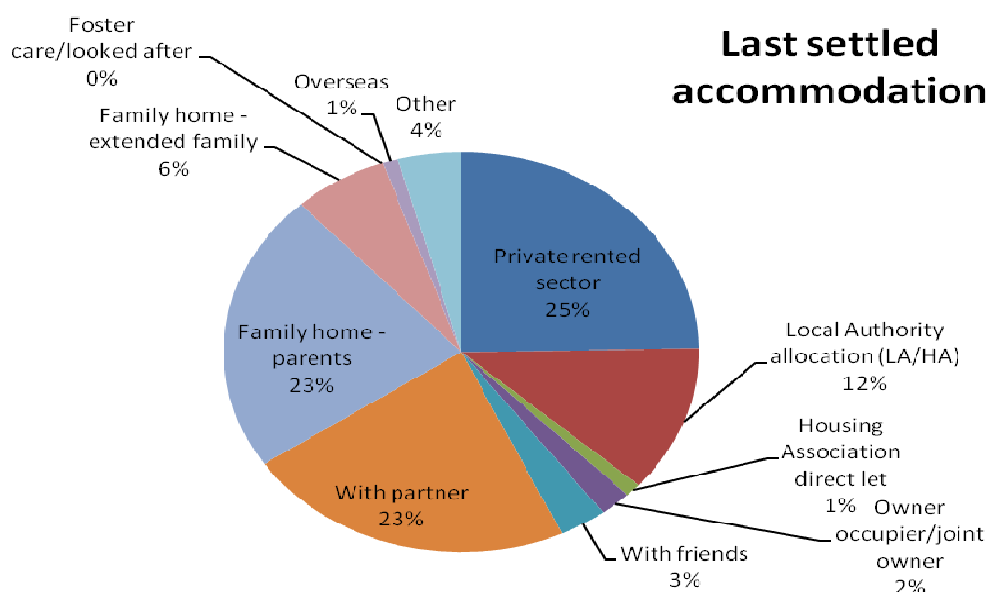


Figure 7 - Respondents last settled accommodation

4.5 PROMPT respondents asked “What one thing would have kept you in your last accommodation?” The responses were varied but were categorised as follows:

- Finance/income
- Gaining employment
- Access to accommodation
- Access to information or support
- Better relationships with partner or family member
- Responsible behaviour
- Control over drug and alcohol use
- Nothing (20% of respondents)
- Don't know

4.6 Some Individuals indicated that their drug or alcohol use had contributed to the breakdown of relationships and loss of accommodation. Some acknowledged that if they had help to or managed to control this aspect of their life, they possibly could have kept their accommodation. 16 respondents felt that 'Nothing' could have kept them in their last accommodation. Others felt that they needed help to manage the relationship issues they had, including family mediation and relationship counselling.

4.7 Those in temporary employment or with no employment faced instability in paying rent. Some cited benefit entitlement changes as a contributing factor to losing accommodation, sometimes they did not feel they had sufficient time or means to adjust their circumstances. Often people wanted help and support during these periods and found that was not always accessible to them. They indicated that signposting to organisations to help them to resolve their situation would have been helpful. Conversely they did not always know who to approach. There were a couple of cases where immigration status and not having a work permit had been the root cause for homelessness.

'Advice on benefits entitlement and a period of grace before stopping HB, client would have been able to budget better and not get into difficulties with paying rent... Started working but could not afford the rent as HB was stopped.'

Extract from PrOMPT interview

5. Locality

48% people sleeping rough were from within the local area, 52% had moved into the area. Of those from outside of the sub-region 55% advised there was no real reason why they had moved to the area. However 6 respondents advised they were attracted by the Homelessness services, 13 moved due to family and friends being in the area. Some individuals indicated that they found certain parts of the sub region as a safe environment for rough sleeping.

6. Access to support or advice before leaving home

6.1 54% of those surveyed categorically stated they did not wish to access any support or advice before leaving their last settled accommodation. Of those that did access services 25% approached services for homeless people, 8% Services for the general public, 12% for specific advice for certain issues/groups (e.g. social services) *There was little feedback on how often individuals approached these services. Individuals advised of their engagement with the following services: Harbour/Brixton, Nacro, Sisters of Mercy/Manna House/Alone in London and one person approached a school teacher whose action led to a positive outcome.*

Respondents who chose not to access services indicated that if they had wanted help or assistance it would have been from primarily Homelessness Advice services/Local Housing department. Employment and training, social services and alcohol and drugs support services were also mentioned. 50% (24) of those who became homeless from the private sector did not access any support or advice before leaving.

6.2 Individuals were asked what type of accommodation they may have wanted but not accessed. 24 were clear they did not want any, 32 wanted emergency accommodation and 45 wished for long term or independent accommodation.

"Accommodation and support you can access immediately" "I need somewhere to walk into even a derelict building, somewhere you could go into immediately, sleep, get a shower and a wash. Something you can get right away, without months of planning, just a mattress on the floor would do. You see lots of houses boarded up even something like that would do."

Extract from PrOMPT interview

6.3 The PrOMPT audit aims to find out about individual’s transition to rough sleeping from settled accommodation but the responses were generally vague with no clear trends or patterns emerging. 13 respondents made informal arrangements in borough and about 7 were living out of the area when they became homeless.

6.4 A good proportion of respondents (39) advised they did not wish to approach or access services or support during this time of leaving accommodation and going into rough sleeping. There were also another group (34) that wanted to access advice but didn’t actually pursue it. They ideally wanted to access services for homeless people. Figure 8 shows which services individuals did actually approach for advice. Those who did want assistance predominantly approached services for homeless people.

Services for homeless people	Specific advice for certain issues/group	Services for general public	Other	Friends and family
37	12	5	10	2

Figure 8 - Approaches for advice

6.5 Applicants were asked “What one thing could have made the biggest difference in stopping you from sleeping rough?” There were 85 responses, which are categorised as follows:

- Access or help to access accommodation/housing
- Information/knowledge about services
- Drug advice and services/Medication
- Temporary accommodation for longer than 2 nights
- General help and assistance
- Being able to resolve issues in relationships
- Having money
- Resettlement whilst in prison
- Employment
- Access to hostel for rough sleepers

“What one thing could have made the biggest difference in stopping you sleeping rough?”

“...knowledge about services available.”

“Hostel accommodation or temp accommodation for longer than 2 nights”

“Help to get a bedsit. Being told about local services/ being told earlier about the supported housing. (Respondent said he found out about this hostel/ work project from other service users, not from the council where he went for advice). "I couldn't go private because I had no money, so it was help through the council that was needed. I've never signed on, never been involved with them, never been in a council office before this.”

Extracts from PrOMPT interviews

8. The journey of sleeping rough

PrOMPT looks at the next stage of people’s journey, the period between leaving their last settled home and rough sleeping.

8.1 Experiences of rough sleeping vary from one person to another. The PrOMPT survey aims to establish how long people had been street homeless and the amount of times they had found themselves in between any type of accommodation. The data shows that 29% of the respondents spent a total of between 5 and 10 years rough sleeping. The chart below (Figure 9) details the overall time period the individuals have slept rough.

Time spent rough sleeping	1 to 4 weeks	1 to 3 months	3 to 6 months	6 to 12 months	1 to 2 years	2 to 5 years	5 to 10 years	Over 10 years
No of Individuals	7	12	9	6	16	16	13	14

Figure 9 - Length of time spent rough sleeping

8.2 Respondents were asked to recall the number of instances of rough sleeping since leaving their settled accommodation. As figure 10 shows, 34 reported they had slept rough between two and five times, 24 were unable to recount. In between rough sleeping 48 had made informal arrangements with friends. About 30 individuals had been able to access hostels and night shelters.

Instances	One	Two-five	Six-ten	More than ten	Unable to say	No answer
Actual	13	34	5	12	24	5

Figure 10 - No of instances of rough sleeping

Accommodation type	No	Details
None	19	
Informal arrangements (squat/friends etc)	48	14 (in borough) 5 (out of borough) 6 (both in and out) 2 (don't know where)
Emergency accommodation (direct access hostel/night shelter)	30	4 (in borough) 2 (out of borough) 6 (both in and out) 1 (don't know where)
Specialist accommodation	2	
Long-term or independent accommodation	6	
Institution	12	
Other	5	

Figure 11 - Accommodation accessed between periods of rough sleeping

9. Access to support and advice during rough sleeping

9.1 Individuals were asked about the type of support or advice they accessed during the time of rough sleeping. The majority (70 respondents) advised that they accessed services for Homelessness people. 12 accessed specific advice for certain issues/group (i.e. Job centre, social services etc). A further 17 approached general advice services. 16 respondents advised that they did not access any support or advice.

'Individual said the housing office looked too busy, didn't feel he could go in there as so busy and didn't feel he would get help anyway. Would have liked more obvious information about where to go for help'.

Extract from PrOMPT interview

9.2 Individuals were asked how often they had accessed services and to rate the services they received. (Interviewers advised that respondents felt some of the questions were repetitive and so it became difficult to get information from some individuals at this stage.) Whilst not exhaustive, the following table (figure12) lists some of the responses captured where data is available.

How often did you access?	<i>once</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Regularly</i>	<i>No Answer</i>
Day Centres	2	5	16	70
How did you find the service accessed?	Positive	Negative	Neither	No answer
Day Centres	18	3	1	71
How often did you access?	<i>once</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Regularly</i>	<i>No Answer</i>
Homelessness Advice Service	0	1	4	88
How did you find the service accessed?	Positive	Negative	Neither	No answer
Homelessness Advice Service	3	1	1	88
How often did you access?	<i>once</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Regularly</i>	<i>No Answer</i>
Local Council Housing department	2	0	2	89
How did you find the service accessed?	Positive	Negative	Neither	No Answer
Local Council Housing department	2	1	1	89

Figure 12 - Ratings to services accessed by respondents

"...At the time I wanted to sleep rough" "I wasn't in the frame of mind of being a normal human being". Respondent said it would have helped him if services didn't only help "certain categories of people" and felt more "open and like they were there to help people".

Extract from PrOMPT interview

10. The move away from rough sleeping

10.1 PrOMPT asks individuals about the length of time since rough sleeping had ended. 14 of those individuals were still sleeping rough at the time of being interviewed. A further 61 who accessed accommodation have been residing there for 12 months or less. The overall responses to the time spent in rough sleeping are charted below. (Figure 13)

Time spent rough sleeping	1 to 4 weeks	1 to 3 months	3 to 6 months	6 to 12 months	Over a year	No answer
No of Individuals	12	14	12	23	15	3

Figure 13 - Length of time since rough sleeping ended

10.2 The type of accommodation that individuals accessed that allowed their period of rough sleeping to cease has been recorded in the table below. (Figure 14)

Accommodation type	No	Details
None	14	
Informal arrangements (squat/friends etc)	1	
Emergency accommodation (direct access hostel/night shelter)	23	Mainly in borough
Second stage accommodation	0	
Long-term care and support	0	
Specialist accommodation	2	
Long-term or independent accommodation	10	Private rented sector: 4 In borough / 3 out of borough
Institution	1	
Other	4	

Figure 14 - Accommodation accessed allowing rough sleeping to end

10.3 Individuals were asked what they felt had contributed to or made the biggest difference to the ending of rough sleeping. Many responses referred to the services received to a specific outreach provider. However throughout the survey there has been a consistent message from a cohort of individuals advising they did not wish to access services or assistance prior to or after leaving their last settled accommodation. This highlights the need for continuing to provide robust services that are willing to provide outreach to rough sleepers who are hard to engage.

10.4 Respondents gave factors which they felt had made the biggest contribution to ending rough sleeping. It identified access to accommodation and support services as key to resolving their homelessness and other related issues. Services provided by outreach teams also played an important role by engaging with individuals who did not wish to connect with services and had chaotic lifestyles. Individuals quoted services provided by St Giles (10%), St Mungos, Equinox, BCDP, 5000 Project as being instrumental to ending their rough sleeping. One respondent described 'Being found by an outreach team' as the biggest thing to ending his rough sleeping. Others indicated that being able to access drug rehabilitation services allowed them to change their lifestyle. Another identified the 'diagnosis of his mental health condition' as the turning point to ending rough sleeping.

Individuals described that access to accommodation had provided them with the 'freedom to be themselves' and allowed them to reunite with their children, others were very grateful to have their own bed and accommodation.

What was the biggest contribution to ending rough sleeping?

"Having a warm bed to sleep in at night."

"Getting benefits and having my own accommodation."

"Moving into my present hostel and help from the outreach workers"

"Going to prison and getting detox and linking back with St Mungos/Outreach when released"

Extracts from PrOMPT interviews

11. Next steps

The PrOMPT exercise has proved extremely useful to determine the profile of the rough sleeping population within South East London. The findings from the audit were presented and discussed with key partners at the SELHP Housing Conference held in December 2010 and continue to be shared in various forums across the sub region. The PrOMPT audit is being undertaken by other London sub-regions and all the information is being collated through Homeless Link, who continue to co-ordinate the overall project.

The SELHP Interim Rough Sleeping Action Plan to end rough sleeping by 2012 was devised in April 2010. The plan will be updated in February 2011 to reflect the findings of the PrOMPT Audit. The opportunities exist to link into other strands of work and have a co-ordinated approach to prevent homelessness for single people. Ending rough sleeping continues to be a priority for Local Authorities within the sub-region.

ⁱ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/roughsleepingstrategy>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.crisis.org.uk/pages/rough-sleeping.html>

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