

Briefing on Rough Sleepers in Barnet **Requested at the Housing Committee on the 08th February 2017**

Purpose

The purpose of this briefing note is to update the Housing Committee on rough sleeping in the borough, the issues causing it and how the Housing Strategy is tackling the problem.

Background

Since 2010, each local authority has been required to submit an annual figure to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to report the number of rough sleepers on any one typical night¹. The total number reported gives a national, regional and local snapshot each year of rough sleeping in England. It allows local authorities to track progress, consider whether current measures are effective in tackling rough sleeping and if new approaches are needed. Each local authority must complete a count or estimate in October or November each year; the next one will take place in October or November 2017. The DCLG provide the following definition for the purpose of the exercise:

“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” which are makeshift shelters, often comprised of cardboard boxes)”.

The recently released ‘Rough Sleeping Statistics’ from the DCLG shows that the number of recorded rough sleepers in Barnet has more than tripled from 7 in 2010 to 22 in 2016. This increase continues to be of great concern because of the multifaceted problems that rough sleeping brings to the individual and the wider community.

Summary of the Issues

Each local authority can decide to undertake a count or an estimate; in 2016 86% of local authorities including Barnet provided an estimate to the DCLG. An estimate is conducted because Barnet Homes works closely with organisations that have regular and reliable data on rough sleepers in the borough as Barnet is a large borough and therefore it would be difficult to cover it all in a single night to conduct a count.

In 2016, Barnet Homes worked with Thames Reach and Homeless Action in Barnet to estimate the number who slept rough on the night of 28th November. An estimate was obtained through two methods:

- On the night of the 28th November, Thames Reach visited known rough sleeping ‘hot spots’ to record the number of rough sleepers, and

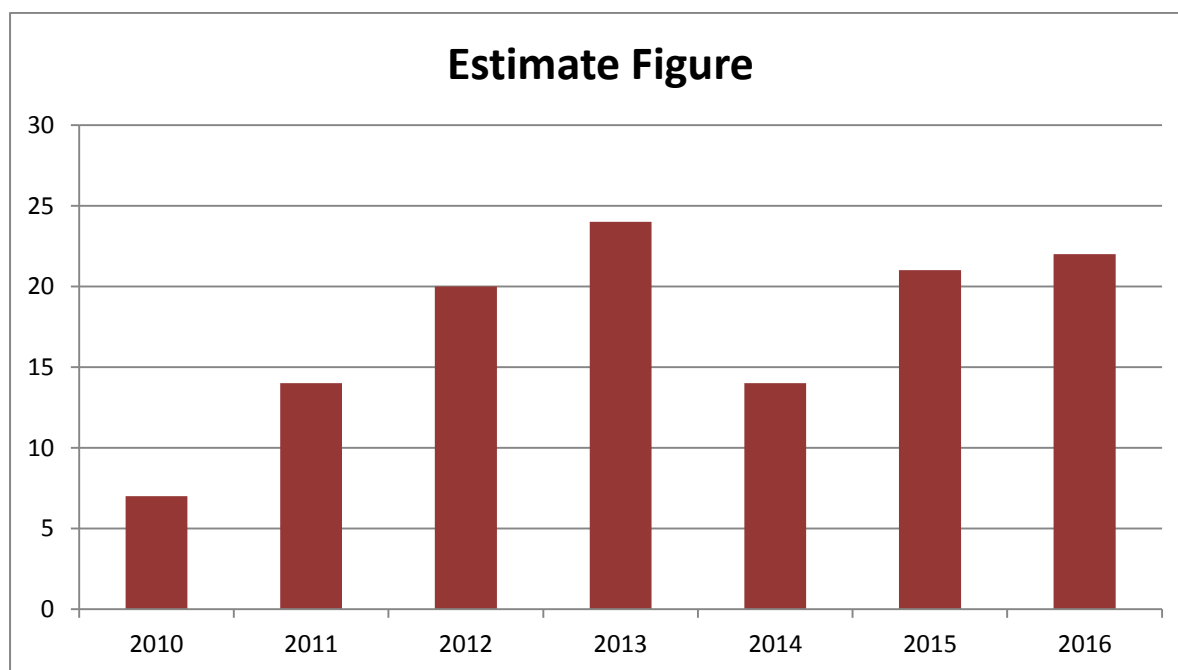
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https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/585713/Rough_Sleeping_Autumn_2016_Statistical_Release.pdf

- Homeless Action in Barnet (HAB) and Barnet Homes Housing Options service recorded those who self-reported on the morning of 29th November as having slept rough the previous night.

The names of rough sleepers were then compared and duplicates removed before submitting a final figure of 22 to the DCLG in December 2016.

Barnet's Rough Sleeper Estimate Results



Since 2010, the number of rough sleepers in Barnet on a typical night has increased from 7 to 22. The data shows a year on year rise, albeit a drop between 2013 and 2014. Although the same verification process has been followed since 2013, it appears that fewer rough sleepers were identified on the specific night that the estimate was conducted in 2014.

How Barnet compares to the rest of London and the UK

A total of 4,134 people were counted or estimated by local authorities to be sleeping rough in England on a typical night in autumn 2016, an increase of 16% from 2015. Barnet reported an increase of 4.7% between 2015 and 2016, which is below the national average increase of 16%, but above the average London increase of 3%. In comparison to the 31 other London boroughs, Barnet had the 14th highest number of rough sleepers in 2016, and the 18th highest number of rough sleepers per household.

London boroughs with the largest number of rough sleepers on a typical night in 2016

	Westminster	Croydon	Redbridge	Waltham Forest	Newham
2015	265	51	43	33	28
2016	260	68	60	47	41

In 2016, for the first time each local authority was required to submit demographic data to the DCLG on rough sleepers. Of the 22 rough sleepers identified in Barnet, 8 were non-UK rough sleepers from EU countries and 3 rough sleepers were from outside the EU.

The definition of rough sleeping provided by the DCLG does not fully capture the extent of rough sleeping as it is widely thought that the true number of people rough sleeping on a typical night far exceeds the annual figure released by the DCLG. The definition means that local authorities are not allowed to include verified rough sleepers staying in night shelters on the night of the estimate or count, including rough sleepers sleeping in Barnet's Winter Night Shelter. The Winter Night Shelter, which runs from October to March and is hosted by various churches in the borough, provides shelter for those who otherwise would be rough sleeping. Homelessness Action Barnet (HAB) allocates places to verified rough sleepers on a night by night basis. On the night of the estimate, 17 verified rough sleepers were staying in the Winter Night Shelter.

Furthermore, 7 known rough sleepers were identified by the Police on the evening of the estimate but were unable to be verified in accordance with the definition and consequently were excluded in the final figure provided to the DCLG. Therefore, we currently believe that the number of rough sleepers in Barnet is closer to 46.

Causes of rough sleeping

During quarters 1-3 of 2016/17, Homeless Action in Barnet had 349 new service users accessing their services. Of those 349, 98 (or 28%) were homeless because of eviction from private rented sector, 37 (or 10%) because of family breakdown and a further 35 (or 15%) because of relationship breakdown. The remaining 179 of new service users provided a range of reasons for homelessness including substance misuse and release from prison.

Barnet is the fourth most expensive outer London borough, with a severe shortage of affordable housing. In February 2016, only 1.4% of accommodation available to rent was at or below the Local Housing Allowance (LHA). This overheated and buoyant private rented sector coupled with below market increases in LHA leaves few affordable options. These problems are further exacerbated for under-35s because of the low supply of rooms available at the shared room rate and no direct referral hostels.

Actions that have been taken so far

Barnet has extensive support for rough sleepers in the borough, including:

- **Homeless Actions in Barnet** is a day centre that provides a range of services for rough sleepers in the borough including access to GPs, tenancy support, Care of address, meals, washing facilities, access to drug and alcohol support. Rough sleepers must have a local connection to Barnet to access the support. Barnet Homes provides a grant of £30,000 per annum towards the running of the day centre and commissions a support worker for the Foundation Project. The Foundation Project provides 19 rooms in a hostel for ex-offenders with support needs.
- **St Mungo's** is funded by Barnet Homes to deliver the statutory advice and assistance function to single non priority homeless people. They also operate a successful rent deposit guarantee scheme which housed 156 households in 2015/16.
- The **Assessment Bed Protocol** is an agreement Barnet Homes has with certain agencies in the borough allowing them to refer customers who do not appear to be in priority need to be accommodated for 15 days. This allows for them to engage with relevant support services and facilitates a move-on to more settled accommodation. To be accommodated under this agreement, customers must be eligible for assistance and have a local connection to the borough.
- **Thames Reach** are a street homeless organisation that verify rough sleepers and provide support through night time outreach work to move rough sleepers on to more settled accommodation.
- Under the **Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)**, all rough sleepers including those who are ineligible for assistance can access accommodation when temperatures drop below 0 for a prolonged period of time.
- The **Task & Targeting Group** is being launched by Barnet Homes in April 2017 and is a multi-agency group who are responsible for the development and application of a rough sleepers housing pathway. Key partners include Barnet Homes, HAB, Thames Reach, Public Health, Community Safety and the Police.
- The **North London Rough Sleeper Leads Group** is a joint initiative between Barnet, Westminster, Haringey, Islington and Enfield to deliver partnership working to reducing rough sleeping. From this group, **St Pauls Staging Post** and **Hope Worldwide** initiatives were developed to increase the number of bed spaces for rough sleepers in the area. St Pauls Staging Post is a 7 bed Hostel in Islington that provides assessment beds for 28 days, and Hope Worldwide procures accommodation in the private rented sector and provides support to rough sleepers as they begin their tenancy.

Barnet Housing Strategy 2015 to 2025

The Councils Housing Strategy references partnership working with St Mungo's, Homeless Action in Barnet and North London Housing Partnership to prevent homelessness for single homeless people and to develop and deliver initiatives to reduce rough sleeping across the region. This is actively happening with funding pending from the controlling migration fund and demonstrated through the homeless day centre, Hope Worldwide, St Pauls Staging Post and the Task and Targeting group. This demonstrates that the Council is being proactive by responding and working with rough sleepers to move them on to more settled accommodation.

Proposed future actions and next steps

Further funding for reducing rough sleeping in Barnet

The Council has placed a joint bid as part of the North London Housing Partnership, which sits above the North London Rough Sleeper Leads Group, to the Governments' controlling migration fund. Barnet, along with Haringey and Enfield, are disproportionately affected by 'encampments' where groups of CEE migrants create temporary structures in which to live whilst funding cash-in-hand work from outside big box retailers on the A406. Thames Reach has recently completed some research to better understand this group and found that:

- The majority of them are Romanian males aged between 18 and 50 years old, who come to work in the UK and send money home. They are often working in the 'grey economy' and do not pay taxes.
- Many of those in encampments have previously held legitimate employment and lived in accommodation which they lost when they lost their job.
- This group does not have significant support needs, and would be willing and able to take up legitimate work and end rough sleeping if appropriate help was available to help them find a job and a place to stay.

The proposal submitted is based on the findings from this research, which recommends that individuals living in encampments could be provided with an offer of support in order to assist them to legitimise their status in the UK by accessing regularised employment and low cost shared accommodation. The funding, if successful, will be used to fund two new post holders to work across those North London boroughs:

- 1) *An Employment and Outreach Link Worker* to a) identify and sign employers who need entry level posts with an emphasis on those who provide 'tied accommodation', and b) support clients to complete CVs and match them with employer vacancies. These roles are likely to be in recycling, warehouse work, agriculture, construction or food preparation.
- 2) *An Accommodation and Outreach Link Worker* who will work within the private rented sector to identify suitable low-cost shared room accommodation and identification of hostel/ backpacker accommodation to move people sustainably off the streets.