



**Report from
the Young
People
Sleeping
Rough
Sub-Group**

Life Off the Streets Taskforce

August 2020

Contents

Foreword	03
01 Introduction and background	04
02 Approach	05
03 Key findings	07
04 Emerging issues	19
05 Appendix 1 – Summary of key findings	22
Appendix 2 – Young People Sleeping Rough Sub-Group Update (March 2020)	25
Appendix 3 – Young People Sleeping Rough Sub-Group Membership	26
Appendix 4 – Young People Sleeping Rough Sub-Group Terms of Reference	26

Foreword

I vividly remember my first day at New Horizon Youth Centre. It was someone else's first day at the centre too: a young man came in, looking traumatised and unable to make eye contact. Carl was shy, clearly nervous and, as it transpired, had been sleeping rough by bedding down all alone for many nights, invisible behind bins in a Big Yellow Storage facility. His story, as is so often the case with the young people we support, was a difficult one. He'd grown up with his aunt and cousin but the relationship had become financially and emotionally exploitative.

Sadly Carl's story is just one of hundreds every year in London. In 2018/19 692 people aged 16 to 25 were recorded as rough sleeping through the Greater London Authority CHAIN database, and these were just the ones who had been seen. Indeed it was the sense of scale of the issue that first led the then Deputy Mayor for Housing, James Murray, to ask me to chair a group on young people sleeping rough as part of his Life Off the Streets Taskforce (then called the No Nights Sleeping Rough Taskforce).

After a year of data analysis, interviews with young people and discussions with the sector, what we found might be unexpected to those imagining rough sleeping to be mostly visible. It won't however surprise those who work with young people day in and day out. Indeed it won't come as a surprise for young people like Carl who would tell you he'd slept behind the bins of the storage facility because he hadn't wanted the stigma and the lack of safety of sleeping somewhere more public.

This report illustrates some of the main reasons why and highlights many more invaluable insights. It was first presented to the taskforce in October 2019, after which the sub-group followed up its feedback until February 2020. More work remains to be done, not in the least in terms of understanding inequalities for black young people, but for me the report shows without a doubt that young people experience the streets differently than the wider rough sleeping population. As such they need specific and youth-focussed solutions. That was true when we wrote it and it is even more so now given the impact of Covid-19 at the time of writing, when CHAIN data tells us that the number of young people sleeping rough in London has risen disproportionately in the first three months of lockdown.

My thanks go to the members of the sub-group and to the Life Off the Streets Taskforce who brought their insights, challenges and determination to every meeting. We remain eternally grateful to the young people who shared their experiences so openly so that others wouldn't have to face what they did.



Phil Kerry
Chief Executive, New Horizon Youth Centre

01

Introduction and background

This report was originally presented in October 2019 by the Young People Sleeping Rough Sub-Group to update the Mayor of London's Life Off the Streets Taskforce of its work on examining the scale and nature of rough sleeping among young people and the best way of ensuring they receive the support they need.¹ The sub-group was active between January 2019 and February 2020, chaired by Phil Kerry, CEO of New Horizon Youth Centre, and had members from boroughs, charities and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Its aims were to:

- understand and improve data on rough sleeping among people aged 18 to 25;
- investigate patterns of and reasons for rough sleeping among this group; and
- determine how best young rough sleepers can be supported.²

1. The Life Off the Streets Taskforce brings together partners key to tackling rough sleeping in London and is part of Homes for Londoners, which brings together all of the Mayor of London's work to tackle the housing crisis. The taskforce is chaired by the Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development.
<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing-and-land/homelessness/life-streets-taskforce>.

2. Please see Appendices 3 and 4 for further details of the sub-group's membership and terms of reference.

02

Approach

The work of the sub-group has involved in-depth analysis of a range of existing data and a survey of young rough sleepers.

2.1 Analysis of existing data

The first phase of work was intended to yield insights on:

- numbers of young people sleeping rough in London;
- how young people who sleep rough compare to the wider population of young people seen by services; and
- the profiles of young rough sleepers and the variations between those seen by different services.

It involved gathering and reviewing anonymised data on young people seen by a range of services between April and December 2019 (the nine months following implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017).

The scope of this exercise included the following groups:

- 18 to 25-year-olds recorded on CHAIN as having slept rough³;
- those who had been referred to StreetLink and judged by the referrer to be under 25⁴;
- 18 to 25-year-olds seen by Camden, City of London, Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Westminster Housing Options services and assessed to be sleeping rough at the time when they did so⁵; and
- 18 to 25-year-olds assisted by voluntary sector providers on the group⁶, including:
 - those who had attended New Horizon Youth Centre (New Horizon) or received support from its street and prison outreach services;
 - those who had used Centrepoin'ts supported accommodation (often having been referred by a local authority);
 - those who had used Depaul's supported accommodation, floating support and advice services⁷; and
 - those who had used Stonewall Housing's services, including advice and supported accommodation.

3. CHAIN (Combined Homelessness and Information Network) is "a multi-agency database recording information about people sleeping rough and the wider street population in London", commissioned by the Mayor of London and managed by St Mungo's. "Information is recorded on CHAIN about the following groups of people: People who have been seen rough sleeping by outreach workers – often referred to as 'verified rough sleepers'. People who have a 'street lifestyle' such as street drinking or begging – often referred to as 'wider street population'. Many people who have a street lifestyle are also rough sleepers, but a minority are not." <https://www.mungos.org/work-with-us/chain/>

4. StreetLink enables "members of the public to connect people sleeping rough with the local services that can support them". <https://www.streetlink.org.uk/>

5. The sub-group sought information for all London boroughs' H-CLIC records from MHCLG, but MHCLG were unable to provide this. In view of this, the sub-group asked local authorities represented on the taskforce but not on the sub-group to provide H-CLIC data. City of London, Tower Hamlets and Westminster did so.

6. Although Albert Kennedy Trust provided data, this was not included in results from this exercise, because the data did not indicate whether or not young people reported having slept rough.

7. Data on this group dated from 2017, rather than relating to those seen by Depaul between April and December 2018. This is because Depaul does not routinely record whether those using its services have slept rough, but had asked that as part of a survey.

The sub-group recognised that these groups are potentially overlapping, as young people may be recorded or seen by multiple services or organisations, including because one service refers them to another. It was also aware of the limitations of aggregating and comparing data from different sources, due to variations between the information different services record.

In part to establish a clearer picture of the potential total scale of rough sleeping among rough sleepers in London, the sub-group explored the scope to identify the extent of overlap between those recorded on CHAIN and those seen by the above local authority and voluntary sector services. As section 3 outlines, it concluded that the scope for doing so was limited.

2.2

Survey of young rough sleepers

The sub-group also conducted a survey of young people with experience of sleeping rough, developed in consultation with young people. It was designed to yield insights into young people's routes into rough sleeping, their experience of doing so, and whether and how they had accessed help.

Four voluntary sector organisations represented on the sub-group conducted the survey with 40 young people who had slept rough. The sub-group identified a need for particular insight into the experiences of 18 and 19-year-olds, women, care leavers, those from BAME backgrounds and those who identified as LGBT+. So, in seeking young people with whom to complete the survey, services sought to ensure good representation of those with these characteristics. To incentivise participation, young people who took part in the survey received a £10 voucher, to be paid for from the budget allocated to support the subgroup's work.

03

Key findings

3.1 Analysis of existing data

3.1.1. Number of young people sleeping rough

The sub-group identified that 1,225 people judged to be under 25 had been referred to StreetLink and 548 seen and recorded on CHAIN by outreach teams. Further, it identified that the other services that contributed data to this exercise had seen 2,924 young people. Of these, 2,820 had been asked whether they had slept rough and 436 of them (or 15%) reported that they had done so or were assessed as having slept rough.

Table 1: Number of young people recorded as sleeping rough (all participating services)

	Number of 18 to 25-year-olds seen	Number recorded as sleeping rough or having done so	
		Number	Percentage
From services for those sleeping rough			
CHAIN	548	548	n/a
StreetLink	1,225	1,225	n/a
Total	1,773	1,773	
From wider services			
Camden, City of London, Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Westminster Housing Options services	1,100	33	3%
New Horizon	822	250	30%
Stonewall Housing	229	25	11%
Albert Kennedy Trust	104	Not recorded	
Centrepoint supported accommodation	519	113	22%
Depaul's supported accommodation, floating support and advice services	150	15	1%
Total	2,924	436	15%

Housing Options: As table 1 shows, a very small number of young people who saw Housing Options services were assessed as sleeping rough – even though these boroughs have above-average levels of rough sleeping. In view of this, the sub-group also identified the number of young people whom Housing Options services assessed were living with family or friends, had no fixed abode, or had become homeless on departure from an institution – on the basis that

A very small number of young people who saw Housing Options services were assessed as sleeping rough

some of them, particularly those with no fixed abode, might have been sleeping rough or at risk of doing so. A total of 243 young people were assessed as being in one of these situations. This number, together with the 33 assessed to be sleeping rough, accounted for 22% of the total number of young people seen by Housing Options services.

None of the young people seen by Housing Options services and assessed as sleeping rough were recorded on CHAIN.

Comparison with CHAIN: The sub-group had hoped to carry out analysis to identify how many of the young people seen by voluntary sector providers and identified as having slept rough were also recorded on CHAIN. Its rationale was that the resulting figure would provide an indication of the extent to which young people seen by voluntary sector services who are sleeping rough or have previously done so are also seen by rough sleeping outreach services. This would in turn have helped the sub-group to gauge the overall scale of young people sleeping rough in London and the extent to which they are being identified by outreach teams. However, providers represented on the sub-group were not confident that they could share data with CHAIN within the terms of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). It would be possible for members of the sub-group to undertake this exercise in future, if they changed their approaches to seeking consent, as outlined in section 4.

If this exercise did not establish considerable overlap between the young rough sleepers seen by outreach teams and those seen by other services, the implication is that the total number of young people sleeping rough in London is greater than the number seen by outreach teams.

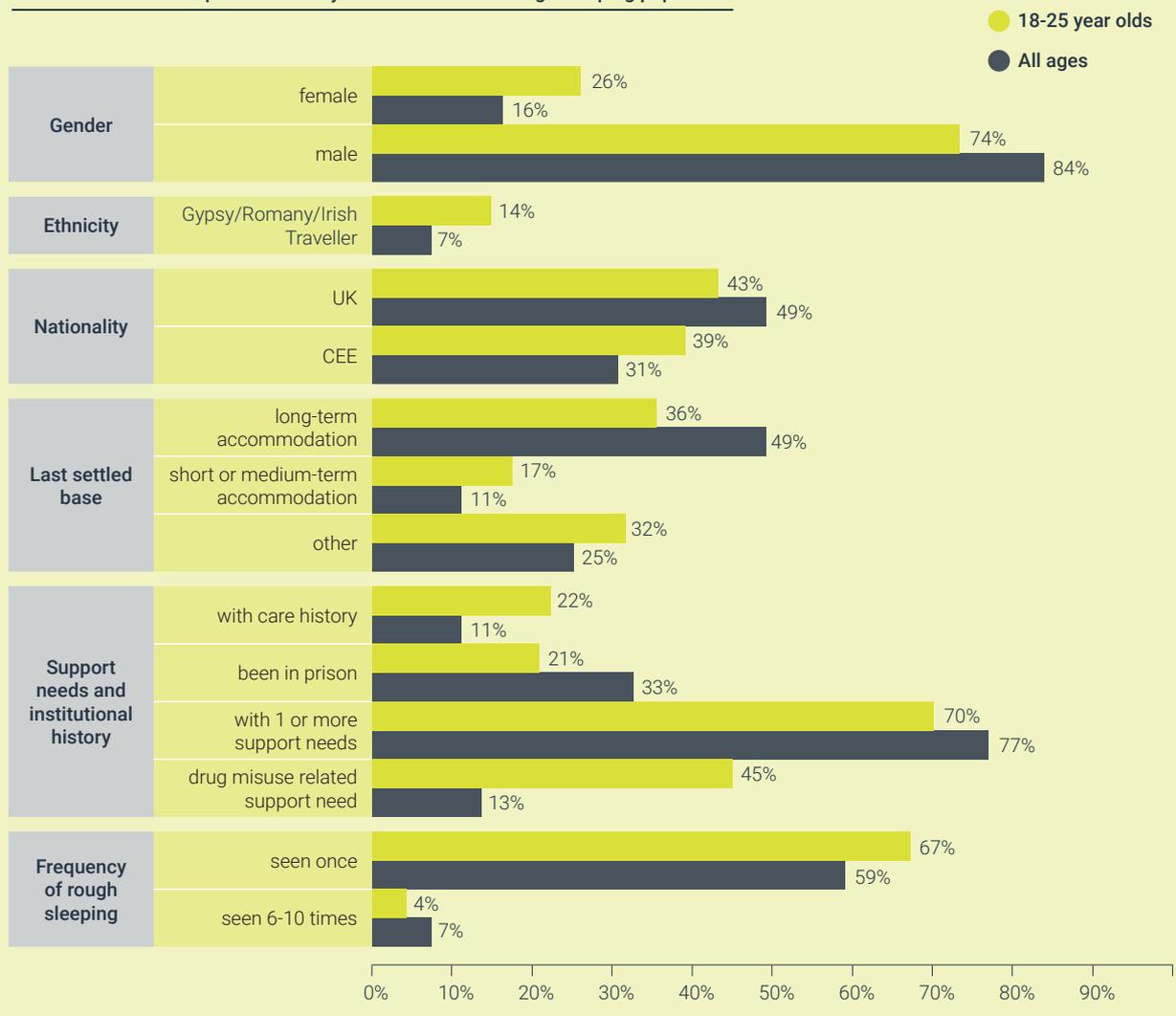
3.1.2 Young people compared to wider homeless and rough sleeping populations

CHAIN: Young people accounted for 8% of all those seen by outreach teams during the period April to December 2018. Young rough sleepers differed from the wider rough sleeping population as recorded on the CHAIN database in the following respects:

Young people accounted for 8% of all those seen by outreach teams during the period April to December 2018

- **Demographic characteristics** – young rough sleepers included:
 - a higher proportion of women (26%, compared to 16%);
 - a lower proportion of UK nationals (43%, compared to 49%);
 - a higher proportion of CEE nationals (39%, compared to 31%); and
 - perhaps linked to the above, a higher proportion who identified as Gypsy/Romany/Irish Traveller (14%, compared to 7%).

Chart 1: CHAIN – comparison 18-25 year-olds and wider rough sleeping population

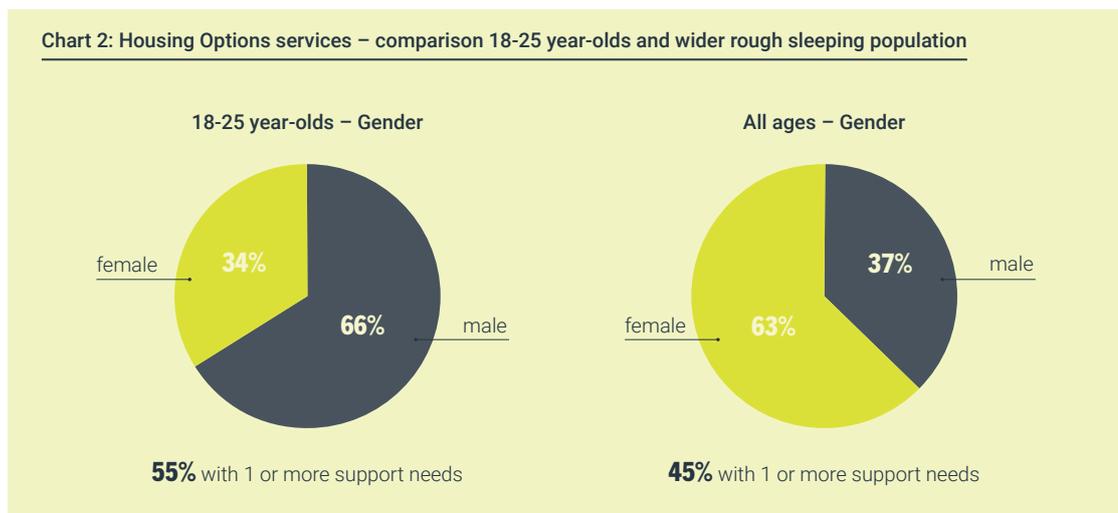


- **Support needs and institutional history** – young rough sleepers included:
 - a higher proportion who reported having been in care (22%, compared to 11%);
 - a lower proportion who reported having been in prison (21%, compared with 33%);
 - a lower proportion assessed to have one or more support needs (70%, compared to 77%); and
 - a slightly higher proportion assessed as having a support need related to drug misuse (45%, compared to 41%).
- **Last settled base** – among young rough sleepers, there were:
 - a lower proportion whose last settled base was long-term accommodation (36%, compared to 49%);
 - a higher proportion whose last settled base was short or medium-term accommodation (17%, compared to 11%);

- a higher proportion whose last settled base was recorded as “other” (32%, compared to 25%); and
- a higher proportion who left their last settled base because of a breakdown in (a) relationship(s) (19%, compared to 13%).
- **Frequency of rough sleeping** – young rough sleepers included:
 - a higher proportion seen sleeping rough only once (67%, compared to 59%); and
 - a lower proportion seen six to ten times (4%, compared to 7%).
- **Outcomes** – The proportion of young people seen by outreach teams for whom an outcome was recorded on CHAIN was very similar to the proportion of all rough sleepers for whom this was the case.

StreetLink: Characteristics of those perceived by StreetLink users to be under 25 were broadly in line with those of older people referred. However, 28% of those aged under 25 who were referred were female, compared to 17% of all those referred. This may be because, as CHAIN data suggests (see above), a higher proportion of young rough sleepers are female. It may also indicate that members of the public are more likely to contact StreetLink about young women than other rough sleepers, because they perceive them to be at greater risk.

Chart 2: Housing Options services – comparison 18-25 year-olds and wider rough sleeping population



Housing Options services: Young people accounted for 15% of those seen by the local authority Housing Options services that provided data for this exercise.

Young people whom Housing Options services assessed were sleeping rough differed from the wider population of young people they assisted in the following respects:

- a higher proportion of men (66%, compared to 37%);
- a higher proportion at the younger end of the 18 to 25 age range, with 25% aged 20;
- a higher proportion who identified their ethnicity as “any other” (30%, compared to 18%); and
- a higher proportion with one or more support needs (55%, compared to 45%).

Voluntary sector services: Among young people seen by voluntary sector services, young people who reported that they were sleeping rough or had done so differed from the wider population of young people seen by those services in the following respects:

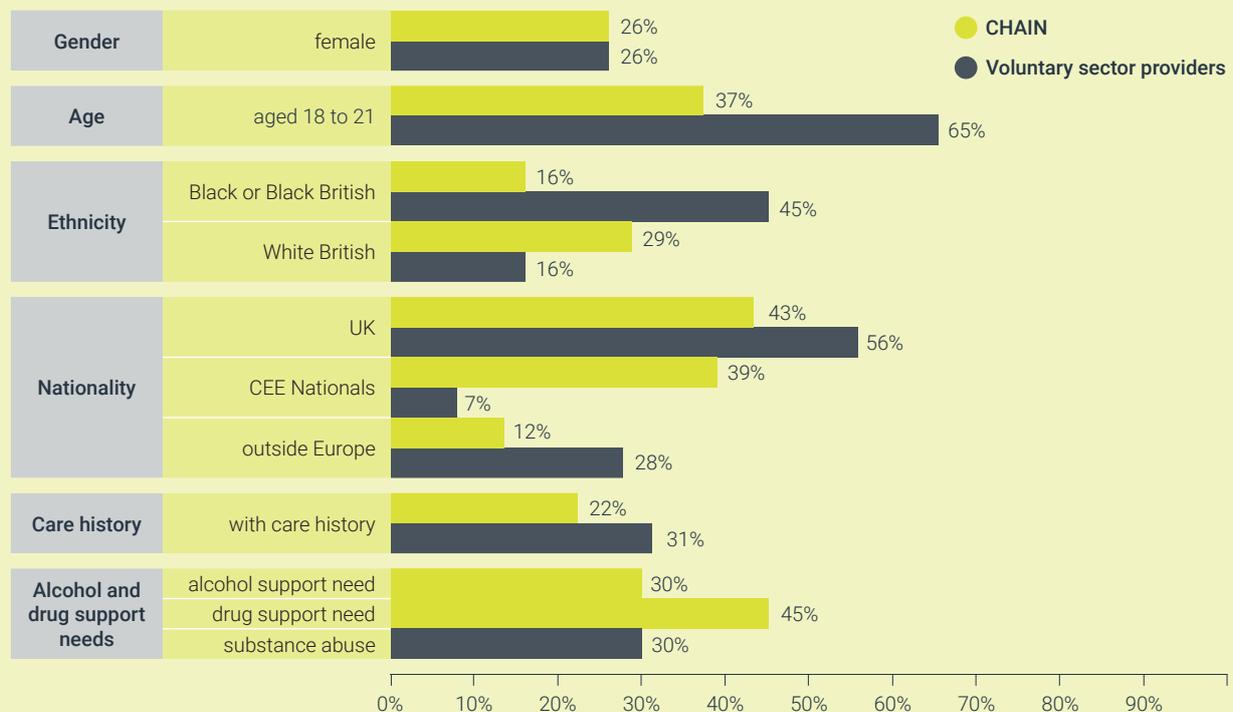
- more male (72%, compared to 61%); and
- more identified their ethnicity as White but not British or Other (21%, compared to 14%).

3.1.3 Comparison of young rough sleepers seen by outreach teams and those seen by voluntary sector providers

The following chart compares the characteristics of young rough sleepers captured on CHAIN with those seen by voluntary sector providers. Those seen by Housing Options services are not included here, because they were so few in number. The chart shows that, compared to young rough sleepers seen by outreach teams, those seen by voluntary sector services, were:

- younger;
- much more likely to be Black or Black British;
- more likely to be UK nationals;
- much less likely to be CEE nationals;
- much more likely to be non-European nationals; and
- more likely to have spent time in care.

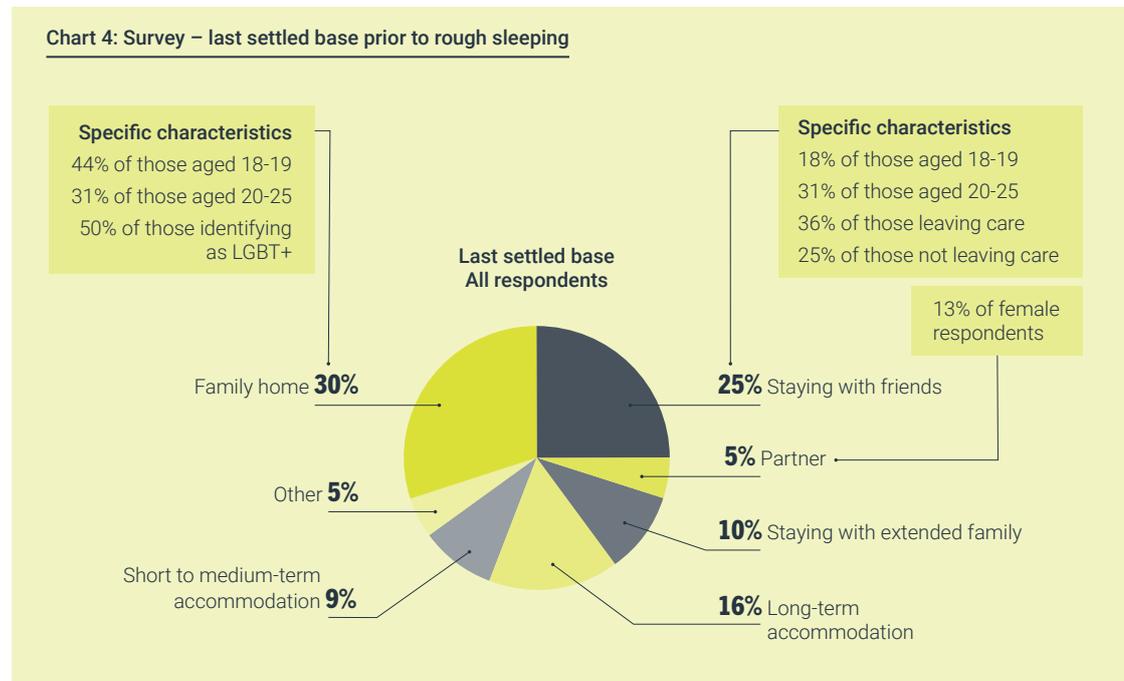
Chart 3: Characteristics of 18-25 young people sleeping rough – comparison CHAIN and voluntary sector



3.2 Survey of young rough sleepers

3.2.1 Background to sleeping rough

Unlike CHAIN, the survey included family home, staying with friends and staying with extended family among the options for 'last settled base'.



Family home – 30% of the young people surveyed reported that their family home had been their last settled base before sleeping rough. In line with this, 28% reported that they had left their family home because they were evicted or experienced tension with their family.

- **Age:** 18 and 19-year-old respondents were more likely to report their family home as their last settled base, with 44% doing so, compared to 31% of 20 to 25-year-olds.
- **LGBT+:** Respondents who identified as LGBT+ were also more likely to report their family home as their last settled base, with 50% doing so.

Staying with friends – A larger proportion of the young people surveyed, 35%, reported that their last settled base had been staying with friends (for just over 70% of this group), or with extended family.

The relatively high proportion of young people whose last settled base was staying with friends or extended family seems to highlight the extent to which young people may be in situations of hidden homelessness before ending up on the streets

- **Age:** 18 and 19-year-old respondents were less likely to report staying with friends as their last settled base. 18% of them did so, compared to 31% of 20 to 25-year-olds.
- **Gender:** Female respondents were more likely than male respondents to identify living in a partner's home as their last settled base. 13% of them did so, but none of the male respondents.
- **Care leavers:** Care leavers were much more likely to report staying with friends as their last settled base, with 36% doing so, compared to 25% of all respondents.

Short, medium or long-term accommodation – Compared to young people captured on CHAIN, smaller proportions reported 'long-term accommodation' or 'short or medium-term accommodation' as their last settled base.

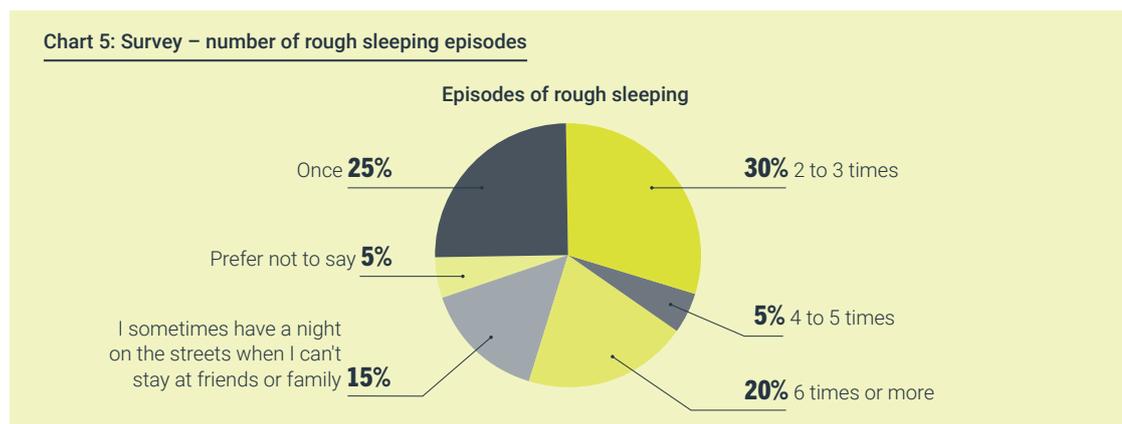
The relatively high proportion of young people whose last settled base was staying with friends or extended family seems to highlight the extent to which young people may be in situations of hidden homelessness before ending up on the streets.

Other causal factors in ending up on the streets were as follows:

- sexual and domestic abuse (for 8% of those surveyed, all of them female)
- threats to safety (for 5% of those surveyed)
- their family becoming homeless (for 5% of those surveyed); and
- moving to London to study or work (5% of those surveyed).

70% of survey respondents reported that their longest spell of rough sleeping lasted a week or longer, with almost 25% reporting a spell of more than three months

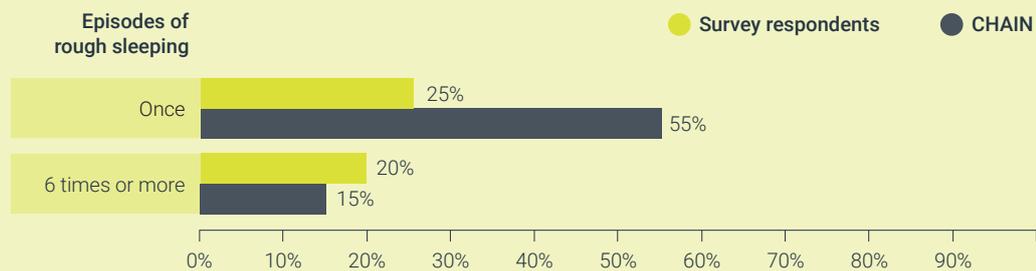
3.2.2. Frequency and duration of rough sleeping



Frequency – The proportion of survey respondents who reported sleeping rough on only one occasion was much lower than the proportion of young people captured on CHAIN who were seen just once – 25%, compared to 55%. Correspondingly, 20% of survey respondents reported that they had slept rough on six or more occasions, where 15% of young rough sleepers captured on CHAIN were seen on six or more occasions.

- **Age:** 18 and 19-year old respondents reported sleeping rough on more occasions. 25% reported that they had slept rough on six or more occasions, compared to 20% of all respondents,
- **Gender:** Female respondents typically reported sleeping rough on fewer occasions: 40% of female respondents reported they had slept rough only once and none that they had slept rough on six or more occasions.
- **Care leavers:** Care leavers typically reported sleeping rough on fewer occasions, with 36% reporting having slept rough on only one occasion.

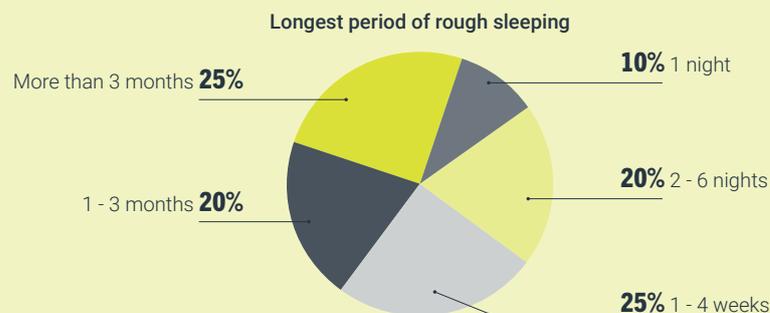
Chart 6: Number of rough sleeping episodes – comparison survey and CHAIN



Duration – 70% of survey respondents reported that their longest spell of rough sleeping lasted a week or longer, with almost 25% reporting a spell of more than three months.

- **Age:** 18 and 19-year old respondents typically reported briefer spells on the streets. 56% reported that their longest spell on the streets was a week or longer, compared to 70% of all respondents.
- **Gender:** Female respondents were less likely to report that they had slept rough for a week or longer, with 62% doing so, compared to 70% of all respondents.
- **LGBT+:** Respondents who identified as LGBT+ were also slightly less likely to report that they had slept rough for a week or longer, with 66% doing so.
- **Care leavers:** Care leavers were also slightly less likely to report that they had slept rough for a week or longer, with 65% doing so.

Chart 7: Survey – longest period of rough sleeping



3.2.3 Locations and patterns of rough sleeping

Table 2: Survey – approaches to being on the streets

	Never	Sometimes	Often
Sleeping on the streets where people could see me	33%	31%	36%
Sleeping on the streets but hiding from others	23%	41%	36%
In a park or playground	48%	26%	26%
In a stairwell of a building	44%	30%	26%
I have kept walking or sitting awake all night	33%	46%	21%
In an A&E waiting room in a hospital	54%	28%	18%
In McDonalds or similar place with late or 24-hour opening times	44%	41%	15%
At a party or a club	59%	26%	15%
On a building site	75%	10%	15%
In a car or van	61%	26%	13%
At a train station or bus shelter	82%	10%	8%
At an airport	82%	13%	5%
At a space at my job or a friend's job (e.g. store room, staff room, kitchen)	90%	5%	5%
In a tent	69%	26%	5%
In car parks	82%	13%	5%
At the place of a stranger	92%	5%	3%
At the place of a friend	90%	7%	3%
At a place with many drug users or drug dealers	92%	5%	3%
Staying/sleeping on the street in a group	92%	5%	3%
Staying/sleeping on the street alone	62%	38%	0%
Staying/sleeping on the street with a partner or a friend	90%	10%	0%
Prefer not to say	95%	5%	0%
Other	69%	31%	0%

Out of sight – 77% of survey respondents reported that, when sleeping rough, they had slept out of sight. This that may have reduced their visibility to both outreach teams and members of the public who might have referred them to StreetLink. However, 67% reported that they had slept in fully visible locations. This suggests that young rough sleepers sometimes seek to hide and sometimes seek to be visible.

67% of respondents reported that, when on the streets, they had not actually bedded down

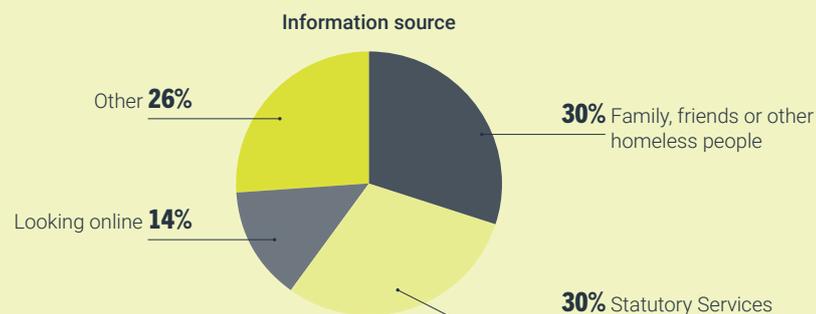
Groups – A small proportion of respondents, 18%, reported having slept rough with one or more other people – potentially also a factor in reduced visibility.

Bedding down – 67% of respondents reported that, when on the streets, they had not actually bedded down – again, something likely to have made them much less noticeable to outreach teams or members of the public who might have referred them to StreetLink. Respondents reported having spent nights in branches of McDonald's (56%) or Accident and Emergency departments (46%), at parties or clubs (41%), and in cars (39%).

Approaches – 90% of survey respondents reported that they adopted two or more approaches to negotiating being on the streets. Only 10% described sleeping in a single location or engaging in a single activity. Again, this is likely to mean that it can be difficult to identify young rough sleepers.

3.2.4 Accessing support

Chart 8: Survey – support information sources

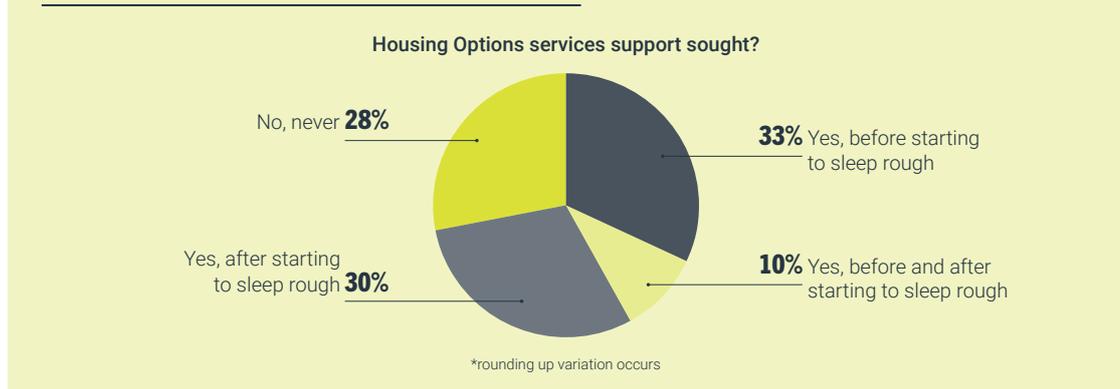


Information sources – 30% of respondents reported that they had found out about assistance available through family, friends or other homeless people. The same proportion reported that they had done so through statutory services, including Housing Options teams, Social Services, a prison, and, for smaller numbers, the police, Probation or a Youth Offending Team. 14% reported that they had located the help they needed by looking online.

Barriers – When asked about barriers to securing assistance, 31% of respondents identified a lack of ID. This may reflect their age, but perhaps also the relatively high proportion of young people with neither UK nor EEA nationalities seen by voluntary sector providers (see Chart 3). 16% of respondents reported that they did not trust services that might provide support.

43% of survey respondents had sought help from a Housing Options service before sleeping rough. 64% per cent of the respondents who did so reported that they had not received assistance

Chart 9: Survey – local authority Housing Options services*



Local authority Housing Options services – 28% of survey respondents had not sought help from a local authority Housing Options service. In most cases, this was because they were not aware of these services.

However, 43% of survey respondents had sought help from a Housing Options service before sleeping rough. 64% per cent of the respondents who did so reported that they had not received assistance, with some being advised that they were not in priority need.

40% of respondents sought help from a Housing Options service once they were sleeping rough, three quarters of them for the first time. Half of those who did so were helped to secure accommodation.

The sub-group sought to engage with local authority Housing Options services through the Pan-London Housing Needs and Homelessness Group to better understand the barriers that services face to assisting young people at risk of sleeping rough or currently doing so. Responses from services were limited.

Outreach teams – 33% of respondents reported that they had been approached by outreach workers. However, some of these respondents reported receiving food or bus tickets from those they identified as outreach workers. This suggests that not all those respondents had actually seen outreach workers. 5% of respondents reported that contact with outreach teams resulted in them securing accommodation and 5% that they were referred to a day centre.

3.2.5 Assessment and accommodation outcomes

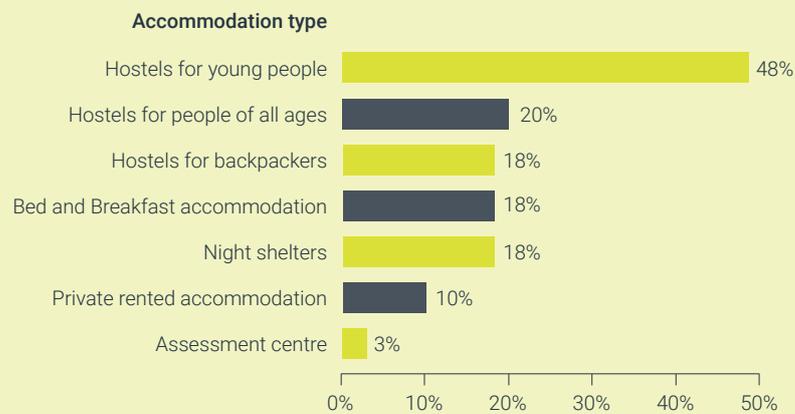
No Second Night Out – Only 25% of respondents were aware of No Second Night Out (NSNO). Only one had used the service, and two had refused an offer of referral. Two of those who were familiar with NSNO expressed concern about the prospect of using a service alongside older rough sleepers.

Accommodation outcomes – 77% of respondents reported that they had secured accommodation and the majority of them that they had secured more than one type of accommodation.

Types of accommodation – These respondents had accessed the following types of accommodation:

- hostels for young people (48%);
- hostels for people of all ages (20%);
- hostels for backpackers (18%);
- Bed and Breakfast accommodation (18%);
- night shelters (18%);
- private rented accommodation (10%); and
- an assessment centre (3%).

Chart 10: Survey – type of accommodation accessed



Respondents who had stayed in one or more hostels for young people reported more positive experiences

74% per cent of respondents who had stayed in one or more hostels for young people reported more positive experiences, while respondents reported less positive experiences of hostels and shelters for all rough sleepers.

When asked about the type of accommodation they thought they needed when they ended up on the streets, 57% indicated a preference for accommodation that provided them with their own room in shared accommodation. Only 9% indicated that they felt they needed emergency or short-term accommodation. Almost all young people commented that they felt they needed accommodation where they would be provided with support.

04

Emerging issues

Through the work described and summarised above and through its wider discussions, the sub-group has identified a number of steps that could help to improve understanding of rough sleeping among young people and, critically, to improve the likelihood of them receiving the help they need. These are outlined below.

4.1

Ensuring data recorded helps to identify the total number of young people sleeping rough and why they are doing so

- **Voluntary sector** – Voluntary sector providers could routinely ask whether young people are currently sleeping rough or have experience of sleeping rough. They could agree to do so in a consistent way, so that different providers can aggregate data to gauge the extent of rough sleeping among their service users.
- **Information sharing** – All services could seek consent from young people in a way that enables
 - sharing of non-sensitive personal data to form a picture of rough sleeping among young people in London, and/or
 - checking between voluntary sector services, CHAIN and Housing Options services, to establish whether a young person has been seen by more than one of these services.
- **Local authorities and CHAIN** – The categories used to record last settled base and/or current housing situation on both H-CLIC and CHAIN could be refined to better reflect the experiences of young people who lose their accommodation. For example:
 - the classification “No Fixed Abode” could be removed from H-CLIC;
 - H-CLIC could differentiate between living with family and living with friends; and
 - categories for living with family and living with friends could be added to the range of ‘last settled base’ on CHAIN.

4.2

Recognising that young people may sleep rough in ways that mean they are less likely to be visible and therefore to secure help

It is probably unrealistic to rely on most young rough sleepers accessing assistance through outreach services

The high proportions of survey respondents who reported sleeping rough in hidden locations and/or not bedding down, as well as the low proportion who reported having slept rough with one or more others, may mean that they are less likely to be referred to StreetLink or located by outreach teams. These behaviours suggest that it is probably unrealistic to rely on most young rough sleepers accessing assistance through outreach services and suggests a need to consider alternative approaches.

4.3

Improving awareness of homelessness, rough sleeping and the assistance available among young people

Young people who commented on the design of the survey conducted by the sub-group were clear that they did not recognise the term “rough sleeping” as one that described their experiences of sleeping on the streets. Voluntary sector providers on the sub-group recounted how some homeless young people who use their services do not perceive themselves as homeless. The sub-group observed that these phenomena may reflect low levels of awareness of homelessness among young people, as well as also a sense of stigma around homelessness and rough sleeping. Some suggested that not using the term “rough sleeping” was a way in which young people could differentiate themselves from those they perceived as “typical” rough sleepers.

Such understandings and perceptions may render young rough sleepers reluctant to seek help. Findings from the sub-group’s survey also made clear that young people did not necessarily know that help was available to them, or where to access help. In addition to this, if young rough sleepers are less visible and therefore less likely to be referred to StreetLink or identified by outreach teams, it is all the more important to improve awareness of the assistance available among young people at risk of sleeping rough.

If young rough sleepers are less visible...it is all the more important to improve awareness of the assistance

Raising Awareness – Therefore, the sub-group identified the value of measures to raise awareness of homelessness and the help available for those facing it. These might include:

- **Schools** – engaging with young people in schools on issues around housing and homelessness;
- **Websites** – making information on sources of advice and assistance available on websites that young people with nowhere to stay may use – for example, Couchsurfing.com and dating sites such as Tinder and Grindr; and
- **Staff at other locations** – advising staff in, for example, all-night fast food outlets and hospital A&E departments on engaging young people spending prolonged periods of time there, so that they can access the help they need.

4.4

Recognising that young people with different characteristics may have different experiences of sleeping rough

The survey results in particular highlight that young people with different characteristics may have different routes into rough sleeping and experiences of doing so. It is important to bear this in mind when considering interventions to ensure that young rough sleepers receive the help they need.

4.5

Increasing the availability of specialist supported accommodation for young people

The sub-group has consistently noted the acute challenge of securing appropriate accommodation for young people, especially in emergency situations and for those with medium to high support needs, for whom options such as Nightstop and night shelters are unsuitable. It identified the availability of revenue funding as the greatest obstacle to increasing the supply of supported accommodation: the Mayor's Affordable Homes and Small Sites programmes and offers of assistance from developers could help provide the land and capital assets needed to develop accommodation. The sub-group suggested that delivering additional supported accommodation on a pan-London or sub-regional level would enable sharing of revenue costs and so could make the option of additional provision more feasible.

Other options may include seeking social investment and/or pursuing plans to co-locate supported accommodation with another residential or commercial development that would generate revenue for the supported accommodation – the model used in the architectural ideas competition that John McAslan + Partners ran for New Horizon in 2018. Providers on the group are particularly interested in these models, as they anticipate that there would be greater flexibility around access to accommodation not commissioned by a local authority or group of local authorities.

The sub-group has consistently noted the acute challenge of securing appropriate accommodation for young people, especially in emergency situations and for those with medium to high support needs

05

Appendix

Appendix 1 – Summary of key findings

Key findings from analysis of existing data

- Between April and December 2019, 1,225 people judged to be under 25 had been referred to StreetLink and 548 seen by outreach teams and added to CHAIN. Other, mostly voluntary sector, services that contributed data to this exercise had seen 2,924 young people. Of these, 2,820 had been asked whether they were sleeping rough and 15% of them reported that they had slept rough or were assessed as having done so.
 - The extent of overlap between rough sleepers seen by outreach teams and those seen by other services is currently unknown. However, limited overlap would indicate that the number of young people sleeping rough in London is greater than the number seen by outreach teams.
 - Only 3% of young people who saw Housing Options services were assessed as sleeping rough, although a further 19% were living with family or friends, had no fixed abode, or had become homeless on departure from an institution.
 - Young people accounted for 8% of those seen by rough sleeping outreach teams. Compared to the wider population seen by outreach services, this cohort included:
 - more women and more Central and Eastern European (CEE) nationals;
 - more people who had been in care, but fewer who had been in prison;
 - more people whose last settled base was recorded as “other” and more who left their last settled base because of a breakdown in (a) relationship(s); and
 - more people who were only seen sleeping rough once.
 - Young people seen by voluntary sector services who reported that they were sleeping rough or had done so differed from the wider population of these services’ users in the following respects:
 - more men; and
 - more identified their ethnicity as White but not British or Other.
-

- Compared to those seen by outreach teams, young rough sleepers seen by voluntary sector providers were:
 - younger;
 - much more likely to be Black or Black British;
 - more likely to be UK nationals, much less likely to be CEE nationals, but more likely to be non-European nationals; and
 - more likely to have spent time in care.

Key findings from the survey of young rough sleepers

- 30% of young rough sleepers reported that their family home had been their last settled base before sleeping rough, with those at the younger end of the age range and those who identified as LGBT+ more likely to do so. 35% per cent reported that they had been staying with friends or extended family, with those who had spent time in care more likely to do so.
- The proportion of survey respondents who reported sleeping rough on only one occasion was much lower than the proportion of young people captured on CHAIN who were seen just once. Eighteen and 19-year-olds were most likely to have slept rough more than once.
- 70% of survey respondents reported that their longest spell of rough sleeping lasted a week or longer and female respondents were more likely to report this.
- 77% of survey respondents reported that, when sleeping rough, they had slept out of sight. This may mean that they are less likely to be referred to StreetLink and less likely to be seen by outreach teams. However, 67% of respondents reported that they had slept in fully visible locations.
- 67% of respondents reported that, when on the streets, they had not actually bedded down.
- 28% of survey respondents had not sought help from a local authority Housing Options service. In most cases, this was because they were not aware of these services.
- However, 43% of survey respondents had sought help from a Housing Options service before sleeping rough. Most of the respondents who did so reported that they had not received assistance.
- 33% of respondents reported that they had been approached by outreach workers.
- 53% of respondents reported that they had secured accommodation. Respondents tended to report more positive experiences of hostels for young people and less positive experiences of hostels and shelters for all rough sleepers.

Key emerging issues

- Ensuring data recorded helps identify young people sleeping rough and why they are doing so, including:
 - voluntary sector providers routinely asking whether young people are currently sleeping rough or have experience of sleeping rough;
 - services seeking consent from young people in a way that enables sharing of non-sensitive personal data to form a picture of rough sleeping among young people in London and/or checking between voluntary sector services, CHAIN and Housing Options services, to establish whether a young person has been seen by more than one of these services; and
 - categories used to record last settled base and/or current housing situation on both H-CLIC and CHAIN better reflect the experiences of young people who lose their accommodation.
 - Recognising that young people may sleep rough in ways that mean they are less likely to be visible and therefore to secure help;
 - Improving awareness of homelessness, rough sleeping and the assistance available among young people, potentially including:
 - engaging with young people in schools on issues around housing and homelessness;
 - making information on sources of advice and assistance available on websites that young people with nowhere to stay may use; and
 - advising staff in, for example, all-night fast food outlets and hospital A&E departments on engaging young people spending prolonged periods of time there, so that they can access the help they need
 - Increasing the availability of specialist supported accommodation for young people, in particular emergency accommodation, especially those with medium to high support needs, for whom options such as Nightstop and night shelters are unsuitable. The sub-group identified the availability of revenue funding as the greatest obstacle to increasing the supply of supported accommodation.
-

Appendix 2 – Young People Sleeping Rough Sub-Group Update (March 2020)

Following the report informed by the research undertaken in 2019, and its subsequent discussion at the taskforce meeting in October, the sub-group has committed to take work forward. This work falls into four key areas:

- improving data
- developing new approaches to outreach
- preventing and addressing rough sleeping among care leavers
- improving the availability of supported accommodation for young people who have slept rough.

This was the final stage in the sub-group's formal work under the auspices of the taskforce in March 2020. However, sub-group members are committed to continuing to work together and would welcome an ongoing relationship with the taskforce. In particular, they propose reporting back to the taskforce the outcome of the data analysis exercise described in table 3 below. However, they would also welcome contact on other issues, should relevant opportunities arise.

The table below summarises the sub-group's commitments and recommendations.

Table 3

Area of Focus	Commitments or Recommendations
Data	Voluntary sector providers on sub-group to standardise data they collect and change how they seek permission from service users to manage and share their data
	Subject to completing the step above, voluntary sector providers to establish the extent of overlap between their service users who report sleeping rough and young people recorded on CHAIN
	MHCLG asked to amend H-CLIC data
	MHCLG asked to provide a summary of outcomes for young people who have sought help from London local authorities under the homelessness legislation and been assessed to be sleeping rough or have no fixed abode
Outreach	Attend outreach managers meeting to establish their current approach to locating, engaging and assisting young rough sleepers
	Arrange for young people with experience of sleeping rough to meet with Thames Reach outreach workers
	Ensure insights from meeting between Thames Reach staff and young people are disseminated to outreach teams
Care leavers	Attend Practice Leaders of Children's Social Care Group to identify ways of preventing and tackling rough sleeping among care leavers
Supported accommodation	Design and deliver pilot project or projects to use voids in supported accommodation to provide a short-term housing option for young people

Appendix 3 – Young People Sleeping Rough Sub-Group Membership

Organisation	Individual
Albert Kennedy Trust	Lucy Bowyer, Services Director
Centrepoint	Balbir Chatrik, Director of Policy and Communications
Depaul UK	Daniel Dumoulin, Policy & Public Affairs Manager
Greater London Authority	Deborah Halling, Senior Policy Officer / Tom Gill, Policy Officer
Homeless Link	Jacqui McCluskey, Director of Policy & Communications / Lauren Page-Hammick, Innovation and Good Practice Project Manager Youth Homelessness
London Borough of Camden	Keri Deasy, Strategy and Commissioning Manager
London Borough of Southwark	Ian Swift MBE, Head of Housing Solutions
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	Anna Whalen / Samad Nadimi / Joe Simpson / Daemon Cartwright
New Horizon Youth Centre	Phil Kerry, CEO (Chair), with input from Marike Van Harskamp, Development and Partnerships Manager
Stonewall Housing	Bob Green OBE, Chief Executive
Thames Reach	Kris Draper, Area Director

Appendix 4 – Young People Sleeping Rough Sub-Group Terms of Reference

Evidence from the youth homelessness sector suggests that there is substantial under-reporting (on CHAIN) of the number of young people sleeping rough in London.

The Life Off the Streets Young People Sleeping Rough sub-group will:

- evaluate the existing rough sleeping evidence, seeking to understand the reasons for the apparent discrepancy between CHAIN data on young people sleeping rough and the numbers encountered by the youth homelessness sector;
- identify and build upon additional data resources to articulate a more accurate reflection of the numbers and demographics of young people sleeping rough in the capital and their presenting needs;
- investigate the reasons behind and patterns of young people sleeping rough and whether and how this differs from more commonly understood street population; and
- determine the best ways of identifying, engaging and supporting young people sleeping rough, including considering whether existing provision can be adapted or specific provision is needed.



**Report from the Young People
Sleeping Rough Sub-Group**

Life Off the Streets Taskforce

August 2020