Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

Why is it so difficult to fix?

Bert Provan, LSE Housing and Communities
Why is it so hard to reduce homelessness?

Not one problem
• Homeless families with children
• rough sleepers
• “single homeless” and students
• Refugees
• “First time buyers” (!)

Not one cause
• Housing is a source of capital and wealth, not just shelter
• Too few houses, too expensive to rent or buy
• Regional (economic) variations
• Benefits and tax system can make homelessness worse

No one solution
• Highly political
• Constant and changing Government, pressure group, third and charitable sector(conflicting) initiatives
• Constant research and analysis
• “criminal” and punitive approaches also common
Past (current) policy: the 1824 Vagrancy Act (still had 3,000 prosecutions in 2015)
Rising number of councils issuing fines for rough sleeping

Use of public spaces protection orders in England and Wales comes despite guidance not to target homeless Patrick Greenfield and Sarah Marsh

Growing numbers of vulnerable homeless people are being fined, given criminal convictions and even imprisoned for begging and rough sleeping. Photograph: Oli Scarff/Getty Images

The number of councils that have obtained the power to issue £100 fines for rough sleeping, begging and “loitering” in England and Wales has increased despite Home Office guidance not to target the homeless. Local authorities have been accused of trying to “airbrush their streets” and “ban homelessness” after analysis by the Guardian found at least 60 councils with public spaces protection orders (PSPOs) forbidding people from putting up tents, seeking charity and other behaviour associated with rough sleeping, up from 54 last year. Those who violate the orders are liable to a £100 fine which, if left unpaid, can result in a summary conviction and a £1,000 penalty.
Who is “homeless” (statutory)?

[An applicant] is to be considered **homeless** if they

- do not have accommodation that they have a legal right to occupy

- which is **accessible and physically available** to them (and their household) and

- which it would be **reasonable for them to continue to live in**.

Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018, Overview of Legislation
Who is a “rough sleeper”

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’).
Who is in the middle?

Recognised as homeless and in “Temporary Accommodation”
- “Accepted” for rehousing but in bed and breakfast, hostels, or other temporary lettings
- Being assessed

Not recognised
- Sofa surfers
- People unwillingly living with their families or relatives
- Single people without “vulnerabilities”
- People with “no recourse to public funds” or without “leave to remain”
Who gets brought in?

Young, well off, first time buyers

• Help to buy (£10 billion 2017-2021)
• Right to Buy (2 million homes sold)
Who actually has a right to housing?

• 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act
  The modern era – new rights to be housed for people with “priority needs”

Priority needs (2019):

• Pregnant women
• Families with children
• 16-17 year olds
• 18-20 care leavers
• Left emergency (e.g. fire)
• “Vulnerable” people – old, ex-care, disability, ex prison, ex military, victim of domestic abuse

BUT:

• not intentionally homeless (feckless)
• “local connection” (vagabond)
New duty of “prevention” (2018 Homelessness Reduction Act)

- Earlier intervention for all, not just priority need, threatened with homelessness within 56 days
- Support to actually homeless applicants for 56 days
- Often provide temporary accommodation while assess, or wait for permanent housing
Why lost previous settled home – in more detail 1992-2017

- Cant stay with parents
- Domestic Violence
- Mortgage arrears
- Rent arrears
- AST end

Cant stay with parents
Domestic Violence
Mortgage arrears
Rent arrears
AST end
Temporary Accommodation

- Households awaiting assessment or permanent rehousing

- 2017-18
  - **83,000 households**, including over 123,000 children
  - Nearly **£1 billion** spent on temporary accommodation 17-18,
    - 80% in London
  - **£3 billion** estimated spent on housing benefit for temporary accommodation
2,069 people were seen sleeping rough for the first time in London in the last three months alone.

(From July-Sept 2019)
Rough sleeping got less, then more. 1998-2017

Figure 2.3: Rough sleeping in England

Source: Crisis (2017): Everybody in – how to end homelessness
## Last settled base

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation Type</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long term accommodation</td>
<td>941</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private rented accommodation</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authority accommodation</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner occupied accommodation</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing association/RSL accommodation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tied accommodation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheltered housing/registered care accommodation</td>
<td>1315</td>
<td>53.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2436</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Short or medium term accommodation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hostel</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asylum support accommodation</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary accommodation</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;B/other temporary accommodation</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinic/Detox/Rehab</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>291</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prison</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>117</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Inappropriately accommodated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Squat</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outhouse</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Newly arrived in UK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newly arrived in UK - not homeless in home country</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newly arrived in UK - homeless in home country</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>191</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Other

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not recorded</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (excl. not recorded)</strong></td>
<td>4456</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Total excluding not recorded is used as the base for percentages.
Causes
We are not “…all two pay cheques away from homelessness”

- Common refrain
- Recent research indicates those at most risk:
  - Experience poverty, and often have experienced childhood poverty
  - Not supported by social support networks
  - Live in areas with poor local labour and housing market opportunities
Causes: less house building, particularly of social housing
Benefits no longer cover the cost of private rents

The “Local Housing Allowance”
Underfunded services compared to needs and duties

LGA briefing, July 2019

• “Our latest analysis demonstrates that local authority homelessness support (including temporary accommodation) faces a funding gap of £110 million in 2019/20”

• “Local authorities face an overall funding gap of £3 billion next year, and £8 billion by 2024/25”
Contested approaches

**Just housing** (e.g. for every rough sleeper)
- or supported housing with **support** (mental health, dependency, work, life skills)

**Soup runs**
- or do they sustain rough sleeping and prevent engagement in support services
Conclusion

• Lots of data, research, initiatives, policies, public concern

• BUT also the “anti crime and disorder” dimension of some policies

• Policy and money focus on home ownership, not social housing and homelessness

• Multiple new initiatives to try (again) to find better way to reduce homelessness