Central and Eastern European Rough Sleepers in London: Baseline Survey
Introduction

National context

Recent expansion of the European Union (EU) has led to an increase in migration from Central and Eastern Europe to Britain. When the EU expanded in May 2004, certain limitations were placed on the entitlements of citizens from 8 out of 10 of the accession countries: Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic. Nationals from these Accession 8 (A8) countries can come to the UK to work but can have limited or no access to social provisions and benefits. The two nations that accessed in 2007, Romania and Bulgaria (A2 nationals) are subject to further restrictions. They require a work permit in order to commence employment in the UK.

Homelessness amongst Central and Eastern Europeans

The majority of migrants from Central and Eastern Europe successfully obtain employment and accommodation in the UK. However, as a result of restrictions to social provision and benefits, options are very limited for the significant minority who find themselves homeless.

In response to members’ concerns over the growing number of Central and Eastern European rough sleepers in London, Homeless Link produced a research report ‘A8 nationals in London homelessness services’ in 2006. This included a snapshot survey of London day centres, outreach teams and night shelters and interviews with providers who had developed specialised services. Over three quarters of the services in the survey saw A8 nationals and 15% of people who used the services were A8 nationals.

Current Homeless Link project

Following on from this research, Homeless Link has received funding from Communities and Local Government to develop a project aimed at reducing rough sleeping among Central and Eastern Europeans.

The project is working with the homelessness sector, government departments, and a wide range of other partners to develop an action plan to reduce levels of rough sleeping among people from Central and Eastern Europe. Although it will focus on rough sleeping in London, it is expected that the solutions identified in the action plan will be relevant to other areas across the country. Work is now underway and the action plan should be completed by March 2008.

The first stage of this project was to conduct a survey to obtain baseline figures for Central and Eastern Europeans currently rough sleeping in London. This report provides the methodology and headline findings from this work.
The methodology

Fourteen London outreach teams were asked to carry out a survey over the week 19 to 25 November 2007. The survey focused on rough sleeping and street activity contacts during ‘usual shift patterns’.

Thirteen teams covered specific boroughs while the London Street Rescue service covered the rest of London. In total 85 outreach shifts were undertaken that week. The 14 outreach teams were:

- Hammersmith & Fulham and Kensington & Chelsea
- Westminster x3 (Central, North and South)
- City & Islington
- Ealing
- Camden
- Southwark
- Brent
- Lambeth
- Richmond
- Waltham Forest
- Croydon
- London Street Rescue

Outreach teams were asked to record numbers for:

- All individuals met during an outreach shift
- Individuals from Central & Eastern Europe met during an outreach shift.

They were also asked to record the nationality and support needs of the contacts from Central and Eastern Europe if known.

In addition, this report compares the Homeless Link survey data with the numbers of Central and Eastern Europeans recorded on Broadway’s CHAIN database\(^1\) for the same week.

\(^{1}\) See [http://www.broadwaylondon.org/chain/](http://www.broadwaylondon.org/chain/)
Rough Sleeping

Numbers

Out of the 402 rough sleepers recorded in total that week, 74 of them were from Central & Eastern Europe.

![Pie chart showing 18% Central and Eastern European Rough Sleepers and 82% All Other Rough Sleepers]

Outreach teams were also asked to compare these numbers to their experience of other weeks. Based on these experiences, outreach teams stated that the number of Central and Eastern European rough sleepers they recorded was:

- Average: 8 teams (57%)
- Below Average: 4 teams (29%)
- Above Average: 2 teams (14%)

For the same week, CHAIN recorded 269 individuals sleeping rough, of which 35 were from Central and Eastern Europe (13%). Whilst the number of rough sleepers recorded was significantly less, the percentage from Central and Eastern Europe was relatively consistent with Homeless Link figures (13% compared to 18%).
Outreach teams were asked, when possible, to record the nationality of Central and Eastern European rough sleepers. Although data was not available for nearly a third of people, the figures show high numbers of Polish nationals, followed by Czechs, Hungarians and Lithuanians.

CHAIN figures also showed the majority of Central and Eastern European rough sleepers to be Polish (51%), followed by Lithuanian (14%), then Czech (11%).
Support needs

Outreach teams were asked to record, where possible, the support needs of Central and Eastern European rough sleepers. The survey found that of the 74 individuals from Central and Eastern Europe, 26 had alcohol support needs, two drug support needs and four mental health support needs.

By comparison, on the CHAIN database, of the 35 individuals recorded, seven had alcohol support needs and none were reported to have mental health or drug support needs.
Street Activity

Street activity refers to problematic or anti-social behaviours such as street drinking, drug use, sex work and begging.

Numbers

Out of 117 individuals recorded as engaged in street activity overall during the week, 40 were from Central & Eastern Europe (34%). However, not all outreach teams collated information on street activity.

Information from CHAIN shows that outreach teams recorded 85 individuals as engaged in street activity during the week, five from Central and Eastern Europe (6%). It should be noted that this figure excludes records from other homelessness services linked to CHAIN (i.e. hostels).

Nationalities

Outreach teams were asked to record, whenever possible, the nationality of the Central and Eastern Europeans engaged in street activity. 18 of the 40 Central or Eastern European individuals engaged in street activity with whom the outreach teams had contact (45%) were recorded as of ‘unknown’ nationality in the survey. The other nationalities were as follows:

- Polish: 20 (50%)
- Lithuanian: 2 (2%)

Of the five individuals from Central and Eastern Europe recorded on the CHAIN database, four were Polish and one was Lithuanian.

Support needs

Outreach teams also recorded the support needs of the individuals from Central and Eastern Europe engaged in street activity, if this information was available. Of the 40 individuals in the data collected by outreach teams during that week, 21 reportedly had alcohol support needs, one had drug support needs and two had mental health support needs.

For the same week, CHAIN found that of the five individuals, four were reported as having alcohol support needs, one as having drug support needs and one as having mental health support needs (some individuals had more than one of these support needs).
Conclusion

These baseline findings show that there are significant numbers of Central and Eastern Europeans rough sleeping or engaged in street activity in London.

The finding that 18% of rough sleepers were from Central and Eastern Europe is relatively close to CHAIN’s figure for that week of 13%. It also reflects the Homeless Link 2006 survey, which found that 15% of people accessing London Homelessness services were from A8 countries. Overall therefore there appears to be some stability in the figures. However, anecdotal information suggests that there is a large flow of individuals over time, some new to the streets, some having been on the streets for a while and some returning to the streets.

Individuals had a variety of nationalities, of which the most prevalent was Polish. Alcohol was by far the most common support need, although a few cases of drug and mental health needs were also reported.

The survey will be repeated towards the end of the project to check progress against the action plan.

For further information: www.homeless.org.uk/policyandinfo/issues/EU10s
Homeless Link is the national membership organisation for frontline homelessness agencies in England. Our mission is to be a catalyst that will help to bring an end to homelessness.

Our two goals are to:

- raise standards in the services that support homeless people and tackle homelessness
- influence the development of policy, strategy and investment at all levels of government.