



London Women's Census

Improving understanding of women's rough sleeping

Life Off The Streets women's workstream

With the support of London Councils, GLA, the Life Off the Streets Core Group and DLUHC

Women's Rough Sleeping Census

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The Life Off the Streets women's workstream is delivering a women's census which aims to better capture data about the extent of women's rough sleeping.

The methodology used will differ from the normal snapshot count in recognition of the fact that women sleep rough less visibly and are less likely to come into contact with outreach teams as a result.

The census is being planned and coordinated by SHP, the Women's Development Unit and St Mungo's. This exercise has the support of London Councils, GLA, Life Off the Streets Core Group and DLUHC.

The Life Off the Streets Executive Board brings together partners key to tackling rough sleeping in London. It is jointly chaired by the Deputy Mayor for Housing and by London Councils. It is supported by the multi-agency Life Off the Streets Core Group which works to operationalise the programme's strategic objectives.

The Life Off the Streets women's workstream is a sub-group working to determine, drive and manage activities intended to ensure that rough sleeping is prevented for women – and where that fails that rough sleeping is a rare, brief and non-recurrent experience.

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Why a women's census

Why is this work needed?

Women are under-represented: Research, lived experience and the experiences of services tell us that women are some of the most vulnerable within the rough sleeping and homeless population, yet we also know that women are under-represented in rough sleeping statistics and provision.

Key data sources used to understand homelessness come from street count figures based on recording practices which are not adapted to women's patterns of homelessness. It follows that if services are commissioned based on this data, they will not be meeting the needs of those who are not captured in this data.

There are also particular risks to women who are experiencing forms of rough sleeping:

Violence and abuse: For women experiencing rough sleeping, experiences of violence and abuse are 'near universal'.

Lower average age of death: In 2020, the average age of death for a woman experiencing homelessness was 41.6 (45.9 for men). Across the general population, life expectancy for women is consistently higher than for men.

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Why is this work needed?

The next slide contains an extract from SHP's video 'Hidden Homelessness: The experiences of women in Camden', which helps to demonstrate the need for this work.

This is a recording of women talking about their own experiences of rough sleeping and homelessness. Please be aware this video talks about experiences which can be difficult to hear about, and includes mention of sexual assault. This video lasts for 1 minute 22s.



Who is the census for?

We are aiming to gain a picture of women who are rough sleeping in London. Our focus will be a gender-informed understanding of rough sleeping – we will provide guidance and survey questions to help establish who can be included.

Our survey will aim to gain a picture of those who have been rough sleeping recently to account for the cyclical and sometimes intermittent nature of women's rough sleeping.

We hope the findings will tell us about the scale of hidden rough sleeping among women; services they have come into contact with prior to rough sleeping; and the needs of women. This data will help to increase understanding of women's experiences and inform future provision.

PraxisCollab researchers are supporting data collection, methodology and analysis of findings and we will produce a report to make the findings public.

We've been working closely with PraxisCollab to achieve a balance between gathering the data needed on women's homelessness while ensuring this census is deliverable across London in its first iteration. We see this as a pilot census which we hope can be replicated and developed in future years.

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Methodology

1. Outreach

Outreach services will be asked to deliver gender-informed outreach sessions using insight into where and when women more commonly rough sleep. Outreach will include at least one daytime shift during census week.

2. Survey

Services likely to encounter women who are rough sleeping (e.g. day centres, women's services, health services) will be asked to complete a simple, anonymised survey over a set period of a week to identify women who are rough sleeping. This will not include accommodation services.

3. Streetlink

We will ask Streetlink to support us with figures on number of calls relating to women reported as potentially rough sleeping over the census period.

4. Housing Options

We will ask Housing Options services in a selection of boroughs to support us with figures on number of women presenting over the census period who are rough sleeping or at immediate risk of rough sleeping.

Methodology

1. Outreach

- We are asking rough sleeping leads in every borough to support outreach teams to deliver daytime outreach during the week. Outreach teams can check if your rough sleeping lead and managers have confirmed the borough's involvement.
- We are producing practical guidance to support outreach teams to plan and deliver their daytime outreach and ensure a consistent approach. We will be delivering an online session on this guidance which will also be recorded. The census team can also meet with outreach teams if requested.
- Outreach teams will be asked to complete a simple survey with women they see during the shift, and fill these in via a link provided. We will provide information on what the survey is for and how people's responses will be used.
- We suggest outreach teams use local intelligence where possible to focus on areas where women are more likely to be seen in the borough. We will also provide a template information package which outreach teams can populate with local service information to use on shift.
- We know that some boroughs have very limited outreach capacity: we're therefore asking for sector volunteers who may be able to join an outreach worker on shift in another borough. Let us know if you can help.

2. Survey

- We are approaching a wide range of services across London who may work with women experiencing rough sleeping. This is with the aim of trying to broaden the reach of the census, particularly given women are less likely to be seen by outreach services.
- Types of services include homelessness support services, VAWG services, health teams, drug and alcohol services, community groups including faith groups and food banks, and migrant support services. Services do not need to be delivering homelessness support to take part.
- We will be asking services to complete a short, anonymised survey with women who attend their service during census week. The survey will include an opening blurb and opening questions to help identify who to include and can be filled in via a survey link. We will provide information on what the survey is for and how people's responses will be used.
- We will be producing practical guidance and an online training session for services who will be involved in this – sign up to the mailing list to make sure you receive all of the information.
- We are trying to get as many services involved as possible: can your service/organisation take part? Can you involve other services in your sector/borough? Help us to get in contact with services.

What next?

- We are producing detailed guidance for services to support delivery of outreach and completion of the survey which will be sent out via our mailing list – sign up to make sure you get the latest information.
- We will deliver training sessions on the outreach and service survey guidance at the end of August.
- For outreach teams: ensure your borough has committed to be involved and work with managers to plan your census shift according to the guidance which will be sent out soon. Contact us if you would like support with this.
- For services: make sure you've signed up to the mailing list to get the latest information. Make sure your service knows about the census and perhaps assign a person or a group to coordinate delivery of the census within your service.
- **Delivery date:** across the full working week of ~~19th-23rd September~~. **Please note, the date of the census has changed and is now being delivered across the week of 3rd-7th October.**

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How can you get involved

This is a fantastic opportunity, with nothing of this scale having been delivered before. We need your help to deliver it!

Ways to get involved

General:

- Can you support us to get more contacts and services involved?
- Can you send information to your organisation's networks? Are you part of a local network you can bring this to?
- Can you be a coordinator in your area or for your service/s to help us deliver census week?

Outreach:

- Does your service deliver outreach sessions? Can you plan a census shift? Contact us if so.
- Can you share local knowledge to help identify areas where women may be seen?
- Can you volunteer to attend outreach shifts in areas with lower capacity?

Survey:

- Can your service complete the survey? Can you coordinate your service's completion of the survey?
- Can you support other services who may have lower capacity if required? (e.g. non-commissioned day centres)

Contacts and information

Sign up to our mailing list to make sure you receive the latest information: <https://forms.office.com/r/Dfkey1UUiE>

Find the latest information at <https://www.connection-at-stmartins.org.uk/womens-census/>

Contact us for more information and to get involved at womens.census@cstm.org.uk

Additional contacts:

- **Eleanor Greenhalgh**, Women's Development Unit Manager, Solace Women's Aid and The Connection at St Martin's
 - e.greenhalgh@solacewomensaid.org
- **Lucy Campbell**, Head of Multiple Disadvantage - Service Transformation, SHP
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- **Steph Ratcliffe**, Head of Migrant and Advice Services, St Mungo's
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