

# Addressing rough sleeping at stations



Artwork installed at Leeds station, in Eastern Region, as part of initiative to tackle homelessness

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## 1 Purpose

This document supports colleagues at railway stations to engage effectively with people experiencing homelessness or rough sleeping.

It applies lessons learnt from:

- the first year of the Rough Sleeping on Rail outreach services in Manchester and Birmingham
- the first 18 months our charitable programme for Control Period 6, Routes out of Homelessness.

## 2 Background

### 2.1 The picture of homelessness in England

During the pandemic in 2020, more than 2,600 people slept on the streets on any given night in England. During this time, an estimated 688 homeless people died in England and Wales - 35% more people than in 2015.

In 2020, the cities with the highest number of estimated homeless deaths were London (143), Liverpool City Region (46), Greater Manchester (35), Birmingham (21), Bristol (20) and Leeds (18).

However, rough sleeping is just the tip of the iceberg of homelessness and the need for safe and secure homes. In 2021, there were 274,405 recorded homeless people in England – this is the equivalent of 1 in 206 people in England\*

In the last year, 32% of households facing homelessness lost their last settled home due to being asked to leave the home of a family or friend. This was the leading trigger of homelessness alongside domestic abuse and the ending of assured shorthold private tenancy.

*\* The estimated number of people recorded as homeless in England on any given night is calculated by Shelter using official homelessness statistics on rough sleeping and temporary accommodation, augmented by data on homeless families accommodated by social services and the number of single homeless people living in hostels.*

### 2.2 What this means for the railway

Railway stations play a key role in the end-to-end passenger journey and customer experience. Stations tend to have a high concentration of rough sleeping as they offer safety, security, warmth and clean facilities. This can affect the passenger experience, and their safety and security as well as that of our staff and operations.

Local authorities have a duty to try to help people who end up on the streets. To meet this duty, many councils commission charities to undertake outreach and contact people directly on the streets. Outreach teams will meet people where they sleep, offer advice and help get them into accommodation. These teams operate in all weather and work with individuals who are new to the streets or have been street homeless for some time. This document sets out some of the ways that railway colleagues can work with local authorities and charities to offer support to those in need.

### 3 How to recognise and approach people requiring assistance

The following tips from Shelter should help if you see someone at your station who looks vulnerable and may be experiencing homelessness.

- If you are really worried about someone's health – if they are not responsive, or they look very unwell – call 999 for an ambulance
- Say hello and ask if they'd like help. Sleeping rough can be a lonely experience, so a chat or friendly hello can make a difference. It's also best to ask if they would like your help first, and ensure you practice social distancing
- Treat everyone as an individual with individual needs – for example, not all people who beg sleep rough, and not all people who sleep rough beg
- Everyone has the right to travel – even if someone shows signs of being street homeless, they could still have a ticket and should be advised to use this or signposted elsewhere as appropriate. Details of organisations that can help are listed in Section 8
- Communicate clearly and calmly – remember that body language is even more important than what you are saying – and listen to the person you are interacting with. Repeat yourself if required and give the person time to understand
- Each situation is different and should be considered on a case-by-case basis. One-off or repeated unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated, however if an individual is not showing signs of inappropriate behaviour, the weather is particularly cold or wet and the station is not busy (for example, it is late at night), station management teams may wish to exercise suitable discretion
- If the person does not wish to communicate and their behaviour gives cause for concern, escalate the situation to your local British Transport Police team

### 4 Begging and anti-social behaviour

Network Rail does not permit begging at stations; however, there are ways to address this while considering the impact on the individual.

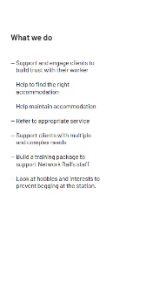
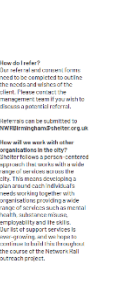
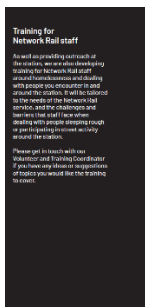
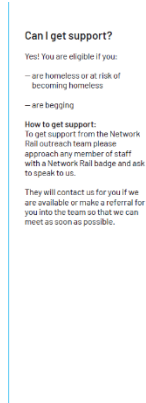
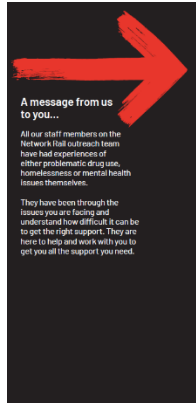
- If you see someone begging and feel it is safe to do so, ask them how you can help. This will allow you to direct them away from begging at the station but towards an appropriate service such as a day centre or outreach team for assistance. Details on services available can be found in Section 8
- If the person's behaviour continues to cause concern and makes you feel threatened, contact the British Transport Police at your station or call 999
- Reporting anti-social behaviour by calling 101 may not achieve a result as quickly, but it will let the police know that you have ongoing problems
- Network Rail's stations are private property and members of the public have an implied permission to enter – if the problem persists, the British Transport Police can provide guidance

around options for withdrawal of implied permission, which could prevent a persistent offender from entering the station

## 5 Ways to support vulnerable people at stations

We do not encourage rough sleeping at our stations; however, we do want to support individuals where possible. It is important to remember that stations are not expected to run large scale events or use lots of extra resource on additional activities. The below examples may however be adapted not only for a positive social impact in your area, but to help address operational issues you may experience and to engage and motivate your teams in a way that best suits you.

- Display the relevant materials (for example leaflets like those below, posters and contact cards) for all employees working at the station, not just Network Rail staff



- Arrange training for staff with a focus on vulnerable people through charities such as The Railway Children and their [Safeguarding on Transport](#) programme
- Ensure all members of staff have seen the rail industry suicide prevention briefing videos and are issued with the suicide prevention ‘tactics’ card – both available on the [Learning Tool](#) website
- Offer the Samaritans Suicide Prevention training course ‘Managing Suicidal Contacts’ to all staff – courses can be booked free of charge by emailing [railcompanies@samaritans.org](mailto:railcompanies@samaritans.org)
- Find out more about [Secure Stations Accreditation](#), a scheme all Network Rail stations are committed to achieving with the aim of both reducing crime and safeguarding vulnerable passengers
- Use volunteer leave to support a local homeless charity – for example, help refurbish or run an employability session at a local day centre

- Consider how you can use your station space to support the homeless community, from running a large-scale event like the annual Christmas meals held at Birmingham New Street, to taking clothing donations from customers on the concourse or running a food bank in the station car park. Other options may include offering void retail space to a local homeless charity for an outreach service or charity shop, holding coffee mornings for their clients, or creating a Big Issue seller’s pitch on the concourse

## 6. Volunteering to address homelessness

Network Rail employees are entitled to up to 5 days volunteer leave per year. Volunteering is an effective way to support charities who work with people experiencing homelessness. For example, you could:

<p>Help with decorating or gardening at a day centre or service</p>	<p>Run a CV and interview skills workshop to help people back into work</p>	<p>Sort stock at a food bank</p>
<p>Hold a bucket collection with your team at your station</p>	<p>Offer your skills in administration or social media to a homeless charity</p>	<p>Organise an event at your station like a clothes collection, Christmas present wrapping stall or sleepout</p>

You may wish to fundraise or volunteer for one of our national charity partners as well charities local to you. Network Rail’s charitable theme for Control Period 6 (CP6) – Routes out of Homelessness – was launched in 2019. The Routes out of Homelessness initiative is a five-year partnership with five national charities: Railway Children, End Youth Homelessness, Shelter, Crisis and The Big Issue Foundation.

## 7. How to set up an outreach service at your station

The Cambridge Dictionary defines outreach as “an effort to bring services or information to people where they live or spend time”. Station staff have many priorities to juggle and are not qualified or expected to provide ongoing support to people sleeping rough in and around the railway. We should consider how we can realistically raise awareness of rough sleeping and provide the right tools for staff to manage related situations. In some cases, we may want to find a local partner who already has an outreach service that can include the station in their patrols, or we might be able to join existing partnerships such as Camden Safer Streets. In some instances, we may also consider contracting bespoke services.

Not every station will need or have the resources to support a dedicated outreach service, however such services have had success at Network Rail managed stations in the past. The scope and cost of each service will differ, but below are some tips when considering introducing outreach at your station.

### **7.1 Determining need and opportunity**

1. Assess the main challenges associated with rough sleeping at your station (e.g. substance misuse, mental health issues, trespass, assault).
2. Working with key rail stakeholders (e.g., British Transport Police, train operating companies, retail units), collect as much data as possible on the current situation within your station so that you can justify any actions/budget required, measure the success of the intervention and tailor the intervention to have maximum impact.
3. Seek out and engage with any local authority or third sector partners around the station with whom you might work to address rough sleeping. They might, for example, have outreach teams available who you can work with.
4. If no suitable local partners are available, consider create a business case for a bespoke outreach service.
5. Identify any sources of external funding that you might apply to fund the outreach service or other ways of addressing rough sleeping at the station.
6. When budget has been secured, move on to procure the service.

### **7.2 Procuring the service**

7. Apply all relevant regulation and Network Rail rules and guidelines, throughout.
8. Start working with colleagues in Commercial and Procurement (C&P) as early as possible.
9. Draw up a scope of what you want to achieve. Make sure you are realistic in your aspirations. Consider how success will be assessed.
10. Consider the duration of the service required – accounting for a period of set up for the service and the potential challenges of re-tendering after short-term contracts (e.g., people moving on for job security, time restraints, possible gaps in service)
11. Attend relevant Investment Panel(s) to seek budget approval. Upon approval, work with Finance to obtain OP codes and authorisation
12. Design and undertake a publicly advertised, competitive procurement process. Consider how the most suitable and cost-effective providers might be third sector organisations (e.g.: charities, social enterprises or community interest companies) and so identify and reduce unnecessary barriers to them competing before going out to market.
13. Remember that it can take a few months to progress from scope creation to going out to tender and several further months again before contract award.
14. Work with Contracts and Procurement to finalise the contract and get it signed.

### 7.3 Project set-up

15. Finalise key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor and use as success measures – for example:

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	% of total referrals
<b>Access to services</b>	
ID secured	60 %
Bank account set up	40 %
Benefits accessed	40 %
Registered with GP	50 %
Registered with dentist	30 %
Mental health support accessed	20 %
Substance misuse support accessed	20 %
<b>Accommodation outcomes</b>	
Homeless assessment	80 %
Secured bed in emergency accommodation	30 %
Secured temporary accommodation	30 %
Secured permanent accommodation	5 %
<b>Sustained accommodation</b>	
3 months	5 %

16. Identify a space that can be used for outreach workers to be based (this could be a co-branded stand in a visible location within the station) and have private conversations with people
17. Appoint a pro-active lead to manage the project and be the single point of contact for the service provider
18. Undertake benchmarking by sending a set of questions to station staff to understand the current situation and perceptions, to repeat after the project (e.g., what is your understanding of the issues of rough sleeping and homelessness; how much time do you spend managing situations involving rough sleeping; how confident are you in approaching someone who is presenting as rough sleeping; what training have you received to address rough sleeping)?
19. Agree frequency of invoicing with service provider (periodic is recommended – the service provider will need to understand that this does not directly align with calendar months)
20. Arrange governance and reporting structures with the service provider – for example, periodic reports and review meetings to discuss progress against KPIs and emerging risks, issues and opportunities. A periodic report may include the following sub-headings alongside progress against KPIs:

<b>Highlights this period:</b>
<b>Planned work for next period:</b>
<b>Problems encountered/risks identified:</b>
<b>Requests/questions to board:</b>
<b>Upcoming events/comms:</b>
<b>Network Rail benefits/feedback:</b>
<b>Case study:</b>



21. Brief all staff appropriately, and consider how to integrate associated messaging into existing training resources (e.g., introduce the new service and include updates in existing team briefs – although face-to-face or virtual sessions with the outreach team are also recommended to explain the referral process)

#### 7.4 Project delivery

22. Hold regular meetings with the service provider and key stakeholders (e.g.; BtP representative) to address any emerging risks and issues and share best practice and ideas for continuous improvement
23. Diarise finance reviews to check over or under spend periodically
24. Report on progress to senior management and Regional stakeholders as appropriate
25. Arrange lessons learnt sessions with the relevant stakeholders before the project draws to a close
26. You can report on the social value and return on investment of your project using the Rail Social Value Tool

## 8. Case studies

### 8.1 Shelter outreach services at Birmingham New Street and Manchester Piccadilly stations

#### 8.1.1 Background



Between October 2020 and November 2021, Network Rail and Shelter delivered a 12-month pilot project which supported people who sleep rough in and around Manchester Piccadilly and Birmingham New Street stations in England to access and sustain accommodation. It also offered referrals to mental health and substance misuse support services, to help clients overcome complex barriers to securing and keeping a home.

Through the pilot, Network Rail funded Shelter to provide a Local Stakeholder Manager, two Outreach Engagement Workers and a Volunteer and Training Coordinator in each location, plus a mental health worker in Manchester and substance misuse services in Birmingham. Several of the

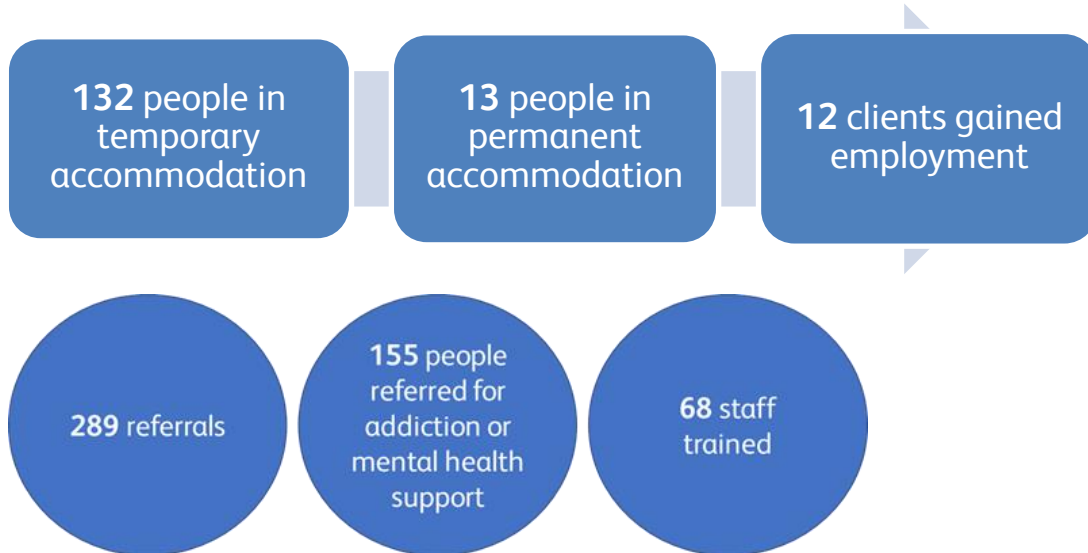
staff involved have themselves experienced homelessness, substance misuse and/or entered the criminal justice system, and so were truly able to understand the support required.

Through training delivered by Shelter, Network Rail station staff were given a basic understanding of the issues faced by rough sleepers, the confidence to approach rough sleepers, and the information to make a referral to Shelter Engagement Workers to access support for the individual. By making the right interventions on the station, Network Rail colleagues were able to support homeless people to get the help they need. The training package design was supported by a previous Shelter service user utilising their lived experience of homelessness.

The project took a user centred approach, tailoring the support given to the needs of the individual. As well as supporting clients with their acute needs, the team were also able to support them to access benefits, register with a GP or dentist, obtain ID and set up a bank account.

Working with local stakeholders, including the British Transport Police and Train Operating Companies, the teams were better able to engage with vulnerable people and signpost them to support.

### 8.1.2 Impact



During the pilot we engaged with 289 people, supported 132 into temporary accommodation, 13 into settled accommodation and 12 into employment with a mixture of full time, part time and permitted earnings work – including 1 service user who has been offered part-time work with Shelter whilst he completes his University degree. 155 people were referred for addiction or mental health support. At the end of the pilot, none of the clients supported had returned to rough sleeping. If accommodation benefits are maintained for 12 months, the pilot will have delivered a social value of £2,489,207.00 – representing a 356 % social return on investment.

68 Network Rail station staff were trained and positive feedback has been received:

- 91 % said that the training was of an appropriate level
- 83 % said they have been able to use what they've learnt in their roles
- 89 % said the trainer was excellent

*“Until I met Shelter, my life felt pointless with no end in sight. The engagement workers seemed to really understand everything that I'd been through, and when they reached out it felt like someone had thrown me a lifeline. They told me about my options, ones that I never knew were even available to me, and for the first time in years I have hope. I feel like I have a real chance to turn my life around.”* Ryan, Rough Sleeping on Rail Outreach Service User

*“This pilot has meant that we can reach out to people outside of our usual environment and be there when people might need someone the most. If you're used to being ignored on the street, or worse, you can start to lose hope and we've been able to help restore that. We've been able to offer advice and support, helping people who had been sleeping rough to find safe*

accommodation. We know that home is everything, and together with our partners we're able to help people find and keep theirs." Liz, Services Manager Manchester, Shelter

### 8.1.3 Lessons learned

We would recommend the following for those looking to run a similar initiative:

- Ensure all staff are given in-depth briefings before work starts
- Carefully consider timings for start of the project (e.g., avoiding busier times for station teams)
- Build in a suitable feasibility and implementation period
- Consider which other organisations should be collaborated with (e.g., in the wider transport industry/city)
- Set clear expectations at the outset
- Collect as much data and benchmarking details as possible before starting

## 8.2 Tap to donate units at stations



Customers are often keen to know how else they can support people experiencing homelessness when approached by someone begging.

For several years we have welcomed Tap London into our London stations, enabling station users to make a £3 donation to homeless charities in the capital through a single tap of their contactless card.

In 2021, we launched a similar initiative with our five charity partners for CP6 (Big Issue Foundation, Crisis, End Youth Homelessness, Railway Children and Shelter).

Railway Children supporters Worldline teamed up with payment experts Evoke Create to install contactless kiosks at Birmingham New Street, Edinburgh Waverly, Leeds, Manchester Piccadilly and Reading stations, allowing people passing through to donate to our partners with a single tap. The terminals can take a gift of between £3 and £15 in a matter of seconds straight from a payment card.

## 8.3 Christmas meal at Birmingham New Street station



Birmingham New Street Christmas 2019

On Christmas Eve 2021, volunteers from Network Rail, Train Operating Companies and Mitie came together to host Birmingham New Street's annual Christmas Eve meal for over 200 people from the local street community.

With support from Birmingham City Council's environmental health officers, a queuing system was put in place to enable social distancing and shelter while a three

course vegetarian meal and hot drinks were prepared by nearby charities Midland Langar Seva Society (MLSS) and the Community Relief Foundation (CRF).

Carol singers provided entertainment while Father Christmas handed out gifts which had been donated by the local community through the Ummah Care Foundation and wrapped by volunteers. As the festivities took place, Birmingham City Council also attended to offer free vaccinations and Shelter's station outreach team were on hand to provide support to staff and guests, while several media outlets joined to cover the event.

A separate event operations plan should be considered for larger scale events detailing how assets will be used and protected and the control measures for keeping guests safe.

A communications plan should also be in place to accommodate the related interest likely to be shown by the media and public.

#### 8.4 Sleep-out fundraising events at stations



Our second annual sleep-out event at railway stations took place in January 2020, to raise awareness and money for Network Rail's CP6 charity partner, Railway Children. The event was sponsored by infrastructure contractor VolkerRail and involved 330 participants from across the industry, at nine stations including Glasgow Central, London Bridge and Manchester Piccadilly. A whopping £150,000 was raised.

### 9. Further information, contacts and materials

#### 9.1 StreetLink (England and Wales)



If you know that an individual is sleeping rough, then the best way for you to help is to make a referral to StreetLink. StreetLink is operated in England and Wales by St Mungo's and Homeless Link and helps the public connect people they see rough sleeping with local support services. The easiest way to make a StreetLink referral is to download the app, however reports can also be made online at [www.streetlink.org.uk](http://www.streetlink.org.uk) or [Streetlink London](http://Streetlink London), or by calling 0300 500 0914. Under new General Data Protection regulations (GDPR), you will need to register with the service online before making a referral, which only takes a few minutes. When making a referral, remember to include the location a person is sleeping, what times they are seen and a good description.

#### 9.2 Services in Scotland

Simon Community has dedicated outreach teams who offer immediate support or advice to rough sleepers. With hubs in both Edinburgh and Glasgow, Simon Community provides drop-in sessions, support and basic amenities. For urgent help, call Simon Community on 0808 1782323 or email the team at [mail@streetwork.org.uk](mailto:mail@streetwork.org.uk). If you see a rough sleeper in Glasgow, the Simon Community

Rough Sleepers and Vulnerable People Service (RSVP) should be able to assist. RSVP also have a street team that work across Glasgow City to support rough sleepers up until 23:00; after this time they can be contacted via the Freephone number 0800 027 7466 or an online form available [here](#). Other partner agencies such as Cyrenians and Rock Trust also support Network Rail managed stations in Scotland.

### 9.3 Day Centres

You can find local day centres via Homeless Link at <http://www.homeless.org.uk/search-homelessness-services>. Enter your town/city or postcode and select 'Day Centre' from the drop-down filter. Please only direct people if you are confident that the day centres offer what the individual is seeking; this information can be found on the above website.

You can also find support at [Crisis Skylight locations](#).

### 9.4 Winter Shelters

When temperatures are projected to fall to zero or below for three or more days, Local Authorities activate Severe Weather Emergency Protocols (SWEP). Outreach teams undertake extra shifts to ensure that they meet as many people as possible to offer them a SWEP bed. Usually, these beds would be provided through temporary emergency winter shelters, however due to the pandemic local authorities are having to find alternative self-contained accommodation which may mean finding shelter at this time is harder than usual, and more people may be looking for shelter at stations. Contact your local authority homeless team to find out what local provision there is in your area and how to signpost people to these services.

### 9.5 Contact telephone numbers

**Shelter: 0808 800 4444**

**Samaritans: 116 123**

**British Transport Police: Call 0800 40 50 40 or text 61016**

**In an emergency call 999**

### 9.6 Rough Sleeping on Rail Charter

Read more about what we are doing to address rough sleeping through the Rough Sleeping on Rail Charter [here](#).

### 9.7 Network Rail station toolkit

More information on how to manage rough sleeping at stations can be found in the [Station Toolkit](#).