



From enforcement to ending homelessness: How police forces, local authorities and the voluntary sector can best work together.

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Foreword

In the 21st century it's not right that any human is forced to live on the streets. That's why we are delighted to co-produce this short, practical guide designed to help police forces, local authorities and other frontline practitioners work together to address street homelessness.

Throughout coronavirus pandemic we have seen evidence of how important it is that police forces and local authorities work in partnership with health services, third sector organisations, local business and communities to keep people safe from harm.

There is a clear commitment from national government, across England and Wales, to end rough sleeping, as well as recognition that no single agency can deliver this alone.

The 'Policing Vision 2025' reinforces the importance of local agencies working collaboratively, with local communities, to understand, intervene and resolve the problems that can damage lives and lead to crime and anti-social behaviour.

Frontline professionals everywhere understand that all too often, they encounter the same individuals over, and over again. If the evidence demonstrates enforcement action alone is not working, potentially pushing people away from the support services they need, then we should review the way we respond.

Understanding the range of local support services available, and how to refer into them, is critical. This will not only make it easier for police officers and other frontline professionals to do their job, but most importantly, it will improve the consistency and quality of services offered to those in most need of them.

The best practice examples highlighted in this guide demonstrate just how much great work is taking place. It is our hope that sharing them will help to drive better, collaborative problem solving interventions in this crucial area of work.



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Introduction

Rough sleeping is the most visible and extreme form of homelessness. It deeply harms the individuals who experience it, and the communities we live in.

In cases where people are forced to sleep rough, the best response is for swift action to help people away from the street. Partnership working and collaboration are key, involving outreach services that link a person to suitable support and housing. Trauma informed, person-centred services, which respond to housing markets and the needs of the individual who is sleeping rough or begging are the best approaches.

In many cases the police are called upon to take a role in engaging with people who are sleeping rough or begging. However, police forces are not necessarily the best placed agency to address the root causes of rough sleeping and begging.

Both English and Welsh governments have committed to end rough sleeping. Recognising that a cross sector approach is needed where the police work in partnership with local authorities, wider public bodies and local partner agencies.

The coronavirus pandemic has shown us how much we depend on others for help and support and to stay safe. Working together, services took collective responsibility to ensure that everyone was offered a safe place to stay and proved how much we can achieve when we work in partnership.

Aim of this guide

This document is a shorter version of a full guide developed by Crisis, in partnership with the National Police Chiefs' Council, to support the work of police forces and local authorities in finding appropriate and proportionate alternatives to enforcement.

The full guide covers in more detail what we know about rough sleeping and begging, types of homelessness and how they can affect people differently. It also discusses trauma and the links to homelessness; how this should inform our responses and how we approach and engage with people who are sleeping rough and/or begging.

The full guide also brings together a range of initiatives which demonstrate how the police can and do, contribute to local partnerships and new ways of working that enable people to access the housing and support they need to move away from the streets for good.

For the purpose of this shorter version we have highlighted approaches that support a person-centred response, cross sector working and approaches which illustrate what can be achieved through partnerships and multi-agency collaborations.

This shorter guide briefly covers:

- What we know about homelessness, rough sleeping and begging.
- People who are more exposed to risk when sleeping rough.
- Policing, rough sleeping and begging.
- Trauma and links to homelessness.
- How multi-agency partnerships can help to end homelessness.
- Practice examples of different approaches and ways of working in partnership.
- Links to organisations and additional information.

Both guides support the work of police forces, local authorities and partner agencies and help achieve both English¹ and Welsh government's² aims as set out in their rough sleeping strategies and action plans.

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/733421/Rough-Sleeping-Strategy_WEB.pdf

² <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-03/rough-sleeping-action-plan.pdf>

What we know about homelessness

Many people are pushed into rough sleeping and begging as they have experienced trauma, poverty, have unmet support needs and have been excluded from the housing market, due to a lack of affordable housing, for example.³

The constant pressure of high rents and low wages when combined with a negative life event such as losing a job, fleeing domestic abuse, or relationship breakdown can become unbearable and drive people already on the brink into homelessness.⁴

Homelessness can also occur when people transition from a state institution such as prison or hospital and when people leave care or asylum accommodation with no home to go. Sadly, these opportunities for the state to help prevent homelessness are too often missed.

There are different types of homelessness, but they can also be linked, and people can experience more than one type of homelessness. People may be sleeping rough, sofa surfing or living in unsuitable or temporary accommodation. People can also be regarded as being statutory homeless, whereby the legal definition is applied, and this will

have specific local authority duties attached, depending on individual circumstances.

Research by Crisis, for example, found that people 'sofa surfing' in Great Britain were more likely to have come from other insecure housing situations, including sleeping rough, and were often forced back into these situations again after a period sofa surfing.⁵

Rough sleeping is not usually the first form of homelessness people experience. The hidden nature of rough sleeping makes numbers difficult to estimate.

The coronavirus pandemic and actions taken by local governments have actually shown us that levels of homelessness are much higher than we knew. For England; the overall number of people accommodated, as of January 2021 was 37,430⁶ and in Wales, the overall number of individuals placed in temporary

³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/793471/Homelessness_-_REA.pdf

⁴ <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/types-of-homelessness/homelessness-projections-core-homelessness-in-great-britain-2017/>

⁵ Sanders, B., Boobis, S., and Albanese, F. (2019) 'It was like a nightmare' The reality of sofa surfing in Britain today. London: Crisis

⁶ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021) Coronavirus (COVID-19) emergency accommodation survey data: January 2021. London: MHCLG. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-emergency-accommodation-survey-data-january-2021>



accommodation between August and December 2020 was 5,010.⁷

In 2020, governments provided emergency accommodation to those who were sleeping rough or at risk of doing so. In the same year, in England, we saw a decrease of 37% in the number of people sleeping rough relative to the previous year, a decline much larger than anything seen in recent history.⁸ Wales saw the numbers of people sleeping rough decline by 40% between August and December 2020.⁹ These figures highlight that there are other tools available, which will support government aims to reduce rough sleeping. Working collectively and proactively to provide housing and support, rather than the use of enforcement to move people away from the streets.

COVID-19 statistics



Jan 2021

37,430

England; the overall number of people accommodated, as of **January 2021 was 37,430.**



Aug-Dec 2020

5,010

Wales; the overall number of individuals placed in temporary accommodation between **August and December 2020 was 5,010.**

⁷ Statistics Wales (2021) Homelessness accommodation provision and rough sleeping: December 2020. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government. <https://gov.wales/homelessness-accommodation-provision-and-rough-sleeping-december-2020>

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2020/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2020>

⁹ <https://gov.wales/homelessness-accommodation-provision-and-rough-sleeping-december-2020>

People who are more exposed to risk when sleeping rough

Sleeping rough is dangerous for everyone but the evidence shows some groups of people are more exposed to risk and need targeted help to relieve the pressures they face.

Women sleeping rough carry the added burden of gender-based violence and abuse before, during, and after their time on the streets. Hiding from harm can mean that women are not receiving support from homelessness services and are also missing from statistics.¹⁰

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning or Queer (LGBTQ) people can be more at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping, if their support systems of family and friends do not accept their sexual orientation or gender identity. Not having a 'family' who cares has significant impacts on people's ability to navigate healthy relationships and can increase vulnerability when someone is experiencing street homelessness.¹¹

People with 'no recourse to public funds' are unable to access many forms of state help, such as welfare benefits and housing assistance. They are at high risk of rough sleeping and may feel forced into begging because of the lack of alternatives.

Evidence suggests that cognitive impairment is disproportionately over represented in homelessness populations.¹² Conditions such as, a brain injury, learning disability or difficulty and autism can often go unidentified, especially when paired with substance use or a mental health issue. As do some of the difficulties people may face when it comes to communication, emotional responses and managing change and in turn this can inhibit someone's ability to develop or maintain relationships, engage with services and manage a tenancy.¹³

A recent Shelter England report highlighted that a quarter, 24 per cent, of people making homelessness applications to local councils in England are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups, even though they make up just 11 per cent of all households in England.¹⁴ The Race Equality Foundation have also highlighted that there are substantial differences among ethnic groups

relating to the types of homelessness that people experience.¹⁵ 'A rapid evidence assessment of what works in homelessness services', carried out by The Social Care Institute for Excellence suggested that cultural needs need to be built into services, and in order to do this we need to improve Black, Asian and Minority engagement and involvement, so that person-centred services can be developed.¹⁶

¹⁰ <https://www.mungos.org/app/uploads/2018/10/Women-and-Rough-Sleeping-Report-2018-Summary.pdf>

¹¹ Stonewall Housing, Finding safe spaces Understanding the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans* rough sleepers 2014

¹² <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/hsc.12682>

¹³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6849546/>

¹⁴ https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/black_people_are_more_than_three_times_as_likely_to_experience_homelessness

¹⁵ <https://raceequalityfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/housing-brief15.pdf>

¹⁶ Sheikh, S and Teeman D, Social Care Institute for Excellence (2018) A rapid evidence assessment of what works in homelessness services, London: Crisis

Policing, rough sleeping and begging

Many police forces are under pressure to deal with rough sleeping, begging and street-based activities and a significant amount of time is spent in response to these issues. Local authority homelessness teams and other specialist local services are better placed and should in almost all cases lead the response, especially through rough sleeping outreach teams. Police may be the service that is called but they do not have all the tools needed to help people on the street to access accommodation and support.¹⁷

Where genuine antisocial behaviour is taking place, this should be dealt with and enforcement plays a crucial role, alongside offers of housing and support for those who need it. Of course, where people are engaged in crime such as drug dealing, harassment or intimidation, this should be taken seriously and dealt with by the police.¹⁸

The evidence shows enforcement activity without an offer of support can displace people physically to other locations, potentially further away from support services and also make people feel more lonely and more isolated.¹⁹ Other evidence shows it can also lead to 'activity displacement', where people engage in potentially riskier behaviour, such as shoplifting or street-based sex work, instead of begging.²⁰

Evidence also shows a "strong overlap" between street homelessness and begging.²¹ Research finds that this group has a higher incidence of mental health issues compared with physical health problems, underlining the need for a psychologically informed approach.²²

¹⁷ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/

¹⁸ Morris, N (2019) 'Scrap the Act' The Case for repealing the Vagrancy Act (1824), p 54. London: Crisis

¹⁹ Sanders, B., and Albanese, F. (2017) An examination of the scale and impact of enforcement interventions on street homeless people in England and Wales. London: Crisis

²⁰ Johnsen, S (2016), Enforcement and interventionist responses to rough sleeping and begging: opportunities, challenges and dilemmas, ESRC

²¹ Johnsen, S (2016), Enforcement and interventionist responses to rough sleeping and begging: opportunities, challenges and dilemmas

²² Shelter Scotland (2019), Street Begging in Edinburgh, Edinburgh: Shelter Scotland



Chris, a former police officer from Guildford, tells his story:

"I personally never found it comfortable arresting someone for rough sleeping or begging. The only good thing that came out of it was them being able to have a cup of tea and biscuit in the station and use the toilet. Just to help them get warm for a short while, but then they went straight back to the street. The real reasons for homelessness, like relationship breakdown, poverty and job losses, are not solved by criminalising people. They were just moved on. It never solved the problem."

Trauma and links to homelessness

Homelessness in adults is more likely amongst those who have experienced a history of childhood adversity and poverty.²³ People who are in the criminal justice system, who use substances, and access homeless services have often experienced trauma.

Police and the criminal justice system are generally not the best lead agencies to help people out of these circumstances and contact with police and criminal justice services can lead to further trauma for the individual if they do not help address the root causes.²⁴

These experiences not only impact on people's physical and mental health, they also make it more difficult for people to move away from the streets. Capacity needs to be built into services across sectors in order to take a multi-agency, trauma-informed approach to the vulnerable child or adult.²⁵

The link between police forces and wider support services is critical to putting effective responses in place to address the root causes of a person's situation and not just deal with the presenting issues.

Crisis research found that any contact with police, or any agency that offers support or outreach, is an opportunity to ensure a person on the streets is linked to support that can help them away from homelessness.²⁶

²³ <https://phw.nhs.wales/files/aces/voices-of-those-with-lived-experiences-of-homelessness-and-adversity-in-wales-informing-prevention-and-response-2019/>

²⁴ Morris, N (2019) 'Scrap the Act' The Case for repealing the Vagrancy Act (1824). London: Crisis

²⁵ <https://phw.nhs.wales/files/aces/voices-of-those-with-lived-experiences-of-homelessness-andadversity-in-wales-informing-prevention-and-response-2019/>

²⁶ Sanders, B., and Albanese, F. (2017), An examination of the scale and impact of enforcement interventions on street homeless people in England and Wales, London: Crisis

People who have experienced four or more adverse childhood experiences are:



20 times

more likely to have been incarcerated at any point in their lifetime.



4 times

more likely to be a drinker at high risk.



14 times

more likely to have been a victim of violence in the past 12 months.



15 times

more likely to have committed violence against another person in the past 12 months.

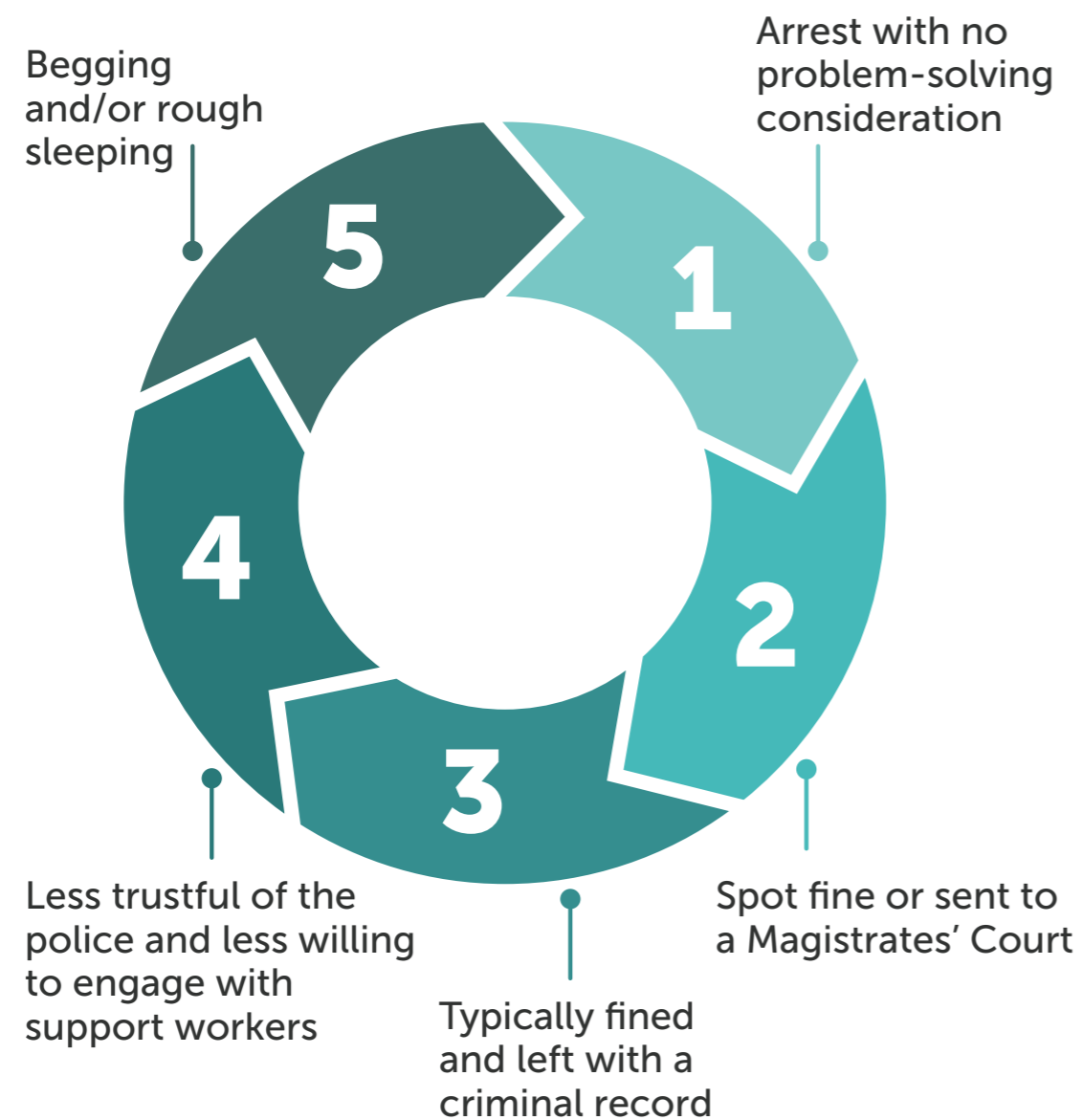


How multi-agency partnerships can help to end homelessness

The full guide identifies practices and initiatives that are already taking place across England, Wales and further afield, and highlights many police forces who are already working in partnership and collaborating to find long-term solutions to end homelessness and begging. Below we provide a brief overview of some of the approaches and initiatives that could be implemented, all of which rely on working collaboratively and developing partnerships that enable local solutions to be found which meet the needs of the community it serves.

Working together to break the cycle

Negative cycle



Positive interventions



Each section heading below corresponds with steps 1-4 on the right-hand side of the info graph.

1	Police and local authority enforcement officers paired with outreach teams to identify and engage rough sleepers into support	Useful links
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assertive Outreach • Promotion and use of StreetLink app • Understanding of adverse childhood experiences – Homelessness in young people and adults is one of the negative effects that has been associated with adversity in childhood • Trauma-informed homelessness training – Developed and delivered in partnership with people who have lived experience and national or local homelessness charities or outreach teams • Local induction training – Have local induction or training sessions delivered by a homelessness organisation that include scenario-based training and visits to local projects • Place-Based trauma-informed training – Where all local charities, organisations, local authority departments, police and other emergency services all undertake the same trauma-informed training • Establishing trauma-informed approaches to policing. 	<p>StreetLink</p> <p>Voices of those with lived experiences of homelessness and adversity in Wales 2019</p> <p>Police Scotland – Trauma-informed policing</p> <p>ACE training for Welsh police forces</p> <p>Manchester – Ace aware and trauma-informed strategy</p>

2	Rough sleepers referred to support workers and housing options for a comprehensive assessment of needs	Useful links
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local knowledge and neighbourhood policing – Building relationships with and getting to know local charities, faith-based organisations, day centres and hostels • Police working in partnership with assertive outreach and local authority housing teams – Providing person-centred support that is persistent and purposeful. In some contexts, enforcement is used alongside assertive outreach • Understanding of local housing and support options – to be able to swiftly link with local authority housing departments, emergency, temporary and supported accommodation and Housing First projects • NHS / mental health street triage teams delivering training to local police forces • The development and use of local information cards / pocket guides – Detailing information on local services, access to facilities, food, emergency accommodation and support that can be handed to people • Multidisciplinary outreach health and mental health triage teams • Multi-agency / mental health control room or street triage – to ensure that the correct services and support are deployed and potentially freeing up police time • Understanding of how everyone's experience of homelessness is different – importance of individualised responses – also think about the specialised services available in the area to support young people, women, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, people who may have a cognitive impairment, such as a learning disability or autism and services for people who do not have recourse to public funds. 	<p>Simon Community – Stay Warm, Stay Safe – information cards</p> <p>Humberside Police – building relationships with local hostel</p> <p>Public Health Approaches in Policing</p> <p>GMP working with Outreach Teams and partner agencies during coronavirus</p> <p>Gender Sensitive Trauma Approach Guidance (P36)</p> <p>Northamptonshire Police Liaison & Triage</p>

3	Immediate access to housing, and support for mental health and drug or alcohol-related addictions, alongside employment and training services	Useful links
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health out of hours 'Sanctuary' schemes that can support people at risk of deteriorating mental health • Medical and personal care to homeless people in hospital and on discharge • Access to GPs and primary health care for people experiencing homelessness • Multidisciplinary teams, services include the police, probation, the local authority, primary and secondary health care services, social services, housing charities, outreach teams and therapeutic services • Holistic drop-in centres for street drinkers – partnered with NHS (where consumption of alcohol is permitted) • Multi-agency / multidisciplinary access hubs or day centres – working collaboratively • Developing strategies in partnership with people with lived experience • Support to increase confidence, build skills, access training and employment opportunities – including specialist services for ex-offenders • Street vulnerability multi-agency meetings / co-ordination cells Regular meetings with all relevant agencies, including the police, probation, housing providers, drug and alcohol services, community groups and mental and physical health services. 	<p>Twilight Sanctuary Scheme</p> <p>Pathway – access to GP and medical services</p> <p>Cardiff Council Multidisciplinary Team</p> <p>Leicester Day Centre 'No 5'</p> <p>Liverpool's REST Project</p> <p>Community Care Collaborative – Wrexham hub</p> <p>Manchester Homelessness Partnership</p> <p>Multi-Agency Meeting – Practice Toolkit</p> <p>Nacro</p> <p>Wallich – BOSS project</p>

4	Permanent accommodation with ongoing holistic support to maintain a tenancy	Useful links
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing First Schemes <p>Police and criminal justice alternatives to enforcement activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support intervention programmes to prevent or defer prosecution, to reduce victims of crime and reoffending 'Traffic light' partnership hub initiatives – staged approach to support and enforcement interventions relating to begging Assertive partnership multi-agency engagement hubs relating to begging Whole system approach to provide an alternative to the criminal justice system Proactive engagement and enforcement projects with 24/7 access to support and health care Intensive criminal justice support services to help prevent reduce reoffending. <p>Liaison and Diversion Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding of the Liaison and Diversion NHS Service Specification Diversion from custody to place of safety or to accident and emergency. Criminal Justice Liaison and Diversion support delivered in partnership with those who have lived experience. 	<p><u>Threshold evaluation report – Housing first for women</u></p> <p><u>Housing First – Its impact in the community</u></p> <p><u>Durham Police</u></p> <p><u>North Wales Police</u></p> <p><u>Essex Police – Operation Luscombe</u></p> <p><u>Greater Manchester Police</u></p> <p><u>Supporting young people in Gwent</u></p> <p><u>Essex Open Roads Projects</u></p> <p><u>Derby City Mission</u></p> <p><u>NHS England Service Specification</u></p> <p><u>Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership</u></p> <p><u>Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust – Liaison and Diversion</u></p>

Closing comments

Multi-agency partnership working, alongside a good understanding of local resources and developing relationships with local services, will help to more effectively link people who are rough sleeping and/or begging to the right individualised support and housing. Better use of this approach could result in fewer people coming into contact with the police and criminal justice services in the first place.

The National Police Chiefs' Council's *Policing Vision 2025* says that they will "support multi-agency neighbourhood projects that build more cohesive communities and solve local problems – recognising that it will often not be realistic for the police to play the central role".²⁷

As examples of new practice and evidence come to light, we will update and republish both guides. For the guide to be a practical and useful document, it would be greatly appreciated if details of any new initiatives that are piloted or embedded into services that provided support to people who are sleeping rough, begging or engaged in street-based activities across England or Wales, could be shared with the Crisis Best Practice Team.

If you would like to let us know about any new initiatives or if you have any questions regarding the content of this or the full guide please contact us at: Bestpractice@crisis.org.uk

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Together
we will end
homelessness