

Practice example - Liverpool: A working partnership between Whitechapel and the Police

The Goldzone is a Police team of 1 Sergeant and 10 Constables, part funded by Liverpool City Council responsible for City Centre Patrols.

Whitechapel Centre (both a Day Centre and provider of Street Outreach in the City, funded by Liverpool City Council): Visit the [website](#) [2] for more information.

Background

The relationship between the Police and the voluntary sector in Liverpool has improved significantly over recent years with successful results. In 2008, in response to a high level of complaints and to reduce the number of rough sleepers, the police carried out a number of 'sweeps' using the Vagrancy Act. However, without being able to offer any options to people arrested for begging or sleeping rough, individuals were simply released from court and often this reoccurred several times. Often those with no means to pay were fined.

In response to this 'vicious cycle,' the police took a different approach and formed a better working relationship with the Whitechapel Centre and other homeless agencies. They increasingly engaged rough sleepers in conversation about their circumstances and provided information about the services available. Now, if the police are particularly concerned about an individual, they bring them on a voluntary basis to the Whitechapel Centre.

At this time, the local authority led a re-orientation to the approach of dealing with rough sleepers, making it clear that in accordance with the Rough Sleeping Strategy no one should have to sleep. Following a multi-agency research project to establish more accurately the true nature and extent of rough sleeping in the city, a more personalised approach to ending rough sleeping was adopted. The research showed that the issue was much larger than the official counts had identified, but that some people were getting support from a number of agencies and no one was taking the lead in co-ordinating that support.

The key outcome from this project was the development of a monthly tracking group, where the key agencies who deal with rough sleepers ([The Basement](#) [3], [The Big Issue in the North](#) [4], [The Homeless Outreach Team](#) [5], [the Whitechapel Centre and the Council](#) [2]) record the details of rough sleepers

accessing their services and then meet monthly to discuss who is still sleeping rough, why they are still sleeping rough and what barriers there are to stopping sleeping rough. Particularly complex cases are referred to the Complex Needs Panel and the police will be notified of people who have been offered a range of solutions but refuse to engage. At present all rough sleepers are offered a solution to end their rough sleeping, ranging from accessing temporary accommodation (including ring fenced beds specifically purchased by the local authority for rough sleepers), rent deposits to access the private rented sector, reconnection (both within the UK and beyond) to very personalised solutions which include a number of different options.

The Whitechapel Centre also underwent a shift in culture; there was recognition that rough sleeping is not acceptable and that the organisation needed to work to change the mindset of those choosing this lifestyle. The organisation increasingly recognises the importance of looking at reducing the negative impact of rough sleeping on individuals and on the wider community in terms of antisocial behaviour. The target of ending rough sleeping sharpened the focus of the work that the Whitechapel does.

What has worked in Liverpool

- The relationship that voluntary sector organisations, such as Whitechapel [2], have with the police is now 'relaxed and useful;' the Police refer clients to the Centre, come rapidly when needed and are sensitive about the impact of uniformed officers coming to the centre.
- There is also a rough sleeping tracker group which meets to discuss 'who is out there' and provides a wider discussion than the count.
- The Goldzone respond to intelligence about street activity and have found that better relationships with rough sleepers leads to good information.
- The police team provide rough sleepers with a useful homelessness leaflet – showing details of accommodation and advice [6]. If people are in particular need, they are taken to day centre services for support.
- Anti-Social Behaviour Orders to move people out the City Centre are considered in some cases where people who are rough sleeping have refused all offers of support. However, both the Goldzone and the Whitechapel are clear that enforcement can't work without the accompanying offer of support and if someone is entrenched in rough sleeping, then the City Council will allow funding for innovative personalised solutions.
- Whitechapel coordinate a weekly 'ring round' to other enforcement agencies such as the British Transport Police and the Community Safety Wardens to gather intelligence about rough sleeping sites.

- There is a Complex Needs Panel where people who need a multi-agency response are discussed. The Goldzone Team will attend this if required.

Impact of the approach

The last official count (carried out in March 2010) was 3, a reduction of 6 from the previous year's count which was 9. Both the outreach team and the Goldzone Team also carry out a monthly rough sleeper count.

Partners are clear that enforcement is only one part of the picture and can get people to the services, but services have to have something to offer. It really helps when the police teams have a level of familiarity with the services and can describe the role they play with confidence. The support given by the Local Authority and the Complex Needs Panel allows tailored support for those who are hardest to reach.

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