

GUIDANCE: YOUNG PEOPLE'S ROUGH SLEEPING CENSUS PILOT

1st to 7th July 2024

Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is for teams/individuals in our three pilot boroughs (Camden, Lambeth and Bromley) who are likely to encounter young people, aged 18-25, who may have slept rough **in the last three months**. This includes teams that deliver street outreach, as well as services that sometimes come across young people who are homeless, such as day centres, drug and alcohol services, food banks, immigration services and more. Homelessness/rough sleeping may, or may not, be your service's core area of support.

There is a video summary of this guidance on our [Census Hub](#). Please ensure you have watched this video before carrying out the census survey with young people.

BACKGROUND

Why is there a need for a young people's rough sleeping census?

You may be aware of, and perhaps have helped to support, the women's rough sleeping census that has been undertaken in London for the last two years. This successful project aims to bring visibility to the experiences of women who are rough sleeping in London yet may not be represented in data, policy and services.

Research, lived experience and evidence from services suggests that it's not just women that are underrepresented in the data. Like women, young people make choices when they are rough sleeping that may make them less visible to 'traditional' outreach. This means our understanding of the prevalence and nature of rough sleeping amongst young people is limited. More comprehensive data on young people's experiences of rough sleeping in London will help us better support them.

The homelessness charity Depaul UK, supported by London Councils, is undertaking a pilot of the first young people's rough sleeping census in July 2024.

Why a pilot census?

We're undertaking a pilot with three contrasting boroughs (Camden, Lambeth and Bromley) so that we can understand the impact of local context on delivery of the project. This will inform our design of a pan-London census, which we're hoping to undertake in 2025.

Importantly, the pilot gives us an opportunity to co-develop our approach to the pan-London census with service teams/those working directly with young people. Following the census week, we'll gather extensive feedback from those involved on both the census process and its materials, and make improvements together. This will help ensure the data we gather from across the capital is as robust and meaningful as possible.

What will the census pilot involve?

With the support of as many organisations as possible across the three pilot boroughs the census pilot will consist of two components:

- **CENSUS SURVEY:** A short survey will be completed with young people who have experienced rough sleeping within the three months prior to census week.
- **REFLECTIVE ACTIVITIES:** Outreach teams and services will be invited to share their experiences of undertaking the census through a range of activities, including interviews and a potential worker/staff survey.

Each pilot borough will have a census coordinator to lead and support services taking part in each area. The details of your borough's coordinator(s) are provided at the end of this guidance.

What is rough sleeping?

The young people's rough sleeping census pilot is defining young people's rough sleeping as:

Nowhere safe to go at night, or nowhere to go at all: for example, sleeping outside on the ground or in a tent, in stairwells or somewhere else that is hidden; sitting/sleeping in places that are open late or 24/7 (such as all-night restaurants) or on transport; or walking around all night.

Young people may not do this every night, and rough sleeping may be interspersed with other forms of hidden homelessness, such as staying in accommodation belonging to unknown/unsafe people, or staying with friends/family/associates on a very insecure and transitory basis (e.g. nightly or weekly, or regularly being forced to leave immediately).

CENSUS SURVEY

What do you/members of your team need to do?

1. Familiarise yourself with this guidance and watch the corresponding video explainer
2. Use the guidance to plan how you/your team will conduct the survey with young people during the week of the census pilot (1st – 7th July 2024).
3. Visit the [Young People's Rough Sleeping Census Hub](#) (on the Depaul UK website) to access all materials.
4. In line with the guidance, carry out the survey with as many young people as possible during census week.

How should street outreach teams conduct the survey with young people?

The survey should be conducted in outreach shifts during census week, 1st – 7th July 2024. We recognise that outreach teams are the experts (in both rough sleeping behaviour and local geography) and are best placed to decide how to reach young people experiencing rough sleeping.

Whilst outreach teams are free to approach census week as they see fit, we ask that where possible, shifts are 'young people-informed'. This means that teams use local intelligence to identify locations, and times of the day/night, that young people are most likely to be seen sleeping rough, and to attempt to cover these 'hotspots' during the week. Suggested locations include: inside train/tube/bus stations; all-night/late restaurants, such as McDonald's/Burger King; A&E waiting rooms.

To help us learn from your experience, please be prepared to describe your approach to reaching relevant young people in your borough after the census week.

How should services (not street outreach) conduct the survey with young people?

The survey should be conducted within services throughout the census week, 1st – 7th July 2024. Services should offer the survey to every young person (18-25) who may be experiencing rough sleeping that they meet or speak to during that week, whether in person or on the phone. The census takes place over 7 days to account for services that may be open over the weekend.

Who should outreach workers and service staff approach?

The definition of rough sleeping for the census recognises that young people who are rough sleeping may not be physically bedded down in a sleeping bag or visible during the night. We aim to reach a broader range of young people whose rough sleeping patterns and circumstances may look different.

The survey is for all young people aged 18 – 25 with experience of rough sleeping in the last three months, according to the inclusive definition of rough sleeping in this guidance.

How to approach

Professional judgement will be key to determining who to approach for the census (when a young person's housing situation may not be clear) and how to approach them (ensuring that the approach is appropriate, sensitive to young people's circumstances and not perceived as intrusive).

Workers and staff do not need to be sure of a young person's exact circumstances in order to proceed. If they would like to take part in the survey, we will be able to understand their experience from their survey responses.

Making a note of refusals

As this is a pilot study, we're interested in learning about all aspects of the census' delivery. If you approach a young person to complete the survey and they decline, it would be useful to make a note of this, recording why, so we can reflect on reasons for refusal as we plan the larger census.

Who should carry out the census survey with young people?

Street outreach shifts will be undertaken by outreach staff from each borough. In other services, their staff will undertake the survey with young people. It may be possible to supplement existing outreach/service capacity with support from the research team/Depaul UK staff where this is appropriate and arranged in advance.

Everyone supporting the delivery of the census pilot should have read this guidance – and watched the corresponding short video – before going through the survey with a young person. You can access the training video via the [Census Hub](#).

What will the survey be like and how will it be done?

The survey will be hosted on Microsoft Forms (a secure online survey platform) so outreach workers/service staff can access it easily via a smartphone or tablet. The survey link will be available to access from the [Census Hub](#) shortly before census week.

You should avoid using paper versions of the survey where possible because written information is not as secure as information held electronically. There will, however, be a paper version available on the [Census Hub](#) should you need it.

Workers and staff should explain the purpose of the research to young people and provide them with the census privacy notice. It should be made clear that participation is entirely voluntary and whether or not they take part will not affect the support they will receive from the team/service administering the survey.

So that we can see if the young people we speak to during census week are on CHAIN, at the end of the survey we'll ask for their name and date of birth. This will allow us to check CHAIN data for people with the same information. It should be made clear that young people DO NOT have to provide this information if they don't want to. If a young person does provide identifying information, we will not use it for any other purpose and will not add them to CHAIN.

Other questions in the survey will relate to:

- Number of nights young people have slept rough during the preceding three months
- Locations of rough sleeping
- Experience of hidden homelessness
- Age young people first slept rough
- Reasons for first sleeping rough

- Services that young people are accessing
- Demographic questions for analysis purposes, such as ethnicity, gender, sexuality. These questions are asked sensitively and have been developed alongside specialist agencies. There is always a 'prefer not to say' option available.

Survey translations

We are aware that many of the young people you speak to during census week will not speak English as their first language. We have reviewed CHAIN data for each pilot borough to find the most commonly spoken languages. Romanian, Tigrayan and Arabic translations are available on the [Census Hub](#).

Day centre and hotspot 'census sessions'

Day centre or building-based services

Services may wish to host a young people's census session during the pilot census week to encourage young people with experience of rough sleeping to complete the survey.

It may be possible for members of the research team, or Depaul UK staff, to attend your session to support capacity for completing the survey with young people. Please contact the census team, or your local census lead, if you would like to arrange this.

Hotspot locations

Outreach teams or services may be aware of particular locations that are well attended by young people who may be rough sleeping. These could be allocated as 'hotspot locations' that a member of the research team, or Depaul UK staff, could attend on one day of census week to complete the survey with young people.

What other information should workers have with them?

Information about local services

Any contact made with young people experiencing rough sleeping and homelessness can be an important opportunity to connect them with support, information and resources, or build on an existing relationship.

Some young people may just want to do the survey, or, if they're already engaged with services, may be already receiving appropriate support. But it is likely that for some young people reached through the census, it may be the first time they've come into contact with homelessness services.

As the census will be carried out by service staff, they will be able to provide information and advice as usual. If members of the research team, or Depaul UK staff, are administering surveys, this will be done alongside qualified staff who will be able to provide assistance should a young person need support.

Where appropriate and relevant, workers and service staff should provide the young people they speak to during the census week with information about local services that may be useful to them. Your local census leads have compiled a borough-specific service sheets for you to download from the [Census Hub](#) and use during the week.

Incentive vouchers

We can provide a £10 supermarket voucher as a thank you for young people who take part in the census survey. Vouchers will be posted to commissioned outreach teams, as well as other key participating services, by Friday 28th June. Voucher distribution will be coordinated by local census leads who will be in touch to make arrangements.

What about CHAIN?

For the women's census, outreach workers were asked to record on CHAIN that a woman had completed a census survey. We are not asking for this in the young people's census pilot, so CHAIN procedures are not affected.

What happens when surveys have been completed?

The surveys should be completed in real time with each young person. The results will go directly to the census team via the online survey platform (Microsoft Forms). Where it has been necessary to use paper copies of the survey, the information should be input into the online survey platform as soon as possible (and the paper versions destroyed with confidential waste). Survey responses dated after 7th July 2024 or submitted online later than 14th July 2024 will not be counted.

REFLECTIVE ACTIVITIES

Reflective activities (e.g. interviews with participating services) will happen in August 2024. Details will be confirmed after census week when we have a clear understanding of which organisations have participated in the pilot across each of the pilot boroughs.

Outreach teams and services will be invited to feedback activities along with full instructions for how to prepare in July 2024.

CONTACT US!

To undertake the census pilot, we're being supported by local census leads. The leads for each borough are:

- Bromley: **Alexander Olayiwola**, Rough Sleeping Coordinator for London Borough of Bromley (alexander.olayiwola@bromley.gov.uk)
- Camden: **Christine Venn.Brown**, Routes Off The Streets Coordinator for London Borough of Camden (christine.venn.brown@camden.gov.uk)
- Lambeth: **Randy Asante**, Rough Sleeping Coordinator for London Borough of Lambeth (rasante@lambeth.gov.uk) and **Silvia Obrador**, Strategic Commissioning Manager for London Borough of Lambeth (sobrador@lambeth.gov.uk)

The project lead from Depaul UK is Daniel Dumoulin, Director of Development and External Affairs. Dan is supported by external consultant, Sarah McCoy. To contact Depaul UK about the census, please use our dedicated email address: youth.census@depaulcharity.org.uk.