



Knowledge and Library Services (KLS)

Impact stories

Title: A KLS literature search on rough sleeping and street begging, conducted in August 2017, allowed local authorities to develop strategies and prevention plans to tackle this issue in a more holistic way.

User testimonial: *"KLS took an extremely wide ranging and complex scope and managed to find highly relevant, appropriate and helpful literature to underpin the review, which enabled me to develop a paper that has been received extremely positively by local authority colleagues."* **Emma Seria-Walker, Public Health Consultant in Health & Wellbeing**

Challenge: This was a challenging search due to the huge scope and number of questions involved. Homelessness is a significant issue that impacts a wide range of areas across health, social care, criminal justice and society/community more broadly, and as such, the literature available is vast. Whilst the scope refined this to a certain extent by drawing it down to rough sleepers, street sleepers and street beggars, there was still a large subset of questions within this, which made it very challenging to develop the search. For the street begging element in particular, it highlighted a gap in the evidence base in relation to this group, which was useful for future consideration.

Solution: Some of the most interesting findings were in relation to the links between early childhood trauma and the likelihood of experiencing homelessness in adulthood. Linked to this, there was some interesting work around psychologically informed environments and the importance of this in preventing/reducing the likelihood of experiencing homelessness. In addition, interventions such as *Housing First*, which focus on the importance of ensuring that an individual has a home before trying to tackle other issues such as substance misuse or mental health problems, were found to be effective in some circumstances. However, in the UK, housing supply and affordability are key barriers to such interventions. Some useful tools and guidance were identified, which have been shared.

Impact: It is a little early to assess the impact of this review in terms of whether or not the findings have led to any significant changes to local authority strategy or intervention in relation to homelessness. However, there has been a commitment to develop a 'next steps' workshop in the South East, where we will look at the findings and think about how it can be used in practice.

Success factors: As the work was requested by Portsmouth and Southampton local authorities, there was buy in from the outset, and a strong working group was established to develop the scope and comment on the drafts of the report. This has enabled them to utilise and share the findings early within their organisations, and has meant that they have been engaged throughout the process. They are now part of a small group of stakeholders in the South East, which will scope the next steps and develop plans for a possible workshop/learning event to support action.

Lessons: The scope for this review was huge and it would have perhaps been more successful if we were able to hone it down further and look at a very specific aspect of homelessness. However, despite the scale of the search, a good overview of the current state of homelessness in relation to rough sleepers and street begging has been produced. This gives an indication of some of the risk factors and drivers associated with homelessness, plus possible interventions/evidence which may support initiatives to prevent and reduce it.

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