

Revo

Retail. Property. Community.

Supporting businesses and communities to alleviate rough sleeping.

A tactics toolkit.

Whilst conducting research in order to create this toolkit Revo has consulted one of the national BIDs who has significant experience in contending with homelessness. We are hugely grateful to Manchester City Co for their time and expertise in helping us pull together this toolkit. In terms of the initial approach, the recommendations centre around three main principles:

- Engagement with the local community, whilst engagement with the third sector is paramount - only a collaborative approach among all key stakeholders will be successful.
- Do not think of it as something to be done as a token gesture in winter, but as an ongoing partnership and collaboration.
- Some behaviours associated with street vulnerability, like injecting and leaving drug litter, leaving belongings in doorways are not acceptable to the business community. CityCo focus on those behaviours and how to manage or prevent them.

Introduction.

Revo is looking at a number of issues that impact upon homelessness in the United Kingdom as part of this campaign. Homelessness has become more and more visible over the last decade, and the retail industry is uniquely placed within the issue at hand. Whilst rough sleepers a small section of those without homes, it impacts our city and town centres disproportionately to the rest of the UK, where the majority of our retail resides. Whether it is through recognising vulnerability in their own staff or providing opportunities for people currently struggling on the margins of society, this campaign is designed to provide real solutions and advice to businesses keen to make a difference for their employees and in their communities.

We have released case studies and big ideas from both retail and other industries on how they are trying to help within the homelessness issue. Examples include a case study on [Change Please](#), a social enterprise coffee start up, as well as on the [Pret Foundation](#), amongst others. We have also produced a toolkit on supporting businesses and communities to alleviate the problem of rough sleeping.

Revo have been signposting to volunteering opportunities over the Christmas period and will be continuing to do so into 2020. A key message Revo would like to express is that homelessness is not a Christmas, or a winter issue, it is something that affects people all year round, and our advice and volunteering suggestions reflect this message.



Overview.

Rough sleeping has been on a steady rise from 1,768 on a single night in 2010 to 4,677 on a single night in autumn 2018 (Homeless Link). These rises have particularly hit London & South East, the West Midlands and Yorkshire. Rough sleeping has permeated all areas of the UK and has become a normality rather than an anomaly, both in urban and rural areas. This has particularly affected the high street and the retail industry as those sleeping rough can often occupy shop doorways and pavements. Those sleeping rough are often the most vulnerable in society, therefore it is important that a compassionate, holistic, collaborative approach between businesses, local authorities and the charity sector is nurtured in order to help reduce and ultimately solve the most visible symptom of homelessness in the UK. This toolkit is focused on people who sleep rough, rather than systemic statutory homelessness. To be homeless does not have to mean sleeping on the streets, someone who has been made homeless may be in temporary accommodation or sleeping on a friend's sofa.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government defines people who sleep rough as: People sleeping, about to bed down or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, derelict boats, stations, or "bashes" which are makeshift shelters, often comprised of cardboard boxes).

Reasons for being homeless.

There are any number of reasons a person can become homeless - these include both personal and structural causes:



Personal

Individual factors:

Lack of qualifications, lack of social support, debts - especially mortgage or rent arrears, poor physical and mental health, relationship breakdown, and getting involved in crime at an early age.

Family background:

Family breakdown and disputes, sexual and physical abuse in childhood or adolescence, parents with drug or alcohol addiction, and previous experience of family homelessness.

An institutional background:

Having been in care, the armed forces, or in prison.



Structural

Unemployment, poverty, lack of affordable housing, housing policies, the structure and administration of housing benefit, wider policy developments, such as the closure of long-stay psychiatric hospitals.

Reasons given by homeless people for being homeless according to Shelter:

- Parents, friends or relatives unwilling or unable to continue to accommodate them
- Relationship breakdown, including domestic violence
- Loss of an AST (Assured Shorthold Tenancy)

Managing rough sleeping.

CityCo and Manchester Bid has found success with a collaborative approach and strategy that is aimed at getting people who sleep rough off the streets and into sheltered accommodation. They have produced a number of dos and don'ts for businesses in Manchester in regards to those living rough on the streets.

Do

- ✓ Accept you are part of city issues and solutions
- ✓ Understand the differences between homelessness, rough-sleeping, begging and anti-social behaviour
- ✓ Understand the procedures and support available through public sector partners
- ✓ Have operational procedures in place to deal with needles or human waste
- ✓ Educate your staff
- ✓ Have consistent messaging to staff and customers.

Don't:

- ✗ Wait until issues have reached crisis point - be proactive
- ✗ Take an introverted approach to building or business management. Don't look at your property in isolation, and engage with the rest of the area.
- ✗ Assume that 'someone else' will deal with it or report it
- ✗ Fail to use public sector support - even if it can be difficult to see immediate results
- ✗ Give to non-partner charities and agencies

Recommendations for businesses and local authorities.

How can businesses and local authorities come together in order to combat the issue of rough sleeping.

Whilst it is important to follow a structural plan and take inspiration from other examples, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to solving problems caused by rough sleeping as well as rough sleeping itself. It very much depends on the local situation.

Informal conversations with stakeholders are the best initial starting point.

In order to create an effective roadmap and reducing rough sleeping it is imperative to understand the needs of the local area as well the hierarchy of stakeholders.

It is also important to understand the current hierarchy. Shopping centres may often be the largest business in the area so they need to be proactive. Establish what is already being done.

Finding existing schemes in the local area and demonstrating their effectiveness.

Bring people together informally to discuss the best route to creating a scheme.

Find the expertise - these may be current schemes in other areas, e.g. CityCo in Manchester or the City of London Corporation.

Finally, find the services that already exist. These may include charities such as St Mungo's, Crisis or Centrepoint, or social enterprises in your area such as Change Please or Coffee for Change.

Create a partnership, local roadmap or reference guide for your local area.



Examples of a holistic operational structure.

The **Manchester Homelessness Partnership Charter** sets out the values for how those in the MHP would like to work:

- Stay true to your values
- Understand homelessness and avoid blame
- Be consistent
- Give informed signposting
- Build mutual relationships

There are a number of organisations and partnerships involved in the overall Homeless Strategy in Manchester and these include:

- Manchester City Council
- Cityco
- Greater Manchester Police
- Outreach groups and evening services
- Charities

The City of London's Homelessness Strategy also encourages a holistic approach among both internal and external key stakeholders.

Among internal stakeholders:

- Members of the Court of Common Council of the City of London Corporation
- Adult Social Care
- Built Environment
- Children's Social Care
- City of London Policy
- Community Safety Partnership
- Housing
- Public Health

Among external stakeholders:

- St Mungo's
- East London NHS Foundation Trust
- London Borough of Tower Hamlets
- London Probation Trust
- Pathway Homeless Team, Royal London Hospital
- Providence Row
- Toynbee Hall
- Westminster City Council

Both homelessness strategies demonstrate the importance of an approach involving large numbers of organisations, each of whom can bring their own expertise towards solving the problem in the large urban areas. Having a large number of stakeholders and clear signposting towards those who can help most allows those sleeping rough to be found and offered help as quickly as possible, thus reducing homelessness on our high streets, and helping those most vulnerable in UK society.

CityCo offers a range of workshops and tabletops to help businesses and property owners better manage the anti-social issues that can affect them. If interested, please contact rose.camm@cityco.com for more information.



About Revo

Revo is the organisation that supports all businesses in the retail property and placemaking sector. Our unique community includes private and publicly listed retailers, investors, developers and owners of retail property, as well as local councils, and advisors and consultants of all sizes who provide services to our industry. We represent over 350 corporate members and 2,200+ individuals and are key economic and social value creators for the UK economy.

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