The situation of older people becoming homeless

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Spotlight on Support for Older People Experiencing Homelessness
Homeless Link, 24 June 2015
Presentation

- Older homeless people and the growth of the older homeless population
- Likely factors contributing to this growth
- What is needed
Older homeless people

Defined as homeless people aged 50+ years

Many people aged 50+ who have been homeless for years have chronic health problems and disabilities normally linked to old age

Some have been homeless for years and have become elderly while homeless; some become homeless for the first time in later life
Growth of older homeless population

In many developed countries:

- the single homeless population is ageing;
- increasing numbers of older people are homeless

Evident in England, Australia, Canada, Japan and USA
Older homeless people in England

- Little information about number of older people who are homeless
- Number of households accepted by local authorities as priority need due to ‘old age’ gradually increased, from 600 in 2009 to 890 in 2014.
- Local authority figures are ‘tip of the iceberg’. Many more older homeless people are in hostels / on the streets.
### Rough sleepers in London

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Aged ≤ 45</th>
<th>Aged 46-55</th>
<th>Aged 56+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005/06</td>
<td>2,890</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>4,433</td>
<td>1,423</td>
<td>581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>5,227</td>
<td>1,644</td>
<td>710</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% increase 2005/06 to 2014/15:
- Aged ≤ 45: 81%
- Aged 46-55: 166%
- Aged 56+: 105%
Likely factors contributing to growth of older homeless population
Demographic changes

- In many western countries, general population is ageing: ‘baby boom’ generation and increased life expectancy.
- 10 million people in UK aged 65+ in 2010; projected to reach 15½ million in 2030 and 19 million by 2050.
- 17% of UK population aged 65+ in 2010; projected to reach 23% by 2035.
Housing changes

Housing situation of older people in many Western cities is changing:

- urban redevelopment has led to loss of low-income housing and spiralling rents in inner cities
- Decline in availability of social housing in some cities has led to increased use of private-rented sector
Private-rented sector in England

- One-third of PRS tenancies in 2012 failed to meet decent homes standard.

- Insecure tenancies. Increase in households accepted by local authorities as homeless due to ending of assured shorthold tenancies: 4,580 in 2009 and 13,560 in 2013. Increase of 196%.

- 42% of new rough sleepers (N = 2,685) in London in 2014/15 had been in PRS accommodation before becoming homeless.
Older people in the PRS

- In 2011 in England and Wales, 9.7% households aged 50-64 years, and 6.5% aged 65+ in PRS

- Many older private renters worried about: (i) ability to pay increasing rents; and (ii) the lack of security of tenure.

- Some older people in PRS have only assured shorthold tenancy agreements (for 6 months which can be extended if landlord agrees).
Economic factors

- Unemployment having impact on older people. Affects immediate financial security and ability to support self during retirement.

- Some unemployed older workers have obsolete skills, are unable to compete in job market, and experience discrimination in hiring practices.

- 2014 report (Foster et al): Work Programme moving less people aged 50+ into sustained jobs than younger people.
Work Programme job outcome rates by age
Problematic behaviours

- Growing number of older people involved in problematic behaviours that in turn can lead to homelessness.

- Estimated 1.4 million people aged 65+ in UK exceed recommended drinking limits. Those aged 46-65 (baby boomers) consume more alcohol than any previous generation.

- In our Three-Nation study, 21% of older people said alcohol problems had contributed to them becoming homeless.
Drug abuse

In England in 2012/13:

- 65,339 people aged 40+ in treatment for drug problems. Increase of 102% since 2005/06.
- 34% of all drug users in treatment were aged 40+. Compares to just 18% in 2005/06.

Growth in number of older drug users: ageing of ‘baby boomers’ whose rates of illicit drug use higher than previous older cohorts; improved health care for drug users so they are living longer.
## Prison population, England and Wales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Aged 15-49</th>
<th>Aged 50-59</th>
<th>Aged 60+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>69,220</td>
<td>3,613</td>
<td>1,655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>74,429</td>
<td>7,360</td>
<td>3,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% increase</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>104%</td>
<td>125%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004 to 2014</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Older prisoners

- Growth in numbers due to: demographic changes, and improvements in forensics leading to prosecutions for historic sex offences
- Many have chronic health problems, are estranged from family, and have no home on release.
- 2013 UK Parliamentary Inquiry into older prisoners heard: older people more likely than younger people to be homeless when released.
Conclusions
What is needed

- More attention to older homeless people and their needs and growing number. At present the group receives little specific attention from voluntary and statutory agencies.
- Planning of appropriate and dedicated services to meet the needs of older homeless people.
- A mechanism for feeding into policy-makers and service commissioners about the problems and needs of older homeless people.
Our proposal

UK COALITION ON OLDER HOMELESSNESS SHOULD BE RECONVENED (disbanded in 2010):

- To raise the profile of older people who are homeless or at risk
- To inform policy-makers / policy development about the needs of older homeless people
- To advocate for appropriate services on behalf of older homeless people

The Social Care Workforce Research Unit, King’s College London, is willing to host the Coalition.
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Homelessness Research Programme:
www.kcl.ac.uk/scwru/res/hrp/index.aspx