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# **SOUP RUNS IN CENTRAL LONDON:**

**‘The right help  
in the right place  
at the right time?’**

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and Political Science  
July 2009

## **About LSE Housing**

LSE Housing is a research and consultancy group within The Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE). We aim to develop understanding of the dynamics in disadvantaged neighbourhoods; promote models of housing and neighbourhood management; develop ways to support community and resident self help action, especially in social housing areas; and shape government policy.

Our research considers the impact of poor neighbourhood and area conditions on residents and the role of local people in regenerating and improving their communities.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was funded by Crisis and Westminster City Council/ Communities and Local Government. There are many people, far too numerous to name, to whom we owe thanks, including soup run providers and volunteers we have met, soup run and other service users, local residents and businesses, particularly the representatives of the Cathedral Area Residents Group, and the many key policy and practice actors working within the sector who have shared their experiences with us.

We are indebted to the members of the Soup Run Steering Group who have offered advice and comments throughout the research process: Sister Ellen Flynn, Ligia Teixeira, Janet Haddington, Victoria Van der Knapp, Alastair Reeves, Michelle Binfield, José Espineira, Steve Guyon, Alastair Murray, John O'Neill, Tim Aldeburgh, Sally Leigh, Martin Rees, Richard Bunch, Steve Davies, Nathan Daniels, and Don Pollard.

Special thanks is also owed to the members of the service user forum who have given up their own time to offer valuable insights and advice about the project; and to the members of the Soup Run Forum organised through Housing Justice.

Costas Constantinou, Becky Rice, Sally Caldwell, Ewa Sadowska and other BARKA volunteers must also be acknowledged for their assistance in carrying out service user interviews.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 WHAT IS THE SOUP RUN RESEARCH ABOUT?

This report aims to provide an independent and objective perspective on soup runs in the London Borough of Westminster. A broad understanding of soup run has been used throughout – to include any mobile food distribution service operating primarily to serve the homeless within the borough.

The issue of soup runs in Westminster has become a contentious and controversial issue with strong advocates both for and against their operation. For some, soup runs are a valuable, life-saving resource that help to feed and support rough sleepers and other vulnerable people. For others, soup runs represent an outdated, poorly targeted and uncoordinated service that supports and sustains damaging street lifestyles. We wanted to find out whether and how soup runs in Westminster fitted into the commitment of the Government to provide 'the right help, in the right place at the right time'.

## 1.2 WHY WE UNDERTOOK THE WORK AND WHAT WE HOPED TO ACHIEVE?

We were asked to profile the use of mobile food distribution services aimed principally at homeless people in Westminster, most commonly known as soup runs. We aimed to find out:

- Who uses the soup runs in Westminster?
- Why people use soup runs?
- How important soup runs are, and where they fit in with other homelessness services available in Westminster?

'The issue of soup runs in Westminster has become a contentious and controversial issue with strong advocates both for and against their operation.'

# 2. Context of homelessness and rough sleeping in Westminster

## 2.1 WHAT IS BEING DONE ABOUT HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING?

Problems of homelessness have been central to social policies in the UK for many years. It is difficult to define homelessness authoritatively as definitions vary in different contexts, but it is widely accepted that homeless people include rough sleepers, people in temporary accommodation and hostels and sometimes people in insecure/inadequate accommodation. Rough sleeping is used to refer to the most visible form of homelessness, ie, people sleeping on the streets. In 1999 rough sleeping was identified as a priority for the New Labour Government.

***'On the eve of the 21st century, it is a scandal that there are still people sleeping rough on our streets. This is not a situation that we can continue to tolerate in a modern and civilised society.'*** (RSU, 1999, p5).

The Rough Sleepers Unit (RSU) was established in April 1999 and *Coming in from the Cold* represented the national strategy for tackling rough sleeping, aiming to reduce the number of rough sleepers in the country by two thirds by 2002. This target was achieved and has been sustained since that time (CLG, 2008, p10). A new rough sleeping strategy was published in 2008, *No One Left Out: Communities ending rough sleeping*, identifying the need for flexibility in finding solutions for rough sleepers and highlighting partnership working and the involvement of communities.

***'There is a limit to what can be achieved through central government. Ending rough sleeping depends on communities rising to the challenge... Progress will also depend on close working and co-ordination across a variety of public services, local authorities and the third sector so that no one falls through the cracks. We will need to tap into the inspiring commitment, innovation and energy of front line staff and services across the country.'*** (CLG, 2008a, p18/19)

***'There are a few people that have remained on the streets for long periods. In London we know that there are around 150 people who have been seen over many years on and off on the streets but have never come into accommodation. That entrenched group needs different approaches from the vast majority and we are pleased that third sector providers continue to try out new ways to engage and support them to move in.'*** (CLG, 2008a, p12)

### Street counts

In 1996 a methodology for assessing levels of rough sleeping was established based on the number of people found 'bedded down' on one night. The annual estimate of the numbers sleeping out in England on any single night is published in September each year. The figures released are often challenged by other homelessness organisations and charities, for example the Simon Community carry

out their own street counts twice a year and consistently record higher numbers of people sleeping rough than official estimates. Whilst the street count system may have its critics, it is important to note that it is a standardised methodology which does not change from count to count. Therefore, street counts are seen to provide a useful snapshot of the number of people sleeping rough on a single night and are regarded as a useful indicator of trends. In 2005 the National Audit Office progress report on homelessness said:

***'Counts might not capture all of those sleeping rough, but because the methodology has been applied consistently area-to-area and year-on-year, it is the most accurate measure of the relative scale of the problem and change over time.'*** (CLG, 2008a, p11)

A new approach called *Street Needs Audit* (SNA) was introduced in the 2008 strategy as a way of supplementing the approach currently taken in the counts. The Street Needs Audit is intended to gather more information about people found in the counts and their needs.

### CHAIN

The Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) was set up in 2000 as part of the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy and contains information about homeless people who have been in contact with accommodation schemes and/or outreach workers in London. CHAIN is used to support the reduction of homelessness in London by:

- Providing information on rough sleeping to assist in the development of policies and strategies and in monitoring and assessing work undertaken with rough sleepers
- Facilitating the sharing of appropriate client information to enable all CHAIN users to work together more effectively in providing appropriate services to rough sleepers
- Enabling outreach teams, hostels, rolling shelters, and resettlement teams to monitor their work and performance.

From CHAIN we were able to put together a picture of the number of people contacted on the streets of Westminster during 2008. Using CHAIN information, we found that a total of 1633 were contacted in Westminster by outreach teams in 2008. This number can be broken down into the following classifications to show the flow of people onto and off the streets: 454 people were 'stock', ie, those sleeping on the streets during at least two consecutive years; 913 were classified as 'flow' meaning first time rough sleepers; and 266 were known as 'returners' those found sleeping rough after an absence of at least one year. While the numbers sleeping on the streets of London have been drastically reduced in the past decade, there remains in 2009 a continuing flow of 'new' rough sleepers alongside entrenched rough sleepers resistant to service provision as well as new migrants who have no recourse to public funds, including many Eastern Europeans not in employment. According to the 2008 rough sleeping strategy, up to 20 per cent of rough sleepers in London are A2 and A8 nationals (people from the EU accession states) (CLG, 2008a, p13).

The constant flow of new 'emergency' cases onto the streets, particularly in Central London, means that there is a constant need for immediate help, for careful support, and for longer term housing solutions. By definition homelessness does not go away when the last rough sleeper is housed. This raises a big social challenge. As our rapidly changing society introduces new problems there is always a time lag in tuning the response to what is really happening. The nature of rough sleeping and of soup runs too is constantly changing, even though the problem of homelessness has very long roots. It is very hard to contain such fluid and evolving problems within clear boundaries.

### **London Delivery Board**

In early 2009, the Mayor of London announced a commitment to end rough sleeping in London by 2012. The London Delivery Board was established to bring together major stakeholders integral to delivering this aim, including local authorities, the voluntary sector, government departments and agencies and other organisations such as the Greater London Authority and the Metropolitan Police. As with recent Central Government strategies on rough sleeping, achieving the Mayor's objective of ending rough sleeping by 2012 depends heavily on the partnership, coordination and collaboration of all relevant actors.

## **2.2 WHAT IS BEING DONE ABOUT HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING IN WESTMINSTER?**

Westminster has always had a large number of rough sleepers. There are various explanations for this disproportionate volume of people sleeping rough on the streets of Westminster which include: the natural appeal of large (capital) cities; the location of national and international transportation hubs; the concentration of services for homeless and vulnerable people including day centres and hostels; the 'safety in numbers' that some vulnerable people may find comforting by sleeping in an area where there are other people bedded down; and many have argued, the high level of soup runs operating within the borough (Randall and Brown, 2006, p3).

***'For a number of reasons to do with the 'pull' of central London, Westminster attracts very high numbers of homeless people and rough sleepers in a high-pressure housing environment. The scale of the challenge is such that three years ago there were more people sleeping rough in Westminster than in all of England's social services' areas put together.'* (Westminster, 2007, p2)**

In 2005 Westminster City Council introduced a new model of service provision for rough sleepers – Building Based Services (BBS). Support services were to be concentrated in buildings including three main day centres: the Passage, the Connections at St Martin-in-the-Fields and Seymour Place. The main objective of BBS was to provide services for rough sleepers from inside buildings, rather than on the streets in order to 'reduce incentives for people to appear on the streets in order

***'Whilst it is clear that rough sleeping numbers have been cut and services targeted towards the homeless have largely been improved, some needs are not met within current provision.'***

to access services' (Randall and Brown, 2006, p2). Whilst BBS has received widespread support and is acknowledged as a successful model, there are some gaps remaining such as rough sleepers not using BBS although they are generally known to outreach workers, and people using BBS while continuing to sleep rough.

***'Refocusing resources from the streets to the BBS means that rough sleepers are now aware that a street lifestyle is more difficult to sustain, and that the services they require are to be accessed through BBS and will not be provided on the streets – except to the most vulnerable clients.'* (CLG, (2007) p15)**

## **2.3 WHAT ARE THE GAPS IDENTIFIED IN SERVICES?**

Whilst it is clear that rough sleeping numbers have been cut and services targeted towards the homeless have largely been improved, some needs are not met within current provision. These issues are very important in the context of examining the role of soup runs as many arguments in support of soup runs emphasise their importance as a way of meeting needs left unmet by more mainstream provision.

### ***Those with no recourse to public funds***

It is accepted by Government that a gap in service provision exists for those with no recourse to public funds, most commonly migrants from the ten accession countries (A2 and A8) that recently joined the EU and asylum seekers.

***'Rough sleeping amongst migrants must be tackled. It is not acceptable to refuse support to destitute people who have no recourse to public funds.'* (CLG, 2008b, p5)**

***'Soup runs are vital to those who cannot get help anywhere else. Soup runs are needed by lots of people with no recourse to public funds, they survive on them. Also people with immigration issues... Lots of day centres will turn people away who can't access benefits. Lots of people would starve to death without soup runs or would turn to crime.'* (BBS Worker)**

# 2. Context of homelessness and rough sleeping in Westminster

## **Professionalisation of homelessness services**

The policy focus has shifted away from the streets and moved inside buildings where service users have been encouraged to take on more personal responsibility for their future. As a result, some people unable or unwilling to take on this role have become further excluded from mainstream provision.

*'Voluntary sector organisations are integrally implicated in the provision of emergency services for homeless people in the UK, yet mainstream service provision increasingly involves highly professionalised corporatist organisations in which there are less and less opportunities for volunteers to participate in meeting homeless people's needs.'* (Cloke, P., Johnsen, S., and May, J., 2007, p1098)

*'Broadway has made changes to the way its day centres operates, no longer just a place for people to come in and eat, **has become more about helping people to move on from the streets, more obligation on service users to provide information and accept help.** However, still a need for open access centres – many people on the streets who will not be willing to give information/not ready to seek help.'* (Direct service provider and campaigning organisation)

*'Policy has dictated reducing access to open areas – somewhere just to be indoors and not to have to engage with others... The more professional and established homelessness services become the more excluded certain people will become'* (Campaigning organisation)

## **Need for more support for people who have moved on**

Another gap identified is that of the need for greater, and more varied, support than is currently available for ex-homeless people once they have been moved on to accommodation. Whilst the provision of tenancy support and other housing-related support services has improved with the introduction of the Supporting People programme in the last decade, there are still issues here that need to be addressed.

*'With no friends and family, homeless people who have succeeded in finding somewhere decent to live may still feel lost. Their only 'friends' may be back on the streets and so they may soon find themselves slipping and sliding back down that yellow brick road.'* (Lemos, 2000, p1)

*'Soup runs are meeting an unmet need. There is a lack of support once people are housed... Critical issue of unmet needs and hand-holding long-term support.'* (BBS Worker)

# 3. The debate around soup runs in Westminster

## 3.1 SOUP RUNS: AN OLD PROBLEM AND A NEW ONE

The provision of emergency food outdoors is a long-standing and well-established tradition in the UK, dating back to the Middle Ages. Throughout this time, charitable giving to the homeless and the 'provision of outdoor welfare services' (Shelter, 2005, p6) have occupied a somewhat controversial and contested role. Johnsen et al (2005) describe in detail the historical debates surrounding this issue, highlighting the moral distinctions employed between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor and the potential for 'inappropriate and indiscriminate' outdoor giving.

**'... the State has for centuries questioned both the degree to which recipients of such welfare are 'deserving' of the assistance offered and the "appropriateness" of that provision.'** (Johnsen et al, 2005, p324)

In recent years, the idea of inappropriate and potentially damaging charitable acts has been revisited as part of the government's homelessness and rough sleeping strategy. With the introduction of the Rough Sleepers Initiative in the 1990s, and continuing through the work of the Rough Sleepers Unit set up by the New Labour Government, there has been an increasing emphasis on the move towards professionalised, 'aspirational' services within buildings and away from open-access charitable giving on the streets.

**'Pursue approaches which help people off the streets, and reject those which sustain a street lifestyle. Our aim is to reduce the numbers of rough sleepers, and to do everything in our power to persuade people to come in for help.'** (RSU, 1999, p9)

### Soup runs in Westminster

Soup runs in Westminster have attracted lots of attention as a form of street provision to rough sleepers. The issue has been contentious for many years now, with various efforts by the local authority to tackle the problem of the overprovision of potentially damaging soup runs. Detailed information on soup runs was provided through the Salvation Army's Soup and Clothing Co-ordination Project up to 2002. Initial research for this project suggested that there was a considerable duplication of soup runs, many of the people using the soup runs were coming in from Greater London, the provision was not appropriate and that many volunteers felt negatively towards government (Salvation Army, 2002). In September 2005 a 'Soup Run Summit' was held where soup run providers were invited by Westminster to come and discuss the issues around soup runs. A scoping and mapping exercise was carried out by the Council in December 2004 and again in January 2007 (Westminster, 2007, p34). In 2007, Westminster unsuccessfully tried to outlaw the distribution of free food on public land via the London Local Authorities Bill. In its most recent Rough Sleeping Strategy, published in 2007, Westminster City Council detailed 'reducing the overprovision of soup runs' as a

**'In recent years, the idea of inappropriate and potentially damaging charitable acts has been revisited as part of the government's homelessness and rough sleeping strategy.'**

priority. Within this strategy the Council also outlined its objectives: to co-ordinate provision and tie in volunteers with existing frameworks of support for rough sleepers; to use preventative and enforcement measures to deal with antisocial behaviour during soup run visits; and to ensure that rough sleepers assessed as vulnerable, and refusing to use BBS', are targeted for sustenance (Westminster, 2007. P34). According to Angela Harvey, the Westminster City Council Cabinet Member for Housing:

**'Along with many homelessness experts and charities, we remain convinced that action needs to be taken to restrict the over-provision of soup runs, which fail to address the complex needs of rough sleepers or help them off the streets so they can be helped back into independent living.'** (BBC, 2007)

As this research was underway the City of Westminster produced the Westminster Cathedral Piazza Draft Action Plan which contains explicit references to the operations of soup runs on the Cathedral Piazza.

**'A major challenge of the draft action plan is the impact of the soup kitchens that operate from the area.'** (Westminster, 2009, p9)

Within this document, the Council also commits to await our recommendations before taking any other action with respect to soup runs.

**'The council plans to use the impartial evidence-based findings from this study to promote more appropriate ways for faith groups to work with more homelessness agencies providing building based services. It may also be used to provide evidence to pursue further an amendment to the next London Local Authorities Bill or for the council to draft its own bylaws (awaiting guidance from the Department of Communities and Local Government) to control the distribution of free food.'** (Westminster, 2009, p11)

There are well documented assumptions about soup runs with strongly contested points of view among different stakeholders working towards helping the homeless. Here we outline the most significant issues of conflict.

# 3. The debate around soup runs in Westminster

## 3.1.1 SOUP RUNS ARE 'KILLING WITH KINDNESS'

In *Coming in from the Cold: the government's strategy on rough sleeping*, published in 1999, a new approach was outlined whereby people were to be encouraged to come indoors and to move away from life on the streets. This strategy made clear the implication that many services targeting the homeless on the streets such as soup runs were to be viewed as doing little to help people and as being counterproductive to government efforts to bring people in.

***'Some agencies were concerned that the work of some voluntary groups could be counter-productive and reinforce street lifestyles. This was often said of soup runs, which are usually operated by volunteers who do not appreciate that the problems of people on the street do not include a lack of food. They too often send out a message that street living is acceptable and should be supported. There are, in London in particular, a very large number of such services, which can act as a magnet for other people who are not currently sleeping rough.'* (Randall and Brown, 2002, p19)**

A common criticism of soup runs is that they help to sustain a potentially damaging street lifestyle and can support drug or alcohol addictions, rather than helping homeless people to address their problems and prepare for life away from the streets. It was hoped that soup runs could be encouraged to "come on board" with Government-led initiatives and thus "channel their efforts into more productive provision" (Johnsen et al, p324).

Furthermore, it is argued that soup runs can provide an incentive to draw people back out of accommodation and onto the streets.

***'Excessive soup run activity helps to maintain a street lifestyle for people unwilling to come indoors, and draws people out of accommodation and back into street culture.'* (Westminster, 2007, p34)**

According to a report by Matthew Davenport in 2005, the excessive and random provision of soup runs in Westminster represented 'misguided giving and random acts of "help" ' which could cause harm (Davenport, 2005, p6)

However, there are also strong arguments advocating the vital role soup runs play in the lives of some of the most vulnerable and needy people in society, refuting the claim that they serve to support damaging street lifestyles.

***'Far from simply sustaining street homelessness, soup runs provide a series of important yet very complex spaces of care in the city.'* (Johnsen et al, 2005, p323)**

***'Faith based groups involved see their work not as 'keeping them there' but, rather 'keeping them alive while they are there' (Chike, 2005)***

Soup runs provide a valuable safety net by making available much needed food and social contact to those who are unable or unwilling to access other services. There are gaps in the current system of homelessness services, particularly with reference to people from the EU accession states (A8s and A2s) and asylum seekers who have no recourse to public funds, and to the most marginal rough sleepers.

***'Soup runs are often the only service accessible to those whom have been excluded from other services and thrust into even more unforgiving public space... Soup runs can become the only legal means of accessing basic food and clothing.'* (Johnsen et al, 2005, p328)**

## 3.1.2 TOO MANY SOUP RUNS BUT TOO LITTLE REGULATION AND COORDINATION

There are big concerns within Westminster City Council that too many soup runs are coming into the borough from outside Central London and that there is a lack of understanding among soup run providers of the facilities for the homeless already provided.

***'The amount of service provision available in Westminster for people sleeping on the street is enough to ensure that nobody should starve or not be able to survive. There are enough safety nets in place to make sure that even the most vulnerable on the streets are afforded some care and protection.'* (Davenport, 2005, p17)**

These concerns are not new. A Salvation Army project successfully managed to reduce the numbers of providers coming into the borough through its Soup and Clothing Co-ordination Project. The focus of the Salvation Army's work was on recognising and integrating the work of the voluntary and professional sectors, and on training the providers. The project found that in 2000 there were 91 providers making 196 visits a week, by 2002 this had been reduced to 54 soup run operators making 57 visits per week (Salvation Army, 2002, p11). It was estimated by Westminster City Council in 2005 that there were 65 soup runs operating in Westminster. The Soup Run Forum in 2007 found 29 groups active in one week and estimated that there would be between 30 and 40 groups operating, many of whom would go out infrequently (Housing Justice, 2007).

It is also suggested that soup runs lack coordination and the same strict regulatory codes of other service providers around issues such as health and safety and food hygiene. To address these problems Shelter suggested the following recommendations in 2005: soup runs should coordinate with each other where there is more than one service in an area; and soup runs should operate to a set of minimum standards, covering issues such as health and safety, food hygiene, methods of engagement, provision of information (Shelter, 2005).

Many providers have taken these criticisms on board and efforts have been made to provide more coordination and consistency among soup run organisations. The Soup Run Forum was established in 2005 and stated its objectives as providing coordination for the various groups

involved; a forum for information sharing; good practice models and exemplars; and an independent campaigning voice. The soup run providers also argue that they come to Westminster because that is where the people they are serving are concentrated.

### 3.1.3 SOUP RUNS NOT TARGETING THE MOST NEEDY

Soup runs have also been criticised for providing a poorly targeted service attracting people who are not homeless (Shelter, 2005, p3). Previous research exercises in this area have shown that many who use soup runs are not rough sleeping (Davenport, 2005; Salvation Army, 2002; Turner, 2004).

***‘Some people that use soup runs are not so poor that they have no other option, let alone being dependent on them, for sustenance.’ (Davenport, 2005, p14)***

***‘Those who have been homeless but are in accommodation... make up a large percentage of those using soup runs, the soup runs do not meet their underlying needs and more specialised help is needed to support them in their efforts to remain off the street.’ (Salvation Army, 2002)***

Soup runs tend to have an open-access, ‘no questions asked’ approach, seeing their role as being there to help whoever is in search of either nutritional or social support and therefore providing for lonely and isolated vulnerably housed people, the elderly, the poor as well as the currently homeless. Faith is an important motivating factor for many of the providers.

***‘Christians have a doctrinal obligation to help the poor and needy. Many Christian groups seek to do that by coming into Westminster, often in preference to their own local areas.’ (Davenport, 2005, p6)***

***‘There is nothing either in law or within Christianity which says that soup runs are meant for rough sleepers. Rough sleepers get the help because they are poor and in need, and many soup runners might well feel that anybody who is poor and in need are welcome.’ (Chike, 2005)***

This open-access ethos is in contrast to the approach of the mainstream, statutory funded services also working with the homeless. Many day centres have moved away from offering only basic services for the homeless such as showers and food, and instead have become outcome focused and professionalised with an aim of moving people on.

***‘Ethos and approach differs from that of many day centres within which service users are encouraged to accept more responsibility for their behaviour and/or move on to a more independent lifestyle.’ (Johnsen et al, 2005, p329)***

The informal environment that soup runs appear to provide allows people to remain anonymous and to offer up as much or as little personal information as they wish. Soup runs tend not to make judgements on the deservedness or the need of the person accessing the service. This provides what Glasser has termed ‘a place of sanctuary’ for many people who deviate from the expected public norms of behaviour (Glasser, 1988, p86).

***‘The accepting ambience of the soup kitchen exists because the service itself exerts almost no demands on the guests.’ (Glasser, 1988, p96)***

However, the open-access, non-judgemental approach of soup runs can also lead to exclusion and isolation of those who may need to access the service the most. Westminster City Council and other critics of soup runs have contested that many of the most entrenched rough sleepers who are extremely vulnerable and needy, will not use soup runs because they are scared of them and intimidated by other users.

***‘... by offering a service geared towards the most socially marginalised, soup runs may be perceived to be unsafe and intimidating places by some individuals.’ (Johnsen et al, 2005, p329)***

### 3.1.4 PRACTICAL IMPACTS OF SOUP RUNS

In addition to claims that soup runs are poorly targeted, uncoordinated, oversaturated in number and contributing to sustaining damaging street lifestyles there are a number of practical concerns raised in terms of the impact of soup runs on the local environment and area in which they are situated.

***‘Anti-social behaviour is rife before, during and after soup runs, and turns many residential and public areas into virtual no-go areas.’ (Westminster, 2007, p34)***

A scoping and mapping exercise looking into soup runs carried out by Westminster City Council in 2005 concluded that there were ‘safety concerns at some sites’ (Westminster, 2005). There is intense concern among local residents, particularly in the Victoria area of the borough, about soup runs and their impact upon safety and cleanliness in the local area.

Conversely, there are suggestions that soup runs actually help to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour by providing resources to vulnerable people who may otherwise be forced into unlawful actions in order to survive.

***‘They reduce the need for disenfranchised people to commit survivalist crimes and act as an important safety net for individuals who have been excluded from other services or have in some way been “failed” by existing state welfare arrangements.’ (Johnsen et al, 2005, p334)***

There is also an argument that soup runs can help to ‘humanise’ desolate and threatening places and make them seem safer by populating them and introducing activity.

# 4. Methodology

## 4.1 WHO WE HAVE SPOKEN TO

During the research we have carried out qualitative interviews with four main stakeholder groups:

- soup run and BBS service users;
- soup run providers;
- soup run 'neighbours' – local residents and businesses;
- and other key policy and practice actors in the wider homelessness field.

### **Service users**

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with 105 service users accessing soup runs and other homelessness services within Westminster. The interviews were qualitative and carried out confidentially and anonymously if people wished. These interviews are not necessarily representative of the views of all rough sleepers and service users in Westminster.

### **Soup run providers**

In addition to participant observation at soup runs we spoke to ten different soup run providers during the operation of soup runs, through the Soup Run Forum and in individual interviews.

### **Soup run neighbours – local residents and businesses**

We attended Westminster Area Forum meetings in the areas around the Strand and Victoria. We distributed questionnaires to local businesses in the areas immediately affected. We also met with representatives of CARG and distributed a limited number of questionnaires to other residents.

Some soup run neighbours, particularly local residents in the Victoria area, expressed doubts about the nature and scope of this research. We understand that a more extensive and comprehensive study into the impact of soup runs on local residents and businesses is wanted by local residents but it was not possible to provide an investigation of this size and scope within this piece of research.

### **Key actors in the homelessness arena**

We carried out qualitative interviews and discussions with over 20 key policy-makers and practitioners active in the field of homelessness.

Our research has been primarily qualitative based on the surveys and interviews conducted, and the literature we have reviewed. We are heavily reliant upon CHAIN information and other sources for the statistics.

## 4.2 WHAT WAS COVERED

Our interviews with service users, soup run providers and other stakeholders covered:

- basic information on soup runs ie, who uses, why, where;
- the role of soup runs ie, how important are they to people, what would happen without them;
- other services available in Westminster ie, what views of Westminster services, other sources of support;
- basic demographic information and housing status of service users.

Please see **Appendix A** for the full questionnaires for all stakeholder interviews.

## 4.3 PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

In addition to the qualitative interviews we carried out significant participant observation at soup runs in the three target sites of Victoria, Temple and the Strand. These sites were chosen by the Soup Run Steering Group as the main sites within Westminster for soup run activity. Lincoln's Inn Fields, was not included, despite the high volume of soup runs there because of its location within Camden as well as Westminster. We also spent time at day centres, during outreach visits with BBS workers and at various meetings with different actors.

- 20 visits to soup runs at different sites including the three target sites of Victoria – Piazza/Howick Place, the Strand and Temple
- four visits to the Passage Day Centre (two on Saturday mornings, two on weekday mornings)
- three visits to the CSTM Day Centre (one on Saturday, two on weekday mornings)
- three outreach night shifts with Westminster BBS workers.

Ethnographic notes were recorded throughout the research.

Please see **Appendix B** for the full timetable of activities and meetings.

## 4.4 LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH

- 45 of the 105 service user interviews were carried out at soup runs or as part of outreach visits with BBS workers. 60 interviews were conducted within day centre environments. Although we would have liked to gather more material at soup runs, day centres proved to be more conducive to carrying out a semi-structured interview
- We carried out the majority of the interviews with service users (75 per cent) but due to time constraints some of the later interviews were carried out by others including volunteers from BARKA, LSE and Broadway. These interviewers were approved by the LSE research team and used the guidelines and interview schedule used in all other interviews.

# 5. Findings: Soup run providers

## 5.1 WHO ARE THE SOUP RUN PROVIDERS?

We have been in contact with a number of different soup runs and organisations providing food and other services on the streets. There is a broad range of providers operating on different days and times throughout the work and with a variety of different approaches.

The following table provides a brief summary of providers we have had most contact with throughout the research.

Name of soup run and home base	Frequency of visits	Where soup run takes place	What is offered	Any other activities	Member of the Soup Run Forum
The London and Slough Run: 'London Run' EAST BERKS/ SOUTH BUCKS	Once a week	Charing Cross – Strand Temple	Waterloo	Food and hot and cold drinks Clothing	Yes
Simon Community CAMDEN	Several times a week	Various sites within Westminster and Camden	Food and hot drinks Clothing	Hospitality at the Simon Community House Outreach – street work Street Cafes	Yes
Sacred Heart WIMBLEDON	Twice a week	Victoria – Howick Place	Food and hot drinks Clothing		Yes
Michael Roberts Charitable Trust/London City Aid HARLOW, ESSEX	Once a month	Victoria – Howick Place	Food and hot drinks Clothing Toiletries Books	Harlow Foodbank	Yes
Missionaries of Charity SOUTHWARK	Once a week	Victoria – Howick Place	Food and hot drinks	Hostel – Gift of Love	Yes
The Core EAST LONDON	Once a week	Victoria – Howick Place	Food and hot drinks		?
ASLAN WESTMINSTER	Once a week	Various sites within Westminster	Food and hot drinks Clothing	Entertainment Evenings at All Souls Clubhouse weekly Volunteers at Webber Street on Saturday mornings Visiting Scheme	Yes
Streetlytes KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA	Once a fortnight	Victoria – Howick Place/ Piazza	Food and hot drinks Clothing	Catering for WLCHC Night Shelters Workshops on drug awareness	Yes

# 5. Findings: Soup run providers

## Case Study: Sacred Heart

Sacred Heart is a church based in Wimbledon, South West London. They travel to the Victoria area twice a week on a Tuesday and Friday evening. They work to a four weekly rota with different teams of volunteers coming out once every four weeks with a total of about 75 volunteers.

The food is all either home-made soup and sandwiches or donations from local bakeries and from members of the Church.

*'We aim to help the **hungry and homeless** by delivering soup, sandwiches, tea and coffee to Victoria in the evenings on Tuesdays and Fridays. Some members help with preparation of food, and others take the food and drink out to meet the homeless'*

[www.sacredheartwimbledon.org.uk/sacred\\_heart\\_soup\\_run](http://www.sacredheartwimbledon.org.uk/sacred_heart_soup_run)

## Case Study: Michael Roberts Charitable Trust/London City Aid

Michael Roberts Charitable Trust was set up in 1997 as a charity dedicated to improving the lives of disabled and socially disadvantaged people. Based in Harlow, London City Aid is part of MRCT and comes into the Victoria area once a month on a Tuesday evening. A team of around 5-8 people attend every trip into London.

Food is donated from local bakers across Harlow and pre-packed and labelled sandwiches are collected.

The team spend up to three hours at the site.

*'Providing daily essentials for **homeless and vulnerably housed people living in London**. London CityAid provides food, drink, clothing, toiletries, blankets and sleeping bags to vulnerable people. The most important aspect of the work is to provide a listening ear to those people who just want to talk and share their thoughts and concerns'*

*'We never really know what we have achieved but feel privileged to be able to give support to people in need and make plenty of new friends in the process.'*

[www.mrct.org.uk/cityaid.htm](http://www.mrct.org.uk/cityaid.htm)

## 5.2 WHAT ARE THE MOTIVATIONS BEHIND SOUP RUNS?

The majority of the soup run providers that we met are from faith based organisations – often church groups. The issue of the motivation of soup run providers and volunteers has been raised in discussions about soup runs in the past. The role of faith seems to be central to the ethos and approach of most of the soup runs.

*'It's the interpretation of what you read in the gospel – being humane to fellow man. It is not exclusively a Christian mission.'* (Soup Run Volunteer)

Most of the soup runs are staffed solely by volunteers, which enables service users to engage in a social and convivial way with non-professionals. Furthermore, soup run volunteers do not require personal information from individuals using the soup runs.

*'Don't ask people's names – people can just come along and help themselves'* (Soup Run Volunteer)

*'The relationship between the volunteer and the person being helped being in itself a form of conviviality as well as a rehearsal for conviviality with others in the future.'* (Lemos, 2000, p12)

There is a clear reciprocal relationship for many of the volunteers with benefits to be gained from the activity of going and engaging people as part of a soup run.

*'Soup runs are multi-purpose – also social networking purpose for the volunteers, they are getting something out of it'* (Former Soup Run User)

*'Many of our volunteers are in recovery from drink and drugs and volunteering is part of that healing process – it isn't about feeling good.'* (Soup Run Volunteer)

## Case Study: Streetlytes

Streetlytes set up in 2007 is an 'organisation made up of committed volunteers that provide food and clothing to the homeless in the streets of London. It also aims to give emotional support and practical advice to those who have found themselves in desperate living conditions and emotional despair.'

Streetlytes operates a soup run in the Victoria area every other Saturday (first and third Saturdays of each month) and provide hot tea/coffee, home-made sandwiches, hot stew, curry and pasta as well as blankets and clothing.

Many of the core volunteers have prior experience of homelessness and substance abuse.

*'Our organisation is unique in that many of the volunteers were once in difficult life situations, including homelessness, traumatic upbringings and drug abuse, and owing to these experiences we are able to share our knowledge of how we improved our lives and recovered from despair.'*

### Streetlytes Mission

- Our mission is to provide the basic necessities of food and clothing without pre-conditions to the homeless and vulnerable population of London regardless of race, gender, age, sexuality, creed or religion
- To empower, encourage and inspire those we serve through mutual identification, mentoring, support, referral and advocacy
- To establish a networking referral system with drug and alcohol agencies, NHS, detoxification centres, homeless shelters, supported housing, hostels, churches and voluntary organizations, both statutory and non-statutory through outreach, peer advocacy linking the homeless with the appropriate services to meet their immediate needs
- To provide workshops on Drug and Alcohol Awareness with emphasis on abstinence based recovery as well as Motivational Groups drawing on personal life experiences of homelessness, drug addiction and alcoholism and abstinence-based recovery to encourage, empower and inspire groups and individuals engaged in the drug and alcohol programs.

[www.streetlytes.org/index.html](http://www.streetlytes.org/index.html)

## 5.3 WHAT DOES THE EXPERIENCE OF SOUP RUNS TELL US ABOUT THE SITUATION?

### Are soup runs fulfilling their original purpose?

In spite of the differences in size, structure and operation of the soup run providers we met, all were motivated by the desire to help homeless and vulnerable people. The suggestion that soup runs were a potentially harmful force was dismissed by many.

*'No validity to argument that soup runs sustain people staying on the streets. Some people are just not at a stage where they could cope with their own accommodation or have a job etc.'* (Soup Run Volunteer)

*'Research indicates that 80 per cent of the homeless have alcohol and substance abuse issues and as a former addict I can attest to the fact that it wasn't the Soup Runs that kept me out on the streets, but rather my addiction and my denial to take responsibility for my circumstances.'* (Soup Run Volunteer)

Some of the soup run providers and volunteers openly expressed ambivalence about what they were doing. They were unsure whether or not soup runs were the solution but they felt they were providing a service that seemed to be needed and thought that questioning this was insensitive at a time when no clear alternative seemed to be available for many of the users. The soup run providers were committed to coming out onto the street and doing their soup run until 'there was nobody there to meet them', and the service was no longer needed.

*'Argument that soup runs sustain people on the streets – do they make it too easy for people? I don't necessarily disagree but then what about the people who are new to the streets? Also, that argument alone doesn't solve any problems.'* (Soup Run Volunteer)

*'I agree that soup runs may help sustain people on the streets but would stopping them be enough to get people to move on? If you take away someone's oxygen it makes it difficult to survive. We will keep coming out until somebody says that we are not allowed to do so anymore'* (Soup Run Volunteer)

There was an acknowledgement from most volunteers that the soup runs provided something that did not appear to be available elsewhere – social contact in a non-professional context.

*'I feel like there is a place for amateurs in this area, as long as they are well informed and know the boundaries, don't make promises you can't keep. I always tell our volunteers that we are there for one night only; we can be a sticking plaster at best.'* (Soup Run Volunteer)

*'We offer friendship... I give people a hug, you're not allowed to do that in many agencies etc now'* (Soup Run Volunteer)

# 5. Findings: Soup run providers

The soup run volunteers were also aware of the limitations of what they could offer and most were keen to ensure that people seeking help were signposted to the correct services and facilities.

***'We do provide information for service users; point them in the right direction for further help and wider services.'***  
(Soup Run Volunteer)

***'The main thing is to communicate with people. If people ask me for help I direct them to the Passage and to Connections at Saint Martin's but I can't make any promises about what help they may receive there or not.'*** (Soup Run Volunteer)

## **How much control and co-ordination of soup runs should there be?**

A common criticism of soup runs is that there are too many of them and that they are unregulated and uncoordinated. The soup run providers we have met are generally committed to working with other providers as part of the Soup Run Forum and adhering to the timetable. Please see **Appendix C** for the most up to date soup run timetable prepared by the Soup Run Forum.

Furthermore, a Soup Run Best Practice guide for soup run providers is available from the Soup Run Forum. This guide contains information and advice on the operating environment; engagement and information; dealing with difficult situations; volunteers – recruitment, training and welfare; and practicalities such as health and safety, hygiene, and insurance. The Soup Run Forum is available online at [www.housingjustice.org.uk/hjunleash/forum/souprunforum.htm](http://www.housingjustice.org.uk/hjunleash/forum/souprunforum.htm). Some soup runs, including ASLAN, have their own guidelines and good practice guides as well detailing health and safety, and food hygiene standards for their volunteers.

There is some concern however, that there will always be individuals and groups who are not willing to collaborate and sign up to any sort of regulation and coordination, particularly if these efforts are associated with authorities perceived to hold a negative attitude towards the soup run providers. The Soup Run Forum can serve a valuable role in this context as a mediating force and a forum for discussion. Shelter also offers some valuable advice on how to proceed in this situation:

***'Where soup-runs are resistant to change, authorities should be wary of taking enforcement action. In a tolerant democratic society the expression of compassion should be welcomed, even though it may not always be manifested in such a way as to achieve its full potential.'*** (Shelter, 2005, p18)

## **Who do soup runs help?**

Soup runs that we have met have been quite open about their desire to help not just the homeless but also other vulnerably housed and socially excluded people – they are there for people who are 'homeless and rootless' (Soup Run Volunteer).

***'The fact that people turned up late at night and in the early hours of the morning, to wait around on the street for a hot drink, some food and a chat, was enough of a justification for many of the volunteers that their service was required.'***

It is commonly accepted that the majority of those using the soup runs were not sleeping rough. This however did not reduce the level of need. The fact that people turned up late at night and in the early hours of the morning, to wait around on the street for a hot drink, some food and a chat, was enough of a justification for many of the volunteers that their service was required.

***'The food is important but different people attend for different reasons. Everyone who is on the street is there for a different reason and therefore will probably attend soup runs or access other services for different reasons.'*** (Soup Run Volunteer)

***'Being on the street is dehumanising and interaction in this form is very important.'*** (Soup Run Volunteer)

***'I think people could get food from other places, for example shops leaving it outside like Pret. Nobody needs to starve in London. People come for companionship though – I am quite prepared to come to London without any food.'*** (Soup Run Volunteer)

## **What are the benefits and drawbacks of soup runs?**

Arguments and fights among service users seemed to be accepted as a potential and limited risk but few of the soup run volunteers mentioned trouble as being a significant occurrence or concern.

***'I have seen very few arguments/fights. I have personally never felt any kind of risk/nerves but I know some of our volunteers have felt intimidated.'*** (Soup Run Volunteer)

***'Have seen some fights in the past, some pretty bad ones... don't know whether us being here may have exacerbated the situation.'*** (Soup Run Volunteer)

The volunteers generally had a system for handing out the food and other items and managed the queuing and allocation to ensure that there was enough to go around. At all of the soup runs we visited the volunteers collected litter during the soup run and when most service users had dispersed to try to ensure that no mess was left behind. There was a conscious effort by most providers to prevent any unnecessary upset or inconvenience to any local residents or businesses.

## 5.4 MORE THAN SOUP RUNS?

Many of the soup run providers offered social contact and involvement with homeless and vulnerable people far beyond simply providing food on the streets.

*'We are more than a soup run – it's about engaging people.'*  
(Soup Run Volunteer)

*'If soup runs were to disappear, people would miss them but I don't think they would suffer as much as some people like to think. They would miss talking to people because Thames Reach and Broadway are not doing the companionship side of things.'* (Soup Run Volunteer)

ASLAN and the Simon Community represent two examples of soup run providers that offer services far beyond soup runs to help the homeless and vulnerable.

### Case Study: ASLAN – All Souls Local Action Network

250 volunteers now and one paid worker

#### Tea Run

The tea run is a weekly service that operates during the early hours of Saturday morning all year round. The tea run started in 1988. A mini-bus of volunteers attends six stops in Central London providing sandwiches, tea and coffee, and an assortment of clothing. At each stop the team distribute tea, coffee, sandwiches and clothing.

*'ASLAN volunteers reach out to some of the most vulnerable and damaged members of society, who are commonly forgotten or ignored. In this way ASLAN hopes to demonstrate Christ's unconditional love... We try to encourage people who are depressed or distressed, and to point them towards services which may be able to help them.'*

There are four teams, each working one Saturday in the month in rotation, supported by a sandwich-making team and committed prayer partners

#### Webber Street Day Centre

ASLAN provides volunteers for the Webber Street Day Centre (London City Mission ministry to the homeless community) every Saturday morning catering for approximately 100 guests every week.

#### Entertainment Evening

Every Saturday evening ASLAN hold an entertainment evening, with a sit down hot meal at their clubhouse in Cleveland Street. The events are invitation only, with invitations being distributed a week in advance.

*'Whilst we do indeed sometimes put on various forms of entertainment, the idea here is rather one of entertaining guests at home. So, we try to create a homely atmosphere and to treat every person who comes through the door as an honoured guest. For people who often feel "unpersoned", this is a very affirming – and, occasionally, emotional – experience.'*

*'People come here for the camaraderie – to talk to other people.'* ASLAN volunteer

#### Visiting

Visiting scheme where teams of volunteers meet with recently re-housed people in a local pub or cafe to give the clients something to look forward to and to provide some routine, to act as a 'safety valve' if problems do arise and to provide advice and sources of information.

*'Work in our Visiting Teams (mentoring scheme) has revealed how difficult many ex-homeless people find it to cope with the mass of bureaucracy which confronts them on being resettled. Many ex-homeless people just give up and let things drift, often ending up in court and back on the streets, or even in prison.'*

*'Prayer is at the heart of all that we do. Each client has a mini-team assigned to them, consisting of a visiting pair (ideally male and female) supported by a prayer partner who prays at home. The prayer partner gets a call from each of the visitors at the end of the visit, so that the visitors can "unload" and commit issues to prayer over the coming two weeks.'*

[www.aslan.org.uk/Index-1.htm](http://www.aslan.org.uk/Index-1.htm)

# 5. Findings: Soup run providers

## Case Study: Simon Community

The Simon Community was founded by Anton Wallich-Clifford in 1963 and is a registered charity.

*'Simon is a partnership of homeless people and volunteers living and working together in a spirit of acceptance, tolerance and understanding. We exist as a community to reach out to, **support and campaign for people who are homeless or rootless, and particularly those for whom no other provision exists.**'*

### Services available:

#### Low-Support Housing

Low-support housing is for those community members who have grown through the community and managed to achieve a greater level of independence. They take prime responsibility for the running of the household and require little support from our volunteer workers. For some residents this is the final stepping stone towards wholly independent living.

#### Outreach

Outreach, which includes street work and tea and soup-runs. 'It is often the first contact we have with people who are sleeping rough in London.'

#### Street work

Street work involves going out on the streets of London every day of the year. Simon Community members go out to spend time and talk to people, and we do so representing Simon and our philosophy of acceptance, tolerance, and understanding. We aim to develop supportive relationships with those who are vulnerable and isolated. Meeting people for the first time is a chance to build a rapport with them and to try to understand their needs.

The majority of homeless people are isolated, at best they are ignored, and at worst they are abused. To have a conversation with those who have been socially excluded is to see them as fellow human beings. It is a start to building trust where there is an expectation of fear and disapproval, and where prejudice and discrimination are faced every day.

#### Tea and Soup Runs

An early morning tea run two mornings a week and a soup and sandwiches run two evenings a week.

#### Street Café

'Street Café is an important meeting point for people – social link'

Every Monday (5-7pm) and Wednesday (10am-12 noon) there is a Street Café at the church of St Mary-le-Strand where sandwiches, and tea and coffee are available. Tables and chairs are set out and people play chess, read newspapers and chat.

*'The whole Community takes part in outreach; residents from our houses, ex-residents living outside Community, as well as part and full-time volunteer workers... Although each rough sleeper's needs are different, an offer of friendship with a non-judgmental face is usually welcome.'*

[www.simoncommunity.org.uk/about\\_simon.htm](http://www.simoncommunity.org.uk/about_simon.htm)

These additional roles and activities demonstrate the wide-ranging knowledge and understanding of the issues around homelessness and rough sleeping that exists within various voluntary organisations currently providing soup runs on the streets of Westminster. As the focus of the providers is about helping those on the streets many soup run volunteers and organisations have expressed a clear desire to find more effective ways of working alongside other voluntary and statutory agencies.

*'Soup run volunteers would like to be part of the solution, helping the most excluded/marginalised who have issues accessing other services for the homeless... Role of soup runs is to plug a gap that exists, there is a need for soup runs. If soup runs were banned, something would be lost.'*  
(Campaigning organisation)

# 6. Findings: Soup run users

The views expressed by the soup run and other service users varied greatly. Soup runs were incredibly important sources of food, clothing and social contact to many people we spoke to. For others however, they were seen to be unimportant and regularly open to abuse.

## 6.1 WHO USES SOUP RUNS?

Of the 105 qualitative interviews carried out with service users we have demographic information for the majority of these:

We interviewed ten women and 95 men. We categorised ages broadly and many ages are estimates based on the appearance and experiences of the respondent.

Age	20s	30s/40s	50s	60+	Unknown
Number of respondents	7	45	21	6	26

The majority of respondents were from the UK – 70 of the 105 interviewed. The remaining 35 can be broken down into 26 from the EU (of which 21 were from A2 and A8 countries), 6 from outside the EU (mostly Commonwealth nations) and 3 unknown.

Nationality	UK	EU	Of total EU – A8 or A2	Other	Unknown
Number of respondents	70	26	21	6	3

When asked about their current housing status – 65 of the 105 respondents replied that they were rough sleeping. 23 people said that they were in accommodation (7 in flats, 7 in hostels, 5 in squats and 4 unspecified). We do not have information on the housing status of the remaining 17 interviewees

Housing status	Sleeping rough	Flat	Hostel	Squat	Accommodation – unspecified	Unknown
Number of respondents	65	7	7	5	4	17

### Service user profiles

All names of service users have been anonymised.

#### Soup run user: David

David is a British man in his 50s. He has been on the streets for a number of years. He uses some day centres including the Passage. He also uses soup runs on a regular basis and thinks they are very important.

*‘People do depend on them to survive. There are different bottom lines for different people, for example some couldn’t beg but could shoplift... If soup runs were to stop, they would need to be replaced with something better.’*

#### Soup run user: Michelle

Michelle is a British woman in her 70s; she sleeps rough in Central London as she has done for the past ten years. She regularly uses soup runs and also some other services, including the Passage.

She thought that soup runs were very important but could be abused by some people.

*‘People do depend on soup runs. Some people do take advantage though – push in and take more than they need to sell it on’*

#### Soup run user: Ludwik

Ludwik is from Poland and has been in the UK for several years. He is in his 40s and has been sleeping rough in Westminster for three years. He uses soup runs regularly and also uses the Passage, Rochester Row and the Webber Centre.

Ludwik said he used soup runs for a ‘source of life’ and that without them people would suffer.

*‘It would be a tragedy for the people who are new to being homeless. For those who have been here longer they know how to manage on the streets... if people who are new to the streets don’t know where to get food they might go to shops and steal. Also, those that are too proud to be “homeless”, too proud to ask for food and for help, will go and steal.’*

# 6. Findings: Soup run users

## Soup run user: Tony

Tony is a British man, from London, who is in his 20s. He has previously slept rough but had recently moved into his own flat. He uses soup runs in the Strand/Temple area on a regular basis and also uses the Connections at St Martin-in-the-Fields where his worker is based. He emphasised the important social role that soup runs serve both to those on the streets and to people who had moved on to accommodation.

*'I go for social as well as food reasons; there are normally about 5 or 6 people who I know. It's something to do to break up your day.'*

## Non Soup Run User: Graham

Graham is a British man in his 40s. He has previously slept rough on the streets but is now in a squat with 5 others slightly outside Central London. He does use day centre services but does not use soup runs anymore.

*'Used to use them for a few years until just before Christmas. I'm in a squat now and we have a kitchen so I buy my own stuff. I have just been put back on benefits.'*

When asked about **who uses soup runs** there was a wide variety of responses. The majority accepted that it was not only rough sleepers using them but very few had any problems with other people using them. Some respondents identified all soup run users as part of the same wider homeless community:

*'People who use them are all the same – the hungry.'* (Anon)

*'All of the homeless community.'* (Anon)

*'All people who are homeless, those in flats/hostels. We all use them.'* (Jason)

*'Mostly homeless, people in flats who are struggling and in hostels.'* (Bob)

Others acknowledged the safety net and familiarity role the soup runs played for those who had 'moved on':

*'They can be most valuable for people who have moved on from hostels to own accommodation – you are encouraged not to return to hostels/day centres once you have left but soup runs provide a way of keeping in touch with people and stopping people being too lonely in their new lives.'* (Anon)

There were others however who felt that it was not appropriate or correct for those other than rough sleepers to use the soup run services. Some had problems with the idea that soup runs could help support drug/alcohol addictions and others felt that the system was open to abuse for those who were trying to make/save some money.

*'Some people who have flats, I find that a bit bad. Once I am housed I won't want to be there again. I am thankful of them but just think it is wrong that those in homes go. It gives a fake representation of numbers of homeless.'* (Wayne)

*'People who've got flats/housing as well as homeless. Some have flats but spend money on drugs and alcohol rather than food.'* (Gerard)

*'A lot who use them aren't homeless – a lot of people are traders who take clothes and go and sell them on. People are abusing them (soup runs) a lot.'* (Paul)

*'Most of them are homeless. Some people get benefits and it's not right that they use handouts if you can buy food otherwise.'* (Ludwik)

Some service users we interviewed in day centres did not use soup runs. Some had done in the past but now felt they had no further need for them, others had more philosophical reasons for not using them.

*'Don't use them anymore. I did before, they were alright. Now I just get money and buy my own food.'* (Gerard)

*'Don't really use soup runs. For practical reasons, you have to be in a certain place at a specific time, may not be convenient. Also for psychological reasons – people need to have self-dignity and pride... Soup runs have a tendency to encourage homelessness. The homeless tend to take things for granted. People get stuck and take things for granted, look for an easy life. They don't want help.'* (Pierre)

We also asked people **how far they normally travelled to go to a soup run**. The majority of service users claimed to be rough sleeping in Westminster and said that they tended to stick within the borough to access both soup runs and other services such as day centres.

*'I don't travel far, use the ones in Westminster area.'* (John)

*'Don't travel to other soup runs outside Westminster.'* (Anon)

*'I mostly stay in the borough.'* (Geoffrey)

*'The furthest I would go would be Blackfriars Bridge, tend to stick around the Temple area. I like to keep out of the way – off the Strand – where it is quiet.'* (Graham)

Most people had a pragmatic approach towards travel in that they would go to wherever the services were available, whether soup runs or other indoor facilities. This inevitably resulted in people travelling into Central London, where soup runs and BBS day centres are concentrated. Some service users did mention travelling around to lots of different areas for particular services.

*'I would try to find a soup run within walking distance or one to which I could get to on a bendy bus.'* (Anon)

*'I travel to wherever I need to, to meet people but most don't need to travel very far. If food became an issue people would move around more.'* (Robert)

*'I stick to the ones around here within Westminster. But people walk for miles when on the streets. One of the most important services here is the podiatrist.'* (Edward)

*'I use a day centre in Ascot. Lots come into London and don't go out of London.'* (Joseph)

*'I don't use soup runs, don't need them... but I use lots of different places indoors like: Plumstead Baptist Church on a Monday; Vineyard in Richmond on Tuesdays; St Stephens Church, Twickenham (been going there for about 15 years, it's a nice place to go); Willesden Baptist Church on a Friday; French Church, Leicester Square on Saturdays; Muswell Hill on Sundays. You can have a dinner every night of the week, the churches open their doors. All of these places are listed in the Pavement.'* (Tim)

## 6.2 WHY DO PEOPLE USE SOUP RUNS?

As the reasons for being on the street vary for each individual so do the reasons for using soup runs. The reasons given included basic needs such as food, drink and clothing and also the need for social contact and conviviality. Routine also came across as being very important, with soup runs providing an important aspect of continuity in social contact when most other services were closed.

Of the 105 respondents: 72 people said they used soup runs regularly or everyday, 60 of these 72 respondents reported that they were rough sleeping, 15 said they used soup runs occasionally and 18 service users claimed not to use soup runs at all. We also asked people what were their main reasons for using soup runs.

Reasons for using soup runs	Food	Company	Hot drinks	Cash poverty/ no money	Clothes
Number of respondents	79	41	14	9	8

Many soup run users emphasised the vital role that soup runs played in providing **food and drink and other basic necessities** including clothing and toiletries.

*'Offer survival. I use them just for food.'* (Anon)

*'It's either that or starving – I go for food and coffee.'* (John)

*'Most people go because they are hungry and for something to do – day centres close around 2pm.'* (Jamie)

*'Essential for those with no money, need food. Essential most day centres close at 2pm, you need food in the cold.'* (Anon)

*'Beats stealing doesn't it?'* (Jason)

Another important reason for using soup runs was for social contact. Soup runs were frequently described as a 'meeting place' or a 'social gathering' and were identified as providing some vital structure and routine to the lives of many homeless people.

*'Food and if I need to see someone... soup runs offer an important meeting place.'* (Anon)

*'People go for food and drink and for social reasons... it is a meeting place – I go there if I need to see someone.'* (Ben)

*'For food, to chat, to meet certain people, talk to human beings. You can feel lonely.'* (Geoffrey)

*'To meet people as well as for the food and drink. To meet new faces and new friends as well. Offer clothing, shoes and at times toiletries.'* (Karl)

*'Soup runs provide some kind of purpose for those who don't have very much.'* (Robert)

*'It is mainly a social gathering. They give out food, clothes, sleeping bags, blankets.'* (Pamela)

*'People can be isolated – have relationships with those using and those doing the soup runs – maybe the only time someone smiles at them all day. Use for food and for socialising – receipt of good will is healing.'* (Anon)

Based on our analysis of more detailed responses from interviewees and from our observations at soup runs, the companionship aspect of soup runs is very important. Soup runs represent a unifying physical activity which allows and encourages social support and interaction.

Some users emphasised the **different approach** used by soup runs in contrast to that of other services available.

*'At soup runs you don't have to give any information to come and eat and get clothes.'* (Anon)

*'You don't get any grief – there are no officials saying you can't have something.'* (Anon)

## 6.3 ARE THERE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH SOUP RUNS?

The main problems identified by service users were:

- people abusing the system – taking more food/clothing than they needed
- people not queuing – pushing in to get to the van
- arguments between users – generally attributed to drink
- soup runs arriving late or not turning up

*'You see the chaos and there is probably violence – becomes a farce. People used to queue and behave.'* (Daniel)

*'People do abuse them, take the piss. I've seen two women come with trolleys and fill the bags full of clothes. People who do need them don't go, they get pushed out.'* (Daniel)

# 6. Findings: Soup run users

***'There is trouble – worse than arguments. Its about greed – there are too many people who want more than they need. People get desperate – think that they want more than they really need – insecurity. This only applies to some people – not everybody.'* (Robert)**

***'People do get impatient if soup runs are late or don't turn up at all.'* (Anon)**

There is a particularly difficult problem arising from the change in the composition of soup run users. There are cultural barriers and tensions between Eastern Europeans who have become much more common users of soup runs in recent years and the more 'traditional' or 'indigenous' rough sleepers for whom soup runs originally evolved to help. Several soup run users attributed problems over provision and competition for resources to this unresolved conflict.

***'Not really trouble. But things are getting difficult over the past 18 months with Eastern Europeans coming in. Eastern Europeans don't queue the same as here. This causes lots of hassle – made it unacceptable – creates lots of friction even though there is enough to go around.'* (Graham)**

## 6.4 HOW IMPORTANT ARE SOUP RUNS?

We found a range of responses from 'lifeline' to not at all that important. The majority of respondents thought that soup runs were very important and that there could be damaging effects for the homeless and wider society if they were stopped.

***'They are a lifeline – people do depend on them.'* (John)**

***'Without them we wouldn't survive – lifeboat to street homeless... Only contact with real world for the homeless who don't have contact with anyone else. Treat us as individuals which the system doesn't.'* (Anon)**

***'Soup runs are very important, I need them very much. If they go away, would be a problem for food, it is important to be able to get food near to where you sleep.'* (Stefan)**

***'I don't claim benefits so I depend on them and would have to do something else if they weren't around.'* (Peter)**

When asked about how much people depended upon soup runs many people highlighted that they provide a vital source of food for those excluded from BBS (self exclusion as well as formal exclusion by authorities), and during times when BBS day centres and other services are not open.

***'Soup runs fill the gaps that exist in the Building Based Services. For example, nobody provides soup runs at lunchtime during the week because of BBS.'* (Anon)**

***'Some people are excluded from BBS. For them soup runs are the only source of food and clothes – the only way to survive.'* (Anon)**

***'Lots of people do depend on them. When I first came back on the streets I did – if you've got no money you're stuck. In day centres you need money... Lots of people would suffer if they weren't there. There would be more shoplifting and stuff like that. If they are not being fed by soup runs they are going to need to get food from somewhere.'* (Philip)**

We also asked service users what they thought would happen if soup runs were stopped.

***'No money, so really depend on them. Without them, people would become desperate; now and again there would be crime.'* (Joey)**

***'Without them there would be an increase in shoplifting, begging, mugging, and people scavenging and going through bins.'* (Anon)**

***'People have to eat, will do whatever it takes to be able to eat, robbery or assault.'* (Anon)**

***'People do depend on them, without them there would be chaos on the streets – muggings, crime, riots. People need food... They should be setting more things up, not getting rid of stuff... it's only going to get worse.'* (Geoffrey)**

***'Best if soup runs stay out on the street – there are people who use them who wouldn't come in here. Don't think majority would survive without them.'* (Pamela)**

Whilst the majority believed that removing soup runs would have devastating effects, some respondents appeared to hold some sympathy with the views of Westminster City Council and other authorities that limiting soup runs would help people to move away from life on the streets.

***'If soup runs disappeared they would have to become more 'creative' and maybe it would be a strong impulse for some of them to leave the street and live in better conditions, as they would know that if they don't 'earn' the food, they will be hungry.'* (Anon)**

***'If soup runs stopped I'd probably get somewhere to live, there's no real push to do that, probably be better in a way, a good thing but some people rely on it and wouldn't manage to live.'* (Ryan)**

## 6.5 VIEWS ON OTHER SERVICES IN WESTMINSTER

We asked respondents for their views on the services available for homeless people within Westminster. Again, views varied from being very positive about the services available to being highly critical and feeling that their needs were not being met.

***'Better here than in Lithuania. Here they care about the homeless.'* (Alfred)**

***'Come to the Passage every day for food and company.'***  
(Pamela)

***'People come here (The Connections at St Martin-in-the-Fields) for companionship and to see others. For company and a bite to eat, same reasons they go to soup runs.'*** (Tim)

***'Use day centres, there are plenty of them about. I only use Connections. Its open 7 days a week. They are helping me get sorted; once you are eligible they do look at helping you out. If you are from outside Westminster you have to wait for 6 months.'*** (Wayne)

## The Connection at St Martin-in-the-Fields

***'We aim to help people rebuild their lives and move as far as possible towards independence. We work with people who are either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. There are many definitions of homelessness and although some people may have a roof over their head, it is not a permanent home.'***

The Connection at Saint Martin's provides an integrated package of services which help people to cope with the physical crisis of being homeless, and address the underlying issues which may have caused the homelessness and/or arisen from it.

The Connection at Saint Martin's services include:

- Street outreach
- Day centre services – one for young people 16-25 and one for over 26's
- A night centre
- Specialist advice and counselling services
- Employment, Education and Training programme
- A 16-bed supported housing scheme.

The centre has a proven track record in making a real difference to the lives of homeless people and in reducing the numbers of people sleeping rough. A renovated and vastly improved building has helped to support the centre's work and to inspire users to engage and change.

***'Our unique organisational identity is based on our unwavering commitment to helping homeless people to find their own solutions, resolve their problems and achieve their potential.'***

Although based in Westminster, service users come from across London, the UK and the world. Some are fleeing conflict or domestic violence, or may have suffered loss or a breakdown in their relationships. Others may have become institutionalised in the armed forces, the care system or psychiatric and prison services and find it difficult to live independently.

[www.connection-at-stmartins.org.uk/](http://www.connection-at-stmartins.org.uk/)

## The Passage

The Passage runs London's largest voluntary sector day centre for homeless people. The Day Centre provides a service for more than 200 men and women each weekday.

***'Our mission is to provide the resources which encourage, inspire and challenge homeless people to transform their lives.'***

The Passage fulfils its mission by providing Day Centre services offering

- basic care
- individual assessment and advice
- health, housing, pastoral and spiritual care
- education, training and employment
- outreach services to contact rough sleepers
- hostel accommodation moving towards re-settlement and further steps to independence
- supported semi-independent accommodation moving towards independence and re-integration.

The Passage aims to:

- give priority to the most vulnerable rough sleepers and insecurely housed;
- have a flexible and professional approach to the work which enables sufficient breadth to meet the needs of the individual;
- ensure that all members of staff and volunteers receive appropriate training, managerial support and affirmative encouragement in order to meet these aims;
- provide service users with opportunities to contribute fully in the life of The Passage and to have a genuine voice in the way that services are delivered and developed.

***'We are committed to helping homeless people to change their lives through the services we provide. We meet basic needs and offer advice. We help with resettlement and rehabilitation, including help with housing, literacy and numeracy, mental and physical health.'***

[www.passage.org.uk/](http://www.passage.org.uk/)

# 6. Findings: Soup run users

Some service users felt that the more professionalised, aspirational approach of some services was unhelpful and had moved too far away from meeting basic needs of the homeless.

*'Problem of the roles of the Passage and other places getting confused, the basic day to day welfare of rough sleepers and the longer term welfare. Too much focus on longer term welfare now without providing enough basic services.'* (Anon)

*'Bureaucracy, very little real help, employees just use homeless people to justify existence, money not helping, the refurbishment of Saint Martin's was unnecessary, not looking after people, don't make adequate provision.'* (Joey)

*'Before they got government money, they were better... still get exactly what you used to here. A lot of money has come in but it all goes on wages. Now if you sleep in the piazza you are not allowed to come into the Passage. They get money per head here so it is not in their interests to move you on quickly. All about money now... They have spent millions on CSTM but there are only three toilets for 70 men!'* (Peter)

*'Problem is that lots of services now have changed since they got government money, they can tell you where to sleep now.'* (Alfie)

A consistent message from many respondents referred to the resentment felt about those with lower support needs not being able to access the help they needed.

*'If you don't have a drink/drugs problem or are Eastern European you get pushed to the back of the queue. If you are a clean and decent person capable of earning a living they leave you to it.'* (Eric)

*'Unless you fall into priority needs of drink/drugs/mental health then there is no help available, you get pushed to the bottom of the list.'* (Pierre)

*'If night worker comes, I have no addictions so they can't help. I would rather have private housing as hostels have alcohol/drugs problems.'* (Anon)

## 6.6 ALTERNATIVES TO SOUP RUNS?

We asked service users for any suggestions they had for any possible alternatives to soup runs. A common response was the idea of moving soup runs off the streets and to indoor facilities. Another popular suggestion was to extend day centre opening hours and to provide places for people to go both during the day and in evenings.

*'It would be better if day centres were open longer and soup runs could be held inside.'* (John)

*'There are better alternatives. If indoors or there was some control people would have to queue properly. There isn't any queuing system. It's very unfair for people.'* (Eric)

*'For me, it is much better to sit down and eat indoors. Also you can get help with training etc.'* (Roman)

*'Would be better indoors. I would choose to be indoors. Where day centres come in, would be good to be open later and every day.'* (Philip)

*'If day centres open all day there would be less drinking and less violence on the streets.'* (Alfred)

*'Halls where you could go inside, chat and have tea, in the evening and at night.'* (Joey)

*'Don't need soup runs but people do need somewhere to go – soup runs are not what they need.'* (Pierre)

*'Day centres are warmer and it would be easier, more organised, people go only once, not many times to get more. They could get Prêt sandwiches. Better indoors, like it because it's straight forward and reliable. You know they'll come.'* (Bob)

*'It would be better if the Passage could stay open later.'* (Geoffrey)

*'More places open at night, get warm bath and shower but day centres are closed at night.'* (Anon)

However, there were others who felt that there was an intrinsic value in soup runs being both physically outside and outside of mainstream provision.

*'More BBS would not solve the problem of people being banned from BBS.'* (Anon)

*'There is something intangible about soup runs that appeals, something about being outdoors/being close to nature.'* (Anon)

*'No alternatives to soup runs. Would be better if day centres opened more but still if you have to buy your meals it can add up, you can get a meal here for £2 but it is a lot of money out of what you have. There isn't a viable alternative.'* (Graham)

Some respondents also identified the importance of finding and helping people who were newly arrived to the streets to prevent them from becoming too established and institutionalised within the street lifestyle.

*'The quicker you can get someone new to the street involved with services, the quicker they will get into a hostel and the quicker they will be able to leave the hostel as well. The longer someone is on the street the more time they have to become prejudiced about services that may mean they avoid using them, also get into the routine of using soup runs and not having to spend their own money on food. It is about stopping people getting into a routine on the streets.'* (Anon)

# 7. Findings: Others affected by soup runs

In addition to those who provide and use soup runs, we identified soup run neighbours including local residents and businesses, and policy makers and practitioners to be key actors in the debate around soup runs.

## 7.1 SOUP RUN NEIGHBOURS

In addition to those who operate and use soup runs directly there are a number of other key stakeholders affected. In the Victoria area particularly, there is concern among some local residents about the practical impact of soup runs upon them and the community in which they live. The Cathedral Area Residents Group (CARG) represents residents in the streets immediately around Westminster Cathedral and has long campaigned for Westminster City Council and other authorities to tackle anti-social behaviour in their area. Soup runs are seen as contributing to this anti-social behaviour.

***'We believe we are the only residential area in Britain to be targeted by soup-run providers.'* (CARG submission to LSE)**

***'Impacts upon our homes and how we use our area. Don't walk through Howick Place at night, or after 6pm now. Impacts on quality of life.'* (Resident)**

***'While we have every sympathy with individuals whose circumstances leave them needing special care and support, there is no reason why aggressively anti-social behaviour should be condoned or facilitated, whether by turning a blind eye to the problems that it causes or by misguided acts of charity which aggravate problems that those dispensing the charity are themselves insulated from. It is our opinion that much more needs to be done actively to discourage drunken and loutish behaviour on our streets and in our public places.'* (Resident)**

Particular concerns of local residents include:

- Safety – the fear of or actual violence and verbal harassment.
- Cleanliness of local area – litter and mess left behind and street urination
- The wider detrimental impact upon the local environment and the quality of life for local residents.

***'Women are disproportionately impacted by both the fear of, and actual verbal harassment, young women especially, and men late at night by the fear of aggression and violence... Late-night groups in doorways and the piazza are especially intimidating.'* (CARG submission to LSE)**

***'They draw anti-social behaviour perpetrators together and create mess in the immediate vicinity of my flat.'* (Resident)**

***'Day or night, our area smells unpleasant. WCC 'clean-up' as best they can but they cannot remove the traces completely.'* (CARG Submission to LSE)**

***'The bookshops on the Piazza were badly affected by a fall-off in trade as tourists avoided lingering after their visit to the Cathedral. Parents of St Vincent's de Paul reported their children as 'feeling frightened' and the Head teacher was concerned at conditions within and around the school gates' (CARG Submission to LSE)***

Many local residents feel that the soup runs are an out-dated form of provision and that providers have become institutionalised, lacking understanding of the impact their actions have on the local community but also of new, more strategic ways of helping the service users.

***'The soup runs seem to serve little purpose save for that of making the providers feel morally better. They must create an expectation which is often not fulfilled, and in view of their intermittent nature cannot provide any useful long term benefit. They often create litter and mess and encourage pigeons and other vermin.'* (Resident)**

***'We feel exploited too by soup-run providers and volunteers from outside the area who come here to dispense their charity. We do not doubt their impulses are genuine, but they seem completely oblivious to the cumulative impact of their activities on local people.'* (CARG submission to LSE)**

***'Soup runs organisations don't think strategically – soup runs providers are reluctant to change. There is a lot at stake – they can't afford to look at the issue.'* (Resident)**

There is also recognition among some local residents that the soup runs are operating without the same regulation and supervision of other service providers.

***'You can laud the soup runs for the work they do but there are problems. I wonder about the motives behind some of them, shouldn't they be working within a proper charity setting with regulations?'* (Resident)**

***'Whole lot of uncoordinated soup runs and people operating at the same time. Soup runs not complying with the health and safety act like other organisations would have to. Charities are very heavily regulated, soup runs are not regulated.'* (Resident)**

Local residents offered various suggestions for ways of improving the situation; including relocating soup runs away from residential areas and making soup run providers more aware of the impact of their activities.

***'We also believe WCC, having succeeded with moving activities to Howick Place, could offer (i) soup-run providers with more literature explaining their effect and (ii) in the short-term offer them 'licensed' pitches in Spenser Place. This is a commercial road behind the City Hall nearer to New Scotland Yard.'* (CARG submission to LSE)**

***'Soup runs do have a function but shouldn't be in residential places.'* (Resident)**

# 7. Findings: Others affected by soup runs

Some residents believe that soup runs should not form any part of provision for homeless people.

***'They should be stopped. It perpetuates the problem of street sleeping' (Resident)***

***'They should be abolished in favour of better organised indoor facilities with the ability to refer people/clients to appropriate facilities for long-term help.'* (Resident)**

Among other residents however, there is an understanding that soup runs play an important role but a questioning of whether the help available is the best way of supporting those people in need.

***'I think soup runs do attract people into the area. People look forward to the time during the week when they talk to someone. Personal contact is important.'* (Resident)**

***'Soup runs are only scratching the surface, need much more than that, social contact, talking to people and being comfortable with others. Soup runs providing only for the basic need of hunger – there are more pressing psychological needs and issues. Homeless people need more support and places they can go once they are moved on.'* (Resident)**

## **Are soup runs fulfilling their original purpose?**

Some key policy actors have been outspoken about their view of soup runs as being an outdated and potentially damaging force for rough sleepers and other vulnerable people.

***'Soup runs are old-fashioned and unnecessary in UK society today – St Mungo's worked that out 40 years ago – there are better ways to help people.'* (Service Provider)**

***'Soup runs do sustain people being on the streets. Responsible for perpetuating the system/culture of being on the streets.'* (Service Provider)**

***'Soup runs detract from everything that we are trying to achieve. They do make life on the streets more comfortable.'* (Service Provider)**

## **Case Study: St Mungo's**

St Mungo's established in 1969 in a house run by volunteers in Battersea, which was opened to rough sleepers, with a soup run operating from the kitchen. Its founder, a Glaswegian, took the name St Mungo's from the patron saint of his native city, although the organisation is not religious. St Mungo's is one of the agencies operating Westminster BBS services within the borough.

St Mungo's street outreach teams go out every night to find people who are sleeping rough. They gradually build up trusting relationships, and offer support and encouragement to bring homeless men and women off the streets and into appropriate accommodation. The London Borough of Westminster has by far the highest density of rough sleepers in the UK. Here, we work in close partnership with two other service providers, running an assessment and referral centre where clients can get support and advice on a range of services – including health, drug and alcohol use, relocation, community support and housing.

***'We don't believe in helping rough sleepers to sustain a street lifestyle. While we understand the importance of providing food to homeless people, it remains our opinion that soup runs rather than offering a solution to street homelessness, exacerbate and prolong it.'***

[www.mungos.org/views/102\\_soup-runs](http://www.mungos.org/views/102_soup-runs)

## **7.2 KEY POLICY MAKERS AND PRACTITIONERS**

We were keen to see where soup runs fitted into current rough sleeping/homelessness policy and practice and so identified key policy and practitioner actors to find out their views on soup runs and wider homelessness issues in Westminster. Most of the information we have gathered has been through direct face to face interviews though we have also sourced already published information. We spoke to voluntary and statutory organisations including Crisis, Homeless Link, Housing Justice, St Mungo's, Look Ahead, Thames Reach, Broadway, Salvation Army, Hostels such as King Georges (English Churches Housing Group) and Castle Lane (Look Ahead), West London Churches Homeless Concern, Westminster City Council – policy and service provider role (BBS day centres and outreach workers at the Passage and the Connection at St Martin-in-the-Fields), Police – Safer Streets Homeless Unit, Communities and Local Government.

However, there are also those working within the sector in direct service provision and in policy making who acknowledge the important role that soup runs can play in accessing vulnerable people.

***‘Despite claims, research shows soup runs provide vital help and emotional support to street homeless and vulnerable people and do not encourage people to remain homeless.’***  
(Adam Sampson quoted in Dugan, 2007)

***‘The value of the soup run is that it is not structured outreach but should engage and build a relationship with people... Volunteer organisations and local churches can be important to finding people that other services cannot reach.’***  
(Campaigning organisation)

### **Are there too many soup runs in Westminster?**

While many people accept the value of soup runs in theory, there are strong arguments from policy makers and practitioners that there remain too many soup runs operating in Central London, in Westminster in particular, and that there is not enough coordination amongst those groups. It is argued that there are enough services available in the borough for genuine rough sleepers and that soup runs create a false impression of the volume of rough sleeping. Issues were also raised about the lack of formal supervision and regulation involved for the soup run providers.

***‘Plenty of access to food in Westminster at day centres and hostels – makes soup runs unnecessary.’*** (Service Provider)

***‘I would like to see soup runs licensed so that there could be regulations around volunteer training, management of groups of people, food hygiene standards etc. People do not mean any harm but end up not helping very much.’*** (Service Provider)

However, as outlined by the soup run providers themselves, some people accepted that the soup runs came to Westminster because of the volume of rough sleepers and other vulnerable people in the area. This inevitably led people to central locations yet while there remained a lack of provision elsewhere it was difficult to argue that soup runs were unnecessary.

***‘Soup runs draw people into the area inevitably but people will always go to where the services are. Until services are provided elsewhere, you cannot argue against them coming in.’*** (Campaigning organisation)

### **Who do soup runs help?**

There are concerns among policy makers and practitioners that soup runs are not targeted enough towards rough sleepers.

***‘Overall, in my opinion soup runs do not target/reach those who need help the most. They help to give those who are involved in street life a greater sense of belonging and having a community which in turn adds to encouraging them to remain on the streets rather than link in with services.’*** (Police)

***‘Soup runs are not targeting those who need it most. Soup runs may be useful in filling a gap but may need to be linked in more to BBS and used more strategically.’*** (Service provider)

Concerns were also raised about the fear that many rough sleepers feel about soup runs, therefore preventing those who the soup runs are directed at from accessing the help.

***‘Lots of people are afraid to use soup runs – have been taken over by Eastern Europeans to support their income... Rough sleepers have been pushed out of soup runs... The most socially excluded people/the ones with most serious mental health issues will not go near soup runs. Hard core/ entrenched rough sleepers don’t use soup runs because they no longer see them as safe.’*** (Service provider)

On the other hand, many key actors emphasised that all those using soup runs could be defined as vulnerable and needy and therefore deserving of the service.

***‘People only go to soup runs if they are desperate.’***  
(Campaigning organisation)

***‘Even those using soup runs despite being in accommodation are there for a valid reason, as in many cases they come for the companionship and routine.’*** (Burdett, 2007)

### **What are the benefits and drawbacks of soup runs?**

Many of the key actors we have spoken to have direct experience of the practical problems and concerns that arise from the operation of soup runs. The Police in particular could point to incidents of anti-social behaviour created by large groups of people gathered together, the associated feelings of intimidation and fear for members of the general public, noise and litter.

***‘The problems I have experienced in the past are the large groups that congregate, some have started to fight and it is intimidating for members of the public. There has also been an issue in the past with rubbish being left in the area.’*** (Police)

***‘Anti-social behaviour, draw to area where services are already stretched, license for people to remain in area where they can access soup runs, litter, intimidating to members of the public/business/local residents.’*** (Police)

***‘Safety in local area; undignified for people; neighbourhood problems and the mess left behind, I can understand the reservations of local residents when it is so close to them.’***  
(Service provider)

# 7. Findings: Others affected by soup runs

However, on the whole soup runs were not highlighted as being regular high-crime spots. There was also an acknowledgement that removing soup runs could in fact create more crime and anti-social behaviour as vulnerable people may be forced to turn to crime to survive and/or to subsidise addictions.

*'Soup runs do not normally cause a massive amount of trouble.'* (Police)

*'There is a danger that people will starve. There is also a risk that taking the service away will actually make a disturbance of the peace more likely, because homeless people will be more desperate for food, and could potentially be driven to crime.'* (Luke Evans quoted in Dugan, 2007)

## 7.4 THE FUTURE OF SOUP RUNS: PROPOSALS FOR THE WAY FORWARD

Most of the key actors had constructive suggestions for ways of moving forward the debate over soup runs and the delivery of services to the homeless population of Westminster.

Some key themes emerged:

### **Holding soup runs indoors**

*'If soup runs were moved indoors things would have to become more reliable and there would be conditions applied which maybe are not needed outside... soup runs become co-ordinated so that once in a while service users have to talk to someone about possible solutions in exchange for the food.'* (Service provider and campaigning organisation)

*'Lots of churches to open their doors more often. Lots of people on the street would be happier going into a church/voluntary service than they would a statutory service. Some are more comfortable, also the perception of a better service.'* (Service provider)

*'Soup runs shouldn't be removed, even if it was possible, without providing something in their place... If people can use free food why not distribute within an existing community setting, volunteers could be used for those. Day centres and community cafes/centres that are open at night.'* (Campaigning organisation)

*'Need for effective regulation or supervision possibly considering using a building to provide the service and not the street.'* (Police)

### **Soup runs to be limited/regulated/supervised but remain on the streets in some format:**

*'May be a role for contact of engaging people on the streets on their level, giving them a cup of tea. Citizen to citizen engagement by volunteers who give up their own time. Soup runs could have a role to play in that.'* (Campaigning organisation)

*'They should be regulated and supervised by outreach workers to encourage users to access services so they can sort out their problems.'* (Police)

*'To have one designated supervised area.'* (Police)

*'Rather than providing food/drink, the people offering alternatives/support and assessing the needs should be sent out (outreach) more frequently.'* (Police)

## **Case Study: Metropolitan Police Safer Streets Homeless Unit, Westminster**

Westminster has a dedicated team of Police officers based at Charing Cross Police Station responsible for the homeless and street population in the borough. The team is made up of an Inspector, a Sergeant, six PCs and six PCSOs. The team generally work in plain clothes.

A multi-agency approach is employed with lots of liaison with the local authority and voluntary organisations/statutory agencies. There has been a shift towards ensuring people on the streets now given co-ordinated help and advice. The SSHU team can advise homeless people on where to get help and shift the onus away from police and towards other agencies more suited to dealing with issues.

*'Soup runs – as long as operating in line with highway and parking regulations – from a Police point of view people not doing anything wrong as long as they abide with laws – obvious issues of environmental health and health and safety overall.'*

*'Officers would probably prefer that the soup runs weren't there. Whilst they may be commendable there are issues that are brought into the areas around them... From a policing point of view it would be easier if there were no soup runs.'*

## Case study: Thames Reach Street Rescue Service

The Thames Reach Street Rescue Service appears to offer some of the most valuable aspects of soup runs ie, engagement with the most vulnerable on the streets and provision of absolute basic necessities when needed but with the additional support of professional outreach workers who can help to make positive changes for the service users. There could be a role for soup run volunteers within this service and within other outreach services operated by other voluntary sector organisations such as St Mungo's and Broadway.

Thames Reach Street Rescue Service

***'Every night of the year, we are out and about across the capital, acting as a safety net for some of society's most vulnerable men and women.'***

London Street Rescue teams of outreach workers and volunteers find and befriend rough sleepers in a bid to help them away from the streets.

They provide immediate and practical assistance, including:

- helping them into emergency accommodation
- information and advice about available support services
- essentials such as blankets or food (but only if this will not discourage move away from the street).

London Street Rescue helps people of all ages and with many different needs. These include people with poor mental or physical health and those with drug or alcohol problems. The teams are there for people who are not getting the services they need and are unlikely to seek help for themselves.

London Street Rescue's actions can act as a catalyst for change in people's lives. Getting rough sleepers into emergency accommodation is often the first step towards them getting back on track and having a home of their own.

***'We will work with individuals for as long as it takes to help them move away from a street lifestyle, no matter how complex their needs.'***

People sleeping rough are very vulnerable to the dangers of the streets. The actions of London Street Rescue can save lives.

[www.thamesreach.org.uk/what-we-do/on-the-street/](http://www.thamesreach.org.uk/what-we-do/on-the-street/)

## Case Study: Crisis Volunteering Programme

Crisis, like many other homelessness agencies, depends upon volunteers who work alongside staff but who have more time to engage with service users. Crisis offers many volunteering opportunities and has a well established and structured programme in which volunteers are supported and can gain accreditation.

### Case Study: Crisis' Volunteering Programme

Crisis began over 40 years ago as a volunteer-led organisation and much of our work would not be possible without the support of thousands of volunteers. In 2008/09 over 10,000 volunteers played a crucial role in Crisis' work with homeless people, providing essential support in the Crisis Christmas event, in the Head Office and Skylight Centres – as tutors and learning assistants, mentors as well as in office roles and events. Crisis also runs a specific client volunteering programme – recognition of the part volunteering can play in building skills, confidence and work-related experience in supporting people's progression out of homelessness.

In the past year, volunteers contributed well over a quarter of a million (266,860) hours of their time – a recent evaluation by the Institute for Volunteering Research estimated the value of this time to be worth over £3.7 million, the equivalent of 139 full-time members of staff. Crisis has a well developed structure for involving and supporting their volunteers. Role descriptions are now provided, accreditation offered and a popular volunteers' awards scheme run. Volunteers are responding well to these support structures; this represents a solid foundation from which the programme can further develop.

**The findings of the study also show that Crisis' clients are highly positive about the contact they have with volunteers.**

They highlighted the many ways volunteers helped them and the specific qualities they valued amongst those who provide them with support. Particularly important for clients was the willingness of volunteers to give up their free time, unpaid, to help them and others. Clients valued having volunteers to talk to and confide in with confidence. They were also a source of inspiration, helping to encourage clients to think positively about their own lives.

***'For me personally, they give me inspiration, they give me a bit of insight into the real world because I have been out of it for so long... There are a couple of volunteers I speak to that have just finished or they are at University. It sort of gives me hope that if they can do it so can I.'***

If you would like to apply to volunteer with Crisis please go to [www.crisis.org.uk/page.builder/volunteer.html](http://www.crisis.org.uk/page.builder/volunteer.html)

# 7. Findings: Others affected by soup runs

## **Increased day centre provision and more focus on supporting the ex-homeless and vulnerably housed**

*'Day centres still serve a role for the housed and the vulnerably housed. People need help and are lonely, dangers of falling back onto the street. Role in breaking down isolation. Day centres serve this role and so could soup runs. Low level every day support for people is the role that soup runs could play in helping people stay on the straight and narrow' (Campaigning organisation)*

*'There could be satellite places set up for ex-homeless people who are housed where they can go to provide a social network, they could discuss issues and problems there. They could get help with things before they progress too far and talk about things that are not possible with their friends on the street who are still homeless. Provide the opportunity for new conversations, community cafes etc.'* (Service provider and campaigning organisation)

## **Case Study: West London Churches Homeless Concern/ Chelsea Methodist Church**

West London Churches Homeless Concern is based at Chelsea Methodist Church on the Kings Road in Chelsea. It operates daytime services year round for the homeless and other members of the public.

*'The Narthex is one area, in particular, where the open door policy of Chelsea Methodist church is at its most visible. It is open to all members of the public. There is a Cafe, ran by volunteers where for a minimal charge you can have a cup of tea or coffee and some biscuits or a sandwich. Most afternoons after 2pm we provide a free simple meal for guests, including the homeless.'* ([www.chelseamethodist.org.uk/Narthex.html](http://www.chelseamethodist.org.uk/Narthex.html))

## **Case Study: West London Churches Homeless Concern**

West London Churches Homeless Concern (WLCHC) is a registered charity (Charity No. 1083203). WLCHC's object is the relief of poverty among homeless people in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham and the surrounding area by the provision of accommodation, advice and assistance.

WLCHC provides:

- a night shelter on every night of the week between the months of November and April;
- a casework service – providing advice, advocacy and practical support to our shelter guests;
- daytime services – a laundry, showers and a clothing store;
- an information card detailing local services for homeless people.

Daytime services are based at Chelsea Methodist Church on the King's Road. The laundry is open every Tuesday and Thursday morning and enables guests to wash and dry their clothes and sleeping bags. One paid member of staff and a team of volunteers run this service. Showers are also available for guests every weekday except Wednesday. We provide towels, shampoo, soap, razors and shaving cream. Sanitary items are also provided for female guests. A clothing store, which also operates every weekday except Wednesday, provides good quality second-hand clothes to all who need them.

*'It is our ethos to provide our services in a welcoming, inclusive and non-judgemental way and welcome all who come through our doors.'*

[www.wlchc.org/webpages/yearround.html](http://www.wlchc.org/webpages/yearround.html)

The need for increased and improved support for service users once they have moved on is accepted within government. Communities and Local Government is trying to promote the establishment of mentoring and befriending schemes for former rough sleepers and is keen to support church groups and other organisations to carry out this work as alternatives to operating soup runs.

*'We will also facilitate links with projects set up under the Cabinet Office funded Mentoring and Befriending scheme to support people in independent accommodation.'* (CLG, 2008, p24)

## Case Study: Mentoring and Befriending

### What is mentoring and befriending?

Mentoring and befriending are increasingly popular concepts and projects exist all over the UK in a wide range of settings. They are very similar activities and generally are both seen as involving the development of one-to-one relationships based upon trust and confidentiality. The relationship is often voluntary and has the goal of providing practical assistance. Involvement can be a very rewarding experience and is an opportunity to not only achieve and develop new skills but also to engage and put something back into the community. Read more about definitions of mentoring and befriending.

### What is the difference between mentoring and befriending?

The difference between these two forms of support is usually the emphasis placed on goals. Mentoring tends to have a stronger emphasis on goal-setting and time limited work and less on the development of a social relationship. Befriending aims to provide a supportive social relationship where none exists and has less emphasis on goal-setting.

### Who makes a good mentor/befriender?

Mentors and befrienders range in age usually from 18 to 70+ (although in some cases they may be under 18), with a wide variety of life experiences and backgrounds. Sometimes people who have worked with a mentor or befriender and have experienced the benefits, go on to become mentors and befrienders themselves. A mentor or befriender may come from any walk of life and should be positive, reliable, a good listener, interested, approachable, non-judgemental and realistic.

### What does a mentor or befriender do?

Some of the key tasks of a mentor or befriender may include:

- Get to know the client and let the client get to know them
- Listen to the client and discuss anything that is worrying them
- Value their opinions and beliefs
- Encourage them to achieve their objectives
- Talk about relevant experiences/problems they have overcome (if appropriate)
- Encourage clients to talk and think about their ambitions and hopes for the future and plan the steps needed to get there.

In particular, a mentor will work towards achieving positive change at a time of transition, through goal setting and motivation and a befriender will support the client to cope with life challenges through friendship and empathy.

[www.mandbf.org.uk](http://www.mandbf.org.uk)

### Targeted actions for legal and illegal migrants

Government officials also argue that the law as it stands on illegal migrants should be enforced more given that the people who fall into this category have no recourse to public funds and can end up on the streets. More work is also needed across government to raise awareness for legal migrants of the options and help available to them.

# 8. Discussion

## 8.1 BRINGING THESE PERSPECTIVES TOGETHER

Soup runs tend to provoke strong and often emotive responses from all involved. We have tried to present an independent and objective analysis of these positions in the hope that some middle ground can be uncovered to help move forward discussions of the role of soup runs in Westminster.

Soup runs present complex social and moral questions and challenges around how to provide the most 'appropriate' help and how to ensure the most needy and 'deserving' are able to access that help in a way that impacts in the least disruptive way on others who share public spaces within crowded cities.

All stakeholders seem to agree that there is a need for some additional or alternative provision (either for meeting basic needs including food and clothing or for providing a forum for social engagement and interaction) for those on the streets who are unable or unwilling to access current, often building-based, services; for those who have been homeless and are struggling in new accommodation with limited support and social contact; and for those who are housed yet poor, vulnerable and isolated.

**'We need to question more why people who have moved on still return to soup runs and other activities – what has failed them in the system?'** (Service provider and campaigning organisation)

**'If people are going on to the streets to attend soup runs, who are housed, then the answer is not to take the food away from them but to set up befriending services etc.'** (Campaigning organisation)

**'Soup runs are not only used by rough sleepers. Also used by people who have somewhere to live but can't cope on their benefits, especially older people/pensioners topping up their shopping.'** (Former soup run user)

**'If people have just been housed, then the first bill arrives/ the light-bulb goes they can end up back on the street, they need to be supported more, more visiting schemes etc. it doesn't take much.'** (Resident)

However, views on the best and most appropriate way of providing help remain divergent. Central and local government policy makers and statutory-funded services have focused on providing support in order to move people away from the streets and have tended to suggest that the unrestricted support offered by soup runs and other voluntary bodies could have a detrimental impact on service users.

**'For the sector as a whole there has been a lasting cultural shift with it increasingly recognised that our job is to solve not sustain homelessness, and that to do this we need organisations and buildings which are capable of delivering change.'** (CLG, 2007, p16)

**'Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he will eat for the rest of his life... Soup runs are supporting but not making changes for people'** (Service provider and campaigning organisation)

**'The voluntary sector in particular has been criticised for not doing enough to encourage people to "move on". The "culture of kindness" perpetuated by soup runs... it is suggested, only reinforces the "culture of homelessness".'** (Lemos, 2000, p11)

Nevertheless, there is a renewed focus on partnership working and engaging all stakeholders, including voluntary organisations, in the aim of ending rough sleeping.

**'Across the country... community and faith-based groups have often established volunteer-led initiatives to respond to the need of individuals. Many of these groups already reach out to people sleeping rough or help people reintegrate into communities. But sometimes they are not sure how they can make best use of their limited resources and the goodwill of their members. We value the efforts of these groups, and want to support them starting by strengthening the skills and knowledge they need.'** (CLG, 2008, p43)

There needs to be further acceptance and compromise from all actors and stakeholders on the respective benefits of different forms of service provision and the potential value of increased collaboration and partnership.

**'The reality is that each week soup runs are engaging with street homeless and vulnerable people and will probably continue to do so despite some official attempts to discourage them. Mainstream agencies are therefore better working with, rather than against, them.'** (Shelter, 2005, p19)

**'In defence of soup runs, agencies have been reluctant to engage with the soup run agenda. Any solution requires compromise from both sides. More traditional agencies need to work with soup runs in order to bring people in... Soup runs could have a useful role. There has to be a diversity of provision – no one size fits all solution – soup runs may be able to play a part but they have to see themselves as more than just handing out food.'** (Campaigning organisation)

**'Very important for the voluntary sector to work well in tandem with local outreach teams and better collaboration is needed between voluntary and statutory organisations. It is important for the voluntary bodies to remain independent but also to work closely with whoever we can.'** (Service provider)

*'Church run night shelter may have an approach that is effective and different. It should be looked into more closely to establish why someone would use that and not other options that are available. **Important to work out how to use the engagement that is established more informally to best effect.**' (Campaigning organisation)*

The role that soup runs play in providing social contact and sociability for vulnerable people is important. This is also an aspect of soup runs that could be easily transferred to alternative forms of provision.

*'Important focal point for the development of social contact and human interaction to meet the basic needs of sociability' (Glasser, 1988, p8)*

*'Role of social contact: soup runs could provide a way of linking people into services, potentially introduce them into a community, at least they would know it exists.'* (Campaigning organisation)

# 9. Conclusion

## 9.1 WHERE NEXT FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Ending rough sleeping has been a clear objective for government and homelessness agencies for over a decade. Policy has been directed to this end by providing solutions that are building-based and help to encourage rough sleepers to move away from a life on the streets. There have been clear statements made about the need to challenge efforts that are perceived to be sustaining and supporting a street lifestyle, including soup runs.

However, there is also an acceptance that current policies for addressing rough sleeping leave some major gaps, particularly with reference to those with no recourse to public funds; and also to entrenched rough sleepers who are unwilling or feel unable to access building based services. In an effort to address this issue, Communities and Local Government have recently proposed a targeted and unified response to help the most entrenched rough sleepers. A group of 205 entrenched rough sleepers have been identified as current rough sleepers who have been seen sleeping rough in five or more years out of the last ten and/or have been seen rough sleeping 50 times or more over that period. Communities and Local Government is working alongside selected local authorities and voluntary agencies to promote a new approach which balances flexible and tailored approaches and offers with consistency of action and enforcement across boroughs boundaries.

However, it remains clear that soup runs, with their tolerant, open-access, and undemanding ethos alongside committed, knowledgeable and well-meaning volunteers, can access many vulnerable people who may not be reached through existing mainstream service provision.

***‘Soup runs potentially provide relationships that statutory services cannot achieve.’ (Service provider)***

***‘Benefits of soup runs, they may be able to access people that wouldn’t be accessing any services. Some who use soup runs just won’t go into day centres.’ (Service provider)***

***‘Lots of people who are ex-homeless or who have something wrong in their lives will access soup runs. It supplements people’s incomes. There is a certain part of the population that is vulnerable in one way but this is not necessarily hunger. We need to identify what it is that these people need, not just discount them and take the soup runs away.’ (Service provider and campaigning organisation)***

There are gaps in services for homeless and vulnerable people within society, and a stronger commitment to find more imaginative, individually-tailored solutions is needed. Whilst homelessness authorities and agencies are fully committed to helping individuals in a variety of different ways, there is some more work to do and the knowledge and experience of voluntary organisations including soup run volunteers could potentially be incorporated here.

***‘Soup runs could provide an important triage service. Could have an important role around speed and being the first point of access for many people on the street... Need to find better ways of directing volunteers into existing services like day centres, hostels etc.’ (Campaigning organisation)***

To ensure that partnership approaches work, soup run providers and volunteers will need to be committed to working alongside government agencies and other bodies, and to be willing to adapt their services.

***‘Soup runs have an important role to play but they are not the solution... Soup runs have to work more closely together with outreach workers etc.’ (Campaigning organisation)***

***‘In principle the idea of a food run is a needed and welcome service for individuals who actually need to use them. However, to achieve this and make a positive impact on the community they are serving they need to be fully aware of the issues and willing to be accountable for their actions.’ (Police)***

## 9.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Having spoken to as many stakeholders and actors involved in soup runs as possible we hope to have gathered together some clear proposals for ways forward in dealing with soup runs in Westminster. The most important theme appears to be the need for closer partnership working and communication between the various organisations involved.

### **Soup runs:**

- Soup Run Forum to continue to play an active role in bringing together all soup runs operating in Westminster. **There is a need for increased collaboration and coordination to reduce duplication and overprovision further.** The Forum can also provide a role in providing guidelines and minimum standards and encouraging all members to sign up to these codes of practice.

***‘Housing Justice started the forum for soup runs in London as well as an on-line national forum. Through these forums progress has been made in identifying good practice and developing a set of minimum standards. It is another aim to help soup runs identify where their work fits within the system.’ (Housing Justice, 2008)***
- **Soup run providers need to work together and with other agencies including BBS outreach workers and the Police SSHU.** The Forum could also be established as an arena for closer working between soup run providers and other relevant professionals. Soup run volunteers could be better briefed on how to signpost service users to services and agencies that could help them. Outreach workers could also build up relationships with the providers that could enable them to engage with service users at soup runs and potentially link them into other services.

- A working group could be established to **discuss and mediate the problems of emergency provision on the streets that resolves or reduces current tensions**. This is most pressing in the Victoria area where the current location of many soup runs in Howick Place can cause undue stress to the local resident population.
- The Simon Community Street Café seems to be a positive model which could be reproduced. **Contact should be made with churches and other venues within Westminster as well as with providers to investigate potential sites for more street cafes.**

#### Wider issues:

- There is a **need for more imaginative and personal/individually targeted solutions for those who have not been helped through existing policies and strategies**. Communities and Local Government are looking to develop new approaches and can use the wealth of experience within the voluntary sector to help with the development and delivery of this.
- **Rapid responses** for those newly arrived on the streets to prevent institutionalisation of a street lifestyle.
- Address **Westminster's role as recipient of people discharged onto the streets** from other parts of London and the country as a whole.
- There should be urgent **special support and enforcement policies and action to deal with the complex problems of foreign migrants, with no recourse to public funds**.
- **Increased opportunities for open-access citizen to citizen engagement and possible ways of utilising motivated and well meaning volunteers**. This could possibly include in day centres, hostels, providing translation services, accompanying outreach workers (within organisations such as Crisis, St Mungo's, Broadway, Thames Reach), providing night stop/supported lodgings, and mentoring and befriending services.

*'Most third sector agencies working to tackle homelessness originated from community responses to local need. Many people want to help but do not know how best to focus their resources. If community and faith-based groups have the right tools and support they can be effective in preventing isolated people from ending up on the streets and can complement the efforts of more formal services.'* (CLG, 2008a, p41)

*'Concerned citizens could also see how they could contribute through volunteering by linking to [www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk) or making a donation. There would be scope to link to local authority and outreach service contact points.'* (CLG, 2008a, p42)

- **Increased day centre particularly during evenings and at weekends**. Volunteers could be used to help staff this provision, as is the case with ASLAN at the Webber Street Day Centre on a Saturday morning. Donated food which is currently given to soup

runs could also be used to provide free food. Based in churches in local boroughs as well as within Westminster.

- **More emphasis on the provision of free food indoors**, such as the churches that open their doors to the homeless. Volunteers would also be vital to providing these services and information could be made available for users on services available for them. This underpins social contact and builds on social capital.
- **Dispersion of current provision from Central London**. Some soup run providers travel long distances to Westminster to provide services when there are needs they could meet closer to home. This could help ensure that soup run users are able to access help more locally and do not need to travel into Central London. **Croydon Nightwatch** is a good model of providing local solutions to local homelessness problems.

### Case Study: Croydon Nightwatch

Nightwatch was founded in 1976 when a group of local people came together concerned after the death of a homeless man in Croydon.

Our core activity is providing prime and direct support for homeless people in Croydon through work undertaken solely by volunteers. We help people at every level of homelessness, from the street homeless to those in hostels and bed and breakfast accommodation and vulnerable former homeless people who need continuing support if they are not to become homeless again.

#### Our Objectives

- To act as first line contact for homeless people, to sign-post them to other agencies
- To provide urgent and necessary items of food, clothes, toiletries, pots, pans, household goods to homeless people in need
- The stabilisation of former homeless people in new accommodation
- To assist in helping unemployed homeless people (both financially and emotionally) to take up vocational training and education.
- To befriend homeless people to encourage empowerment and increase in confidence
- To educate the community at large in Croydon about the realities of homelessness.

[www.croydonnightwatch.org.uk/index.htm](http://www.croydonnightwatch.org.uk/index.htm)

- **Strategies and resources to increase support for those who were once homeless but now housed** are crucial to preventing a 'revolving door' back onto the streets. There needs to be more focus on 'soft' support of social engagement as well as the more structured support needed for independent living. There is a role here for committed volunteers.
- **Improve services for isolated individuals and households** of all types. This applies to other groups as well as the current/formerly homeless population.

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## APPENDIX A: FULL QUESTIONNAIRES FOR ALL STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

### 1. Key Actors

#### 1. Role of soup runs

- What do you think of soup runs?
- Who uses soup runs and why?
- What do they do? What benefits do they bring?
- What are the problems associated with them?
- Do you think people who use soup runs depend on them? Where else do they get food for example: hostels, day centres, shops etc?
- Are there alternatives to soup runs for example: inside a church hall/community centre? Problems with this?
- What would happen if soup runs were to disappear? What is their future?

#### 2. Wider context of homelessness/rough sleeping strategy and services

- What do you think about current policy towards rough sleeping and homeless services?
- What do you know about Westminster Council services for the homeless?
- Where does your organisation fit in?
- Where else do homeless/vulnerable people in Westminster look for help/support?
- What gaps are there in homelessness/rough sleeping services? Does this apply in Westminster? And more widely?

### 2. Soup run providers

#### 1. Wider context of homelessness/rough sleeping strategy and services

- What do you think of Westminster Council services for the homeless?
- Where else do people look for help/support?
- What gaps are there in homelessness/rough sleeping services? Does this apply in Westminster? And more widely?

#### 2. Role of soup runs

- What do you think of soup runs?
- Who uses soup runs? And why?
- What do they do? What benefits do they bring? What problems?
- Do you think people who use soup runs depend on them? Where else do they get food for example: hostels, day centres, shops etc?
- Are there alternatives to soup runs for example: inside a church hall/community centre? Problems with this?
- What would happen if soup runs were to disappear? What is their future?

# Appendices

## 3. Soup run/Westminster service users

### 1. Soup run information – practicalities, benefits, problems etc

- What do you think of soup runs?
- **Who** uses soup runs?
- **Which** soup runs do you use? Are some more popular than others?
- **Why** do you use soup runs? What do they offer? What benefits do they bring?
- Is there ever **trouble** at soup runs? Arguments? Complaints from residents or local businesses? Do the police tend to get involved? What is their attitude?

### 2. Other forms of support

- What do you think of **Westminster Council services** for the homeless?
- Have you used them? Which ones? What do people say about them?
- **Where else do you look for help/support?** Which other services do you access?

### 3. Role of soup runs

- **How much do people who use soup runs depend on them?** Where else do they get food for example: hostels, day centres, shops etc?
- **Is there any better alternative to soup runs** for example: inside a church hall/community centre? Problems with this?
- What would happen if soup runs were to disappear?

### 4. Demographic information – if not already covered

- What is your housing status at the moment?
- How far have you travelled to come to this soup run?
- Do you work?

## 4. Soup run neighbours – local residents/businesses

1. Do soup runs affect you? If so, how?
2. What do you think should be done about them?
3. If you find them problematic, how do you think the problems they create should be dealt with?
4. How do you think the problems they are trying to solve should be dealt with? Alternatives to soup runs?

## APPENDIX B: FULL QUESTIONNAIRES FOR ALL STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Month	Soup runs	Day Centres	Other meetings – key actors/service providers
May			Steering group meeting (14.05.08)
June			Soup Run Forum (03.06.08) Alastair Murray (27.06.08)
September			Janet Haddington, WCC (10.09.08) Soup Run Forum (11.09.08) Steering group meeting (16.09.08) Service User Forum (17.09.08)
October	The London Run (Strand/Temple 07.10.08) Simon Community Street Café (St Mary le Strand 13.10.08) Observation of Lincolns Inn Fields		
November	Observation of Lincolns Inn Fields		Pre-meeting with Sister Ellen, Ligia Teixeira and WCC (20.11.08) Westminster Building Based Services Managers Team (21.11.08) Steering Group meeting (21.11.08) Service User Forum (26.11.08) Andy Soloman-Osborne, Thames Reach (28.11.08)
December	Simon Community Street Café (St Mary le Strand 15.12.08) Observation of Lincolns Inn Fields		Becky Rice, Broadway (12.12.08) Soup Run Forum (15.12.08)
January	The London Run (Strand 05.01.09) Simon Community (Temple 15.01.09) Simon Community Street Café at St Mary le Strand (21.01.09) Sacred Heart (Victoria Howick Place 30.01.09) Core (Victoria, Howick Place 30.01.09) Anon Soup Run (Victoria, Howick Place 30.01.09) Observation of Lincolns Inn Fields	Passage (10.01.09) Passage (24.01.09)	BBS Outreach – CSTM (05.01.09) Distributing questionnaires to local businesses and residents (Victoria 06.01.09) BBS Outreach – CSTM (15.01.09) Danny Strickland, WLCHC (20.01.09) Service User Forum (21.01.09) Steering Group Meeting (26.01.09) Peter Cockersell and Alexia Murphy, St Mungos (27.01.09) Distributing questionnaires to local businesses (Strand 30.01.09)
February	Streetlytes (Victoria 21.02.09) Simon Community (Temple, Victoria 26.02.09) Observation of Lincolns Inn Fields	CSTM (07.02.09) CSTM (10.02.09) Passage (17.02.09) Passage (24.02.09)	Martin Goodwin, Homeless Link (03.02.09) José Espineira and Michelle Binfield, CLG (04.02.09) Inspector Martin Rees, Met Police Safer Streets Unit (06.02.09) Paul Perkin, Look Ahead (10.02.09) Steve Davies, King Georges Hostel (11.02.09) Westminster Area Forum (Victoria 11.02.09)

# Appendices

Month	Soup runs	Day Centres	Other meetings – key actors/service providers
March	Simon Community Street Café (St Mary le Strand 16.03.09) London Run (Strand/Temple 16.03.09) Streetlytes (Victoria Howick Place, 21.03.09) Simon Community Tea Run (Temple/Victoria and other sites 22.03.09) Temple and Strand, and Victoria (23.03.09)	CSTM (10.03.09)	Hannah Hunter, St Mungos (02.03.09) CARG (03.03.09) Westminster CC Area Forum (West End 03.03.09) Crisis (Duncan and Ligia 06.03.09) ASLAN Entertainment Evening (07.03.09) Collette Gamble, Salvation Army (Rochester Row 09.03.09) Steering Group Meeting (16.03.09) BBS Outreach – Passage Streetlink (16.03.09) Mark McPherson, Look Ahead (18.03.09)
April	MRCT, Victoria (14.04.09) Coptic Church, Victoria (14.04.09) ASLAN Tea Run (25.04.09)		Soup Run Forum (06.04.09) Service User Forum (08.04.09)



# Appendices

## SOUP RUN TIMETABLE

last revised May 2009

### WEDNESDAY

Approx times	Kentish Town	Camden Town	Kings Cross	St Pancras Euston	St Mary's Islington	Hinde Street, W1	Marble Arch	Victoria/House of Fraser	Lincoln's Inn	The Strand	Temple	Waterloo
10.00										SC		
10.30										SC		
11.00										SC		
12.00										SC		
12.30	HK											
13.00		HK										
13.30			HK									
19.30									HK			
20.00				SC					SVC		LS, HK	
20.30						SC		DT?				
21.00									TC		SC	
21.30										HK		SC
22.00								SC/TC				

### THURSDAY

Approx times	Kentish Town	Camden Town	Kings Cross	St Pancras Euston	St Mary's Islington	Hinde Street, W1	Marble Arch	Victoria/House of Fraser	Lincoln's Inn	The Strand	Temple	Waterloo
12.30	HK											
13.00		HK										
13.30			HK									
19.30									HK		HK	
20.00				SC				SF	SVC			
20.30						SC						
21.00										KT	SC	
21.30												SC
22.00								SC				



# Appendices

## SOUP RUN TIMETABLE

last revised May 2009

### SUNDAY

Approx times	Kentish Town	Camden Town	Kings Cross	St Pancras Euston	St Mary's Islington	Hinde Street, W1	Marble Arch	Victoria/House of Fraser	Lincoln's Inn	The Strand	Temple	Waterloo
6.00am				SC	SC							
6.30						SC				HB		
7.00										SC, HB		
7.30								SC		SC, HB		
8.00								SC				
8.30								SC				SC
9.00							SC					SC
PM												
2.30 - 4.30										HTB	SWLV	
20.00 -21.00									IC	7 D	GS + ?	
21.00-22.00								HCR				

#### KEY

Red	Monthly or Bi-Monthly Soup Runs
7 D	7th Day Adventists – different groups on different days
A	Agape (group from Kingston)
AS	ASLAN (All Souls Local Action Network) Every Saturday.
B+J	Beryl and Joyce
C	The Core
CC	Coptic Church. Every Tuesday evening.
CCC	Celestial Church of Christ every 1st and 3rd Monday
DT	De Paul Trust may operate a run every 2nd Wednesday?
FHSR	Friends of the Homeless Soup Run. Every Friday.
FHG	Food for the Homeless Group (St John's Wimbledon)
GS	Good Samaritan
H	Hampshire Run. Last Tuesday of the month. Clothes only.
HB	House of Bread. Hot breakfasts. Every Sunday.
HK	Hare Krishna Food for Life. Every Monday-Saturday
HCR	Harlow Chocolate Run
HTB	Holy Trinity Brompton Rd. First Sunday
IC	Imperial College Soup Run. Every Sunday.
IG	St. Ignatius Soup Run. Every Saturday.
KT	Kensington Temple
LCI	Lighthouse Chapel International

LS	London and Slough Run. Monday and Saturday. Monthly Wednesday runs.
MC	Missionaries of Charity
MR	Michael Roberts Charitable Trust. 2nd Tuesday of the month
Q	Quaker Run (Winchmore Hill). 2nd Friday
SB	Sai Baba Run. Monday and Wednesday.
SC	Simon Community: Every Monday, Wednesday and Thursday.
SF	St Francis (Stratford) last Thursday of the month
SH	Sacred Heart Church. Every Tuesday and Friday.
SJV	Saint John Vianni
SL	Streetytes
SVC	Sadhu Vaswani Centre
SVP	St Vincent de Paul
SWLV	South West London Vineyard. Every Sunday.
TC	St. Thomas of Canterbury, Woodford Green every other Wednesday
VC	Victory Church
W	Watford Group
WM	Wycombe and Marlow Churches
other groups	details unknown at present

List compiled by Alastair Murray at Housing Justice [www.housingjustice.org.uk](http://www.housingjustice.org.uk)  
Email corrections to [a.murray@housingjustice.org.uk](mailto:a.murray@housingjustice.org.uk)

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### ***Day centres***

#### **Passage**

Rough Sleepers drop in sessions 4.30-6pm Monday-Friday

(By invitation – food often available)

Saturday and Sunday mornings, 9am-12 noon

Open access

Food available

#### **The Connection at St Martin-in-the-Fields**

Tuesday and Thursday evenings, 4.30-7.30pm

Open access

Food is available on these evenings

Saturday and Sunday mornings, 9am-1pm

Open access

Food available

#### **West London Day Centre**

Resettlement groups held Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, 1.30-3.30pm

Food available

### ***Hostels***

All hostels either have food provided or have self catering facilities.

Many hostels receive food donations from local food retailers, distributed free of charge to residents.



Equality and diversity are central to the aims and objectives of LSE. The School actively promotes the involvement of all students and staff in all areas of School life and seeks to ensure that they are free from discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, social background, disability, religious or political belief, age and sexual orientation. At LSE we recognise that the elimination of discrimination is integral to ensuring the best possible service to students, staff and visitors to the School.

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The information in this leaflet can be made available in alternative formats, on request. Please contact: Laura Lane, Email: [l.lane@lse.ac.uk](mailto:l.lane@lse.ac.uk)