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## Information about homelessness

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People can be homeless or threatened with homelessness for a huge range of complex and intertwined reasons. The scale of the homelessness problem stretches far wider than those people owed a duty by Local Authority homelessness departments and plenty of those who aren't sleep rough on the streets or 'sofa-surf' between the houses of family and friends. If we are to have a realistic understanding of the extent of the problem the distinction between official numbers and actual numbers is important.

In 1998 Tony Blair set a country-wide target that by 2002 the number of rough sleepers should be reduced by at least two thirds from the existing level of 1,850. The target was met ahead of time in 2001 and to date is being sustained with a level of just under 500 recorded in 2007. However, [Crisis](#) estimates that in Great Britain there are approximately 400,000 people who can be considered to be 'hidden homeless'.

All Local Authorities are required by law to provide a homelessness service. There is a statutory duty both to make attempts to prevent homelessness and to have in place adequate provision for those to whom a duty is owed according to certain assessment criteria. As well as Local Authority provision voluntary agencies offer advice, support and temporary supported housing.

More information about legislation and assessment criteria can be found by clicking on the links on the left-hand-side and information about agencies, which might be able to help address homelessness and related difficulties can be found in the 'Finding accommodation' section.

Often, providing someone with a roof over their head, although extremely significant, is only the first step in addressing a range of enduring life difficulties.