

The Homelessness Crisis

Research from Liam Byrne MP

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New research published by Liam Byrne MP reveals the depths of the homelessness crisis across the West Midlands

The research compiled from face to face interviews with homeless citizens, House of Commons library research, Parliamentary Questions and Freedom of Information requests reveals:

- A 333% increase in rough sleeping between 2010 and 2018 - with a rise of nine-fold in Birmingham, and a six-fold rise in Sandwell
- The number of homeless children across the West Midlands currently in temporary accommodation has increased by 175% (a factor of 2.75) since the start of 2013, with one local authority (Coventry) showing an increase of 663%.
- Children now make up over one quarter (27%) of those in temporary accommodation across the West Midlands.

A collapsing safety net of services, which once helped stop vulnerable people becoming homeless - and helped the homeless back on their feet.

- The region's number of mental health cases is now rising four times faster than funding
- A quarter of the region's residents live in authorities - including central Birmingham - that are actually cutting mental health spending – despite a rise in caseload
- Drug and alcohol addiction services have been cut by over £8 million across the region - an incredible 20%

One to one interviews revealed:

- All homeless people experienced a twist of fate, which resulted in the losing their home
- All had experienced some sort of violence since living on the streets - often severe violence
- All believed that mental health services needed improving
- Most believed that an increase in housing availability was essential.

The twists of fate: the stories behind the statistics

Our one to one interviews revealed that everyone sleeping homeless who we met had suffered some sort of twist of fate that had led to them losing their place to stay:

- **'Mark'**, was looking after his partner and his sister, and there was no way he would leave them. They had become homeless after their mother had died, and were evicted from a property by a landlord who objected to their dog.
- **'Mya'** had arrived from East Europe looking for work. It hadn't worked out. So the pavement was her bed.
- **'Simon,'** sleeping next to his worldly goods in a battered wheely case, been sent up from London. 'Apparently, I've got connections in Birmingham' he told us, but he didn't know who they were. He was sixty years old.
- **Jakub** is an ex-chef and landscape gardener who had spent some time in prison which had led to him sleeping on the streets
- **'Martin'** told us that he'd been in the care system since 1997 when his dad was arrested for abusing his sisters.
- A 27 year old man, **Ginge** to his friends, told us he had been on the street for at least two years. He had a large debt with Solihull housing and had been disowned by this family.
- **'Marcus'** suffered a break down in his relationship after years of domestic violence. 'I've just got no family to go to', he told us.

Mental health services

- **"John"**, said he suffered from paranoid schizophrenia and bipolar and that he was triggered very easily. But that mental health services and the council always want you to come to their offices rather than meeting you where you are.
- **'Patrick'** had just lost his disability benefits. But he couldn't read the instructions on his medication, so he wasn't taking them. He took crack and heroin to 'block out the bad thoughts'; 'Bad things have happened to me. I've have to have my ways to stop thinking'.
- **'Gaynor'**, is a woman in her 50's who everyone called 'Mom'. She was bipolar, self-harmed 'to let things out' when things got too much, and was addicted to alcohol. She showed me her wrists scarred with cuts.
- **'Martin'** told us that the mental health system was struggling and you'd have to be in a really bad way to be seen by a doctor.

Violence

- **‘Martin’** told us that just that week they’d nearly died: their tent had been kicked and attacked at 4 in the morning. As we left, he warned us “be careful out there”.
- **“Ginge”**, told us that there was “a hell of a lot of violence” but “if you’re homeless, you need a bad attitude to survive”.
- **‘Alex’**, laughed when asked about violence on the streets. He told us that he’d built a reputation as someone not to be messed with – the only way to survive on the streets. However, he said that he used that threat to protect women and children on the streets, that his society allowed that. He reached inside his jacket and pulled out a pristine Bible, that he read every day.

Addiction services

Many homeless people, resort to using drugs, often to self-medicate for trauma. Drug overdoses are a significant cause of homeless deaths.

- Many people we spoke to used drugs, ranging from synthetic cannabinoids like Spice to heroin.
- We heard mixed reviews about services to treat addictions
- **One man** said he was trying to get clean and was worried about the people he might meet in a shelter who might tempt him back into a bad path. He was trying to avoid bad influences, and that meant he was sleeping in the lobby of a bank in the city centre.

Housing

Overwhelmingly, homeless people are looking for a place to call their own - rather than a hostel place, or a shared home. Many have experience of living in shared accommodation with other substance users, which made it harder for them to create a stable environment.

The Statistics: The numbers of rough sleepers and children in temporary accommodation

Across the region, the number of rough sleepers has already more than doubled, with a nine fold rise in Birmingham, and a six fold rise in Sandwell.

Rough Sleeper Census

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Change 2010-2018	
Birmingham	9	7	8	14	20	36	55	57	91	82	911%
Coventry	5	8	12	26	6	9	13	8	25	20	400%
Dudley	3	4	4	6	6	3	3	11	5	2	67%
Sandwell	2	15	14	3	2	4	11	10	14	12	600%
Solihull	3	5	6	5	6	5	6	2	4	1	33%
Walsall	8	13	9	8	5	7	26	20	11	3	38%
Wolverhampton	9	12	8	6	7	13	18	19	19	10	111%
WM TOTAL	39	64	61	68	52	77	132	127	169	130	333%

The number of kids in temporary accommodation this Christmas (2018) nearly tripled in last 5 years. The number of homeless children across the West Midlands has almost tripled since 2013, with nearly 5,000 set to spend Christmas in temporary accommodation.

Liam's research shows:

- The number of homeless children across the West Midlands currently in temporary accommodation has increased by 175% (a factor of 2.75) since the start of 2013, with one local authority (Coventry) showing an increase of 663%.
- Children make up over one quarter (27%) of those in temporary accommodation across the West Midlands.

Children that were homeless in temporary accommodation, Q1 2013	Children that are homeless in temporary accommodation (2018)	% change since 2013
1,814	4,991	175%

Homeless people in temporary accommodation	Children that are homeless in temporary accommodation	Children as a % of those in temporary accommodation
18,770	4,991	26.59%

Source: Shelter

The Statistics: Mental Health Provision

- **Mental health caseloads across the region have risen by 12%, but funding has only increased by 3%. Our analysis of House of Commons Library data revealed the caseload for mental health services in the region is rising by four times faster than funding.**

Number of people in contact with mental health services				
CCG	2016/17	2017/18	Change	%
Overall caseloads	126,935	141,750	14,815	12%
Overall funding for mental health (£M)	597.0	615.1	18.1	3.0%

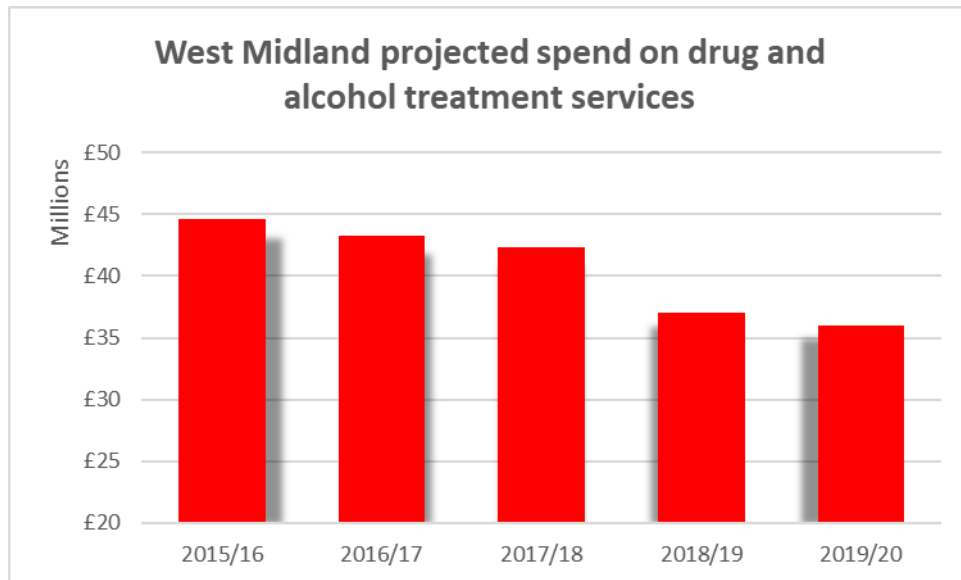
House of Commons library research shows that a quarter of the region's residents live in authorities that are actually cutting mental health spending – despite a rise in caseload – and spending per case varies wildly across the region. The NHS in Sandwell & West Birmingham, together with the NHS in Birmingham South & Central - which covers the city centre - have both cut funding for mental health services, and do not meet the government's own mental health 'investment standards'. Together, they serve 24% of the region - over 700,000 of the region's 3 million patients.

CCG	2016/17 £m	2017/18 £m	Change (£M)	Investment standard achieved?	Mid-2017 population (all ages)	Per capita	Mid-2017 population (18+)
NHS Sandwell and West Birmingham CCG	100.5	96.5	-£3.93	No	501,260	£193	501,260
NHS Birmingham South and Central CCG	67.2	65.9	-£1.31	No	205,951	£320	205,951
NHS Wolverhampton CCG	45.2	46.5	£1.33	Yes	259,926	£179	259,926
NHS Solihull CCG	42.5	44.0	£1.53	Yes	213,812	£206	213,812
NHS Walsall CCG	58.6	61.0	£2.33	Yes	281,293	£217	281,293
NHS Dudley CCG	47.8	50.9	£3.12	Yes	319,419	£159	319,419
NHS Coventry and Rugby CCG	98.0	101.3	£3.31	Yes	466,499	£217	466,499
NHS Birmingham Crosscity CCG	137.3	149.0	£11.73	Yes	755,493	£197	755,493
	597.0	615.1		N/A	3,003,653	£211	3,003,653
% CHANGE IN SPENDING		3.0%			POPULATION WITH FALLING BUDGETS AS % OF TOTAL WMIDS POPULATION		707,211
Source: NHS Digital Mental Health Bulletin							24%

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The Statistics: Addiction Services:

- Our Freedom of Information requests to councils in the West Midlands metro area finds that while addiction service budgets have been steadily declining over the five year period, with a projected £8 million drop across the region.



FOI: Spend/ Project Spend on Drug & Alcohol Treatment (£M)

Council	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Change (£)	Change (%)
Birmingham	£20.7	£19.9	£20.5	£16.6	£16.6	−£4.1	−20%
Coventry	£3.6	£3.6	£3.5	£3.4	£3.4	−£0.2	−6%
Dudley	£4.3	£3.9	£3.4	£3.5	£3.4	−£0.9	−21%
Sandwell	£4.0	£4.0	£3.8	£3.3	£2.9	−£1.1	−27%
Solihull	£3.1	£3.3	£2.9	£2.9	£2.8	−£0.3	−11%
Walsall	£3.7	£3.5	£3.4	£3.3	£2.9	−£0.8	−21%
Wolverhampton	£5.1	£5.1	£4.9	£4.0	£4.0	−£1.2	−23%
West Midland Total	£44.6	£43.3	£42.3	£37.1	£36.0	−£8.6	−19%

Photos

