

ThamesReach

Research into the lives of Romanian migrant workers living in encampments in London

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Foreword - Commonweal

In 2016 Commonweal Housing launched the *Starter for 10* research competition, to mark our 10th Anniversary – ten years of exploring diverse areas of social injustice where housing has a key role to play in any solution. The aim of the competition was to help an expert organisation working on the front lines of injustice find out more about a new or emerging issue – learning more about its scope, causes and impacts, as a first step towards envisaging possible solutions.

Thames Reach's winning proposal raised the issue of tent encampments, which in recent years have sprung up around parts of outer London. An emerging problem, under-reported and little understood, this was just the sort of issue that sparked the interest of Commonweal trustees and staff.

The injustice faced by those living in such unsanitary, unhealthy encampments is clear enough. Staying in the encampments is uncomfortable and unsafe. However, encampments also represent an injustice for those living in the local area: people unable or wary of using their own parks, canal towpaths or other public spaces that have been turned into the camps.

The main response so far has simply been to clear out individual encampments – which more often than not simply pop up again elsewhere, sometimes only 100 metres further on over the local authority boundary. This is no solution at all.

Before we can begin to think about how we can solve this problem, we need answers to some basic questions. Who are the inhabitants of these camps? Where have they come from, and what has driven them to live in tents? How can they be helped out of rough sleeping, and what solutions might work for them? The key finding of Thames Reach's research is that this is a distinct group with particular drivers, motivations and potential solutions.

Those in the encampments are not the benefit-scrounging beggars sometimes portrayed by lazy journalism or misinformed public opinion. As such, different – and new – solutions to avoid the growth of such encampments are needed. That is now the challenge for Commonweal and all in the homelessness and housing sectors. It may require us questioning our previous cosy ideals, norms and solutions; since those solutions have not worked for this group (and probably not for others either).

We need to use this fascinating new research to open our eyes to issues we may have been blind to before, and rise up to this new task. To quote Albert Einstein's view of repeating old mistakes: "Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."

At Commonweal, we hope we can help project partners to find new solutions.

Ashley Horsey

Chief Executive, Commonweal Housing Solutions

Foreword - Thames Reach

Thames Reach works with rough sleepers on the streets of London every single night of the year. In recent years, the number of working migrants sleeping rough in London has increased and this has been a growing cause for concern. Rudimentary encampments have arisen, typically in parks, under bridges, in derelict buildings, and on patches of wasteland.

Those living in these encampments tend to have limited support needs and are evidently self-sufficient. Outreach services are confronted with a conspicuous lack of provision for them. However, these encampments raise troubling issues that cannot be ignored. The nature of these informal camps creates an environment which is unsustainable, both for the people living there and the surrounding communities. Furthermore, migrant workers are taking up unregulated, casual jobs that leave them open to exploitation.

The research presented in this report, generously supported by Commonweal, seeks to understand encampment rough sleepers staying at these sites, specifically Romanian nationals on sites in outer north and east London, and to challenge commonly-held assumptions. In particular, the research seeks to understand the motivations and aspirations of this group, and give them an opportunity to talk about the kinds of work and housing they want.

The findings detailed here offer insights into life in London as a working migrant, and help develop our understanding of migrant homelessness. They reveal discrete communities living in the capital, each with their own needs, requiring a range of responses from homeless and statutory services.

This research is not intended to provide all the answers; this is only the beginning of the debate, rather than its conclusion.

Jeremy Swain

Chief Executive, Thames Reach

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Thames Reach would like to thank Commonweal Housing for its support in funding and providing input on this project. Thanks also to our colleagues at the Greater London Authority (GLA), Crisis, Migrant Rights Network (MRN), St Mungo's Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) team and the Home Office for valuable contributions and insights. We are particularly grateful to the clients who shared their experiences with us, providing first-hand insight into the lives and housing situation of those living on encampments.

1 Executive summary

In 2016, Thames Reach, a London charity supporting homeless and vulnerable people, was awarded funding from Commonweal Housing to research the situation of people living in encampments in outer north and east London.

The aims of the research were to:

- describe the nature of the problem, including the factors driving migration; the organisation of the encampments; the types of work accessed by the residents; and the options they would be willing to pursue if available
- suggest possible approaches to address this form of homelessness.

The research took place between November 2016 and January 2017. The main element of the research fieldwork was interviews with 21 Romanian people staying on encampments in four boroughs: Barking and Dagenham, Barnet, Enfield and Haringey. In this fairly small project it was decided to focus on this specific group, since they are the largest population currently staying on encampments. The researcher, Becky Rice, co-produced this part of the project with a Romanian-speaking outreach worker from the Thames Reach Targeted Rapid Intervention Outreach (TRIO) team, Benjamin Sebok. In addition, the researcher conducted interviews with stakeholders and undertook a desktop review of relevant information.

1.1 Background and context

Romania and Bulgaria joined the European Union (EU) in 2007. Initially there were some restrictions on the rights of nationals from these countries to move to the UK and work, but at the end of 2013, these transitional arrangements were lifted and Romanian nationals were free to come and work in the UK under the Free Movement Directive. Since that time, there has been a large increase in the number of Romanians living in the UK overall, and in the numbers seen rough sleeping in London. In 2015/16, 1,545 Romanians were contacted rough sleeping in London compared to 496 in 2012/13.¹

'Encampments' are defined as sites where three or more people are staying in makeshift shelters and tents. Conditions are very poor and sometimes hazardous. The sites are often in large open spaces, wooded areas or around the A406 road. This research focused specifically on sites where Romanians were living because they are the largest group currently staying on encampments.

Data about the number of people living on encampments in outer north and east London at any one time is of limited quality. Information from CHAIN² does not provide a complete picture because residents of an encampment are often not all present when outreach workers attend, or they refuse to provide details or come out of their shelters.

Various developments in recent years have affected the rights of EU citizens living in the UK. One of the most significant changes in the context of this research occurred in May 2016 when the Home Office published updated instructions for 'assessing whether to administratively remove an EEA [European Economic Area] national'. 'Administrative removal' is when 'the Home Office enforces [...] removal from the UK if [someone] does

¹ Source: CHAIN data provided by the CHAIN team St Mungo's. Note: figure may differ slightly from previously published figures due to retrospective updates to client data.

² CHAIN is a GLA-funded database used by those working with rough sleepers to record information about their work.

not have the right to remain in the UK'.³ The guidance issued in 2016 identified rough sleeping specifically as an abuse of the 'right to freedom of movement'.⁴ New guidance issued in February 2017 specified that enforcement action on the grounds of someone rough sleeping 'must be proportionate, and action should only be taken where it is apparent that the rough sleeper is misusing their right to reside', taking into consideration factors such as whether the individual is taking steps to find accommodation or has been forced to sleep rough due to 'sudden change in circumstances'.⁵

Those living on encampments have little contact with services and the wider community. As evidenced by the interviews (see section 1.3), the specific group in question are motivated to come to the UK purely to access work, are healthy and ready for work, and rarely have support needs requiring services or expectations to access health services or welfare benefits.

TRIO is a pan-London service funded by London Councils to work on encampments and 'hotspots' (sites where three or more people are sleeping rough on the same date). The remit of the team is to support people to access accommodation and work and to improve their health. The TRIO team regularly visits sites to check conditions and the welfare of clients; they also provide advice on the dangers of sleeping rough and the risk of enforcement action. Where possible the team offers some support around employment and accommodation, although the options for this particular group are very limited (most have No Recourse to Public Funds, for example, because they would not be able to demonstrate continuous periods of employment required to secure Job Seekers Allowance – JSA, or Housing Benefit). For people wishing to leave the UK, TRIO can provide support with voluntary reconnections (i.e. pay for and support the client to return to their home country or somewhere else they have a connection to).

1.2 Findings from client interviews

Profile of interviewees

- Interviews were undertaken with 21 people: 19 men and two women all of working age (from 20 to 61 years). All the interviewees were Romanian. Five described themselves as Romanian Roma, but this could be an underestimate due to reticence about providing ethnic data in light of perceived prejudice against Roma people.
- Interviewees reported very few support needs (drug, alcohol and mental health problems), but two had gambling problems. All were regularly undertaking physically demanding work and appeared to have a good level of physical health.
- People interviewed tended to be resilient and resourceful, making the best of their situation and finding a way to manage with limited facilities, for example accessing showers at local gyms and regularly speaking with family back home.
- Interviewees had not been homeless in their home countries before coming to the UK. Many were working in construction or agriculture back home; this work was very poorly paid and irregular.
- Most people were able to read well in their own language, but English language skills among interviewees were generally low.
- Five interviewees had arrived in the UK in 2014 or before. The most common year of arrival was 2015; seven people had first come to London to work in 2016. All but one interviewee had only lived in London since coming to the UK.

³ Right to Remain Toolkit (accessed January 2017): www.righttoremain.org.uk.

⁴ Home Office European Economic Area administrative removal: consideration and decision instructions for assessing whether to administratively remove a European Economic Area (EEA) national. Version 2 (May 2016) See: (Reg 19(3)(c))

⁵ Home Office European Economic Area administrative removal: consideration and decision instructions for assessing whether to administratively remove a European Economic Area (EEA) national. Version 3 (February 2017) See: (Reg 23 (6) (c))

Accommodation and sleeping sites

- Most interviewees had not spent all their time in the UK living outside; 18 people had experience of shared accommodation, usually a shared room in very overcrowded, poor conditions. People had often left this type of accommodation when they had run out of money.
- Visits to Romania to see family were common. Most people planned to return home for several weeks during the colder weather (December 2016 to February/March 2017).
- People had learnt where to find an encampment to stay in from friends and family who had already lived on them, when visiting home, and from other Romanian people whom they had met in areas attended to pick up work.
- Interviewees were clear that they had not paid anyone to stay on the encampments and reported that no one is 'in charge'. There was a sense that everyone was independent and able to find a place to get some sleep, as opposed to people talking about there being community or communal life.
- There was no evidence of crossover between the group interviewed for this research and groups of Romanian people who beg in central London (this was an area of uncertainty in some of the stakeholder interviews, so the researcher and practitioner explored this in some of the later client interviews). Interviewees reported that they had only ever travelled into central London for work; some even commented that they would not know how to get there.

Enforcement action

- Encampments are considered problematic by local and central government because of the unsafe nature of the sites and complaints from local communities about rubbish and anti-social behaviour, for example.
- There has been a drive to stop people congregating to find casual work in some areas. (For example the Public Space Protection Order - PSPO in place in Brent prohibiting people from picking up casual labour in specified areas which has recently been extended until the end of December 2017).⁶
- Over half (13) of the interviewees had experienced encampments being closed down and having to move as a result. Most stated that they looked around for another place in which to set up their sleeping area, usually very close to the location of the original encampment.
- Nearly all this group had had their ID checked by the police while looking for work.

Work

- All the men interviewed primarily worked in construction and labouring roles. This was nearly always 'cash in hand' casual work. Nearly all (18) interviewees found work through word of mouth and by turning up and waiting for work at builders' merchants.
- The average payment was between £40 and £60 per day. People reported that they mainly worked on smaller sites (such as houses and small businesses), but would on occasion work on larger sites.
- There were four male interviewees who mentioned '*legal work*'. Two people (from different encampments) had worked in recycling plants, but found this work extremely unpleasant with poor working conditions.
- Exploitation was reported as common for those working 'cash in hand'. Twelve people had one or more times not been paid the agreed amount for the work they had undertaken.

⁶ A PSPO is 'an order that identifies the public place and prohibits specified things being done in the restricted area... Failure to comply with a PSPO is an offence': www.asbhelp.co.uk (accessed February 2017).

- The two female interviewees' experience of working in the UK had been markedly different from that of the male interviewees. One had a cleaning and housekeeping role in a central London hotel; another was undertaking casual warehouse work packing food. The latter's previous employment had been packing clothes, including for two major high street retailers where she described conditions as very poor and payment of only £4.50 per hour.
- Interviewees were asked how long their longest period without work had been. Most had only experienced short periods of less than a week out of work.

Money

- Over the past three months most people interviewed had sent home more than £500; eight had sent home more than £1,000.
Interviewees were asked what they were saving money for or what they spent it on. Nearly all (18 of the 21) interviewees were supporting people in Romania; usually children and a spouse. Most cited the everyday basic needs - such as food, fuel and clothing - of their dependants as the main use of their income. Ten also said they were using money to improve their homes in Romania. Those sending money back home said that it made a huge impact on the lives of their dependants.
- Those without dependants had not managed to save money.

Potential areas of support

- All interviewees said they would welcome support to find accommodation (i.e. a room). People were also interested in support to help them find legal work in or outside London, and to access bank accounts and National Insurance (NI) numbers if they did not have them.
- Provided they were working, interviewees would be willing to pay for a room, on average, between £201 and £300 a month including bills; equivalent to between £7-10 a night. Interviewees would be willing to share a room with one other person. People frequently clarified that they would only be able to pay this amount if they had regular work.

Motivation, plans and perception of life in London

- All interviewees identified extreme poverty and lack of opportunity as the push factors for leaving Romania and access to relatively well-paid, unskilled work as the pull factor for coming to London.
- Nearly all respondents said they would stay in the UK *'for as long as I can'* or *'as long as I am allowed'*. Most did not have detailed plans for the future, but rather focused on earning money on a week-to-week basis.
- Most felt their move to the UK had been successful.

1.3 Key recommendations

1. Homelessness services should consider how they could assist EU migrants living on encampments to access basic accommodation and move away from the informal labour market. Support with accessing accommodation must be paired with proactive efforts to help people move into legal employment and the promotion of legal advice services available to migrants.
2. Services targeting EU migrants living on encampments should take into account the current demands on clients – for example providing opportunities to access advice outside of working hours and making available Romanian-speaking staff.
3. For accommodation to be suitable for this group it would need to be flexible (probably paid on a nightly or weekly basis) at around £8 a night. Room sharing (preferably with just one other person) and shared toilets and showers would be acceptable.

4. The police and the TRIO team should continue to monitor encampments, undertaking basic checks on the welfare of clients where possible. Health and safety considerations for outreach workers should be regularly reviewed.
5. Expecting or seeking high-quality information about this client group is to be avoided: it would be costly and without clear advantages. However, bringing together the available intelligence across boroughs on a regular basis may provide a clearer picture without being excessively expensive.
6. Where action is planned to close down encampments, this should be done using a cross-borough approach to avoid displacement of those people staying on encampments.
7. This research focuses on a specific group of people who are in good health and able to work on a regular basis. Thames Reach is concerned that there are other more vulnerable groups living on different encampment sites who are at more immediate risk of harm from rough sleeping due to support needs such as heavy alcohol use and lack of income or greater exploitation at work. Further investigation into these groups should be undertaken. A more sophisticated understanding of cohorts within the population of EU nationals rough sleeping in London would be beneficial in developing service responses and informing policy.
8. The homelessness sector should consider options for raising the profile of issues around the exploitation of migrant workers by employers through policy and influencing work. This should include submission of this report and other relevant information to the Independent Review of Employment Practices in the Modern Economy being undertaken for the Department of Business, Industry and Industrial Strategy (DBIIS).⁷
9. While there was no evidence of modern slavery having been experienced amongst research participants, recent research has highlighted this issue in the UK including amongst homeless Romanian people. Services must remain vigilant and be equipped to identify this.⁸

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/employment-practices-in-the-modern-economy> accessed March 2017.

⁸ Keast M (2017) Understanding and Responding to Modern Slavery within the Homelessness Sector, The Passage.

2 Introduction and methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the research project discussed in this paper and outlines the methodology behind the research.

2.1 Introduction

Thames Reach provides outreach services across London including specialist outreach work with non-UK nationals – for example through the London Street Rescue and the TRIO project.⁹ In 2016 Thames Reach was awarded funding from Commonweal Housing to research the situation of Romanians and other EU nationals living on encampments (sleeping sites with three or more people sleeping in tents and makeshift shelters) in outer north and east London.

The aims of the research were to:

- describe the nature of the problem, including the push and pull factors driving migration; the organisation of the encampments; the types of work accessed by residents; and the options they would be willing to pursue if available
- suggest possible approaches to address this form of homelessness.

This report presents the findings from the research, conducted by an independent researcher, Becky Rice, between November 2016 and January 2017. It is intended for use by professionals working in relevant roles, for example within the homelessness sector, the Greater London Authority (GLA) and local authorities.

2.2 Methodology

The methodology for the research is outlined below.

Desktop review

A range of reports, best practice guidance and policy documents were reviewed. These are referenced in the report.

Interviews with professional stakeholders

Face-to-face or phone interviews were conducted with professional stakeholders at the following organisations:

- Greater London Authority (GLA)
- Home Office (Immigration Enforcement and Compliance - ICE)
- Homeless Link
- Migrant Rights Network
- Crisis (who work with EU migrants in skills and employment).

Client interviews¹⁰

The researcher and a Romanian-speaking outreach worker from the TRIO team, Benjamin Sebok, co-produced the interview element of the research. The outreach worker has unique knowledge of the target group for the research. It was anticipated that the issues faced by Romanians may be different from those confronting other EU nationals. It was decided in this fairly small project to focus on this specific group to ensure that findings are as detailed and comprehensive as possible.

⁹ For more information on TRIO, see section 3.4.1.

¹⁰ 'Client' is used to refer to people in the target group for the research who are migrant workers from Romania living on encampments. This is the terminology used by the TRIO team.

The researcher designed the research tools and attended half the interviews, making notes and asking additional questions as appropriate. The outreach worker arranged to meet with clients in suitable locations, obtained consent and conducted the interviews in Romanian. The interviewees included people staying in four different boroughs, a range of ages and two women, to broadly reflect the TRIO team's understanding of the demographics of the target group for this research.

The researcher and outreach worker attended an encampment to observe the conditions and look for potential interviewees. Interviews usually took place in cafés including in a Tesco's superstore and a café in a Selco building supplies store.

There were ethical complications in the research: people felt very nervous about taking part, perceiving that it might result in them being required to return to Romania under administrative removal regulations. In many cases the outreach worker was able to reassure people, but several declined to take part. Participants were given a £10 Tesco's voucher to thank them for their help with the research.

3 Background and context

This chapter provides an overview of the rights of migrants from Romania and their contact with various organisations.

3.1 The accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the EU

Romania and Bulgaria joined the European Union (EU) in 2007. Romanians and Bulgarians coming to the UK to work were subject to transitional arrangements until 31st December 2013. During the transitional period there were limited opportunities for people from Romania and Bulgaria to work in the UK: there were schemes for highly skilled workers and also quota-based schemes for people working in specific industries (agriculture and food processing¹¹).¹² Those working in the UK under these arrangements had to obtain a worker authorisation document. Once these transitional restrictions were lifted there was a large increase in the number of Romanian people coming into the UK and also in the number of Romanians contacted rough sleeping in London; in 2015/16, 1,545 Romanians were contacted rough sleeping in London compared to 496 on 2012/13.¹³

3.2 The rights of people coming from Romania to work in the UK

EU citizens have the right to freedom of movement within the EU and can stay anywhere for a period of up to three months as long as they do not impose an unreasonable burden on the social security system of the host nation. After this the right to reside is subject to their fitting into one of several categories outlined in the Free Movement Directive, including being self-employed or seeking work (with a reasonable expectation to secure paid work).¹⁴ Clients often raise the issue of the likely impact of Brexit on their freedom of movement when they meet with outreach staff (source: TRIO team).

3.3 Policy context

There have been various developments that have affected the rights of EU citizens since restrictions on Romanian migrants were lifted in the UK.

3.3.1 Welfare restrictions

In 2014 access to welfare benefits for migrant workers was revised – for example, access to Child Benefit and Working Tax Credits was limited; the habitual residency test¹⁵ for those wanting to claim JSA was tightened; and payment of JSA was restricted to six months.¹⁶ These changes are unlikely to have affected the group participating in this research because they had no experience or expectation of claiming any benefits.

¹¹ Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme (SAWS) and Sectors Based Scheme (SBS) which cover food processing jobs.

¹² Gower, M, Hawkins, O, (2013) Ending of transitional restrictions for Bulgarian and Romanian workers, House of Commons Library, Home Affairs Section, Social and General Statistics Section.

¹³ Source: CHAIN data provided by the CHAIN team St Mungo's. Note: figure may differ slightly from previously published figures due to retrospective updates to client data.

¹⁴ European Parliament Fact Sheet: Free movement of workers (accessed January 2017): http://www.europarl.europa.eu/atyourservice/en/displayFtu.html?ftuid=FTU_3.1.3.html.

¹⁵ This is a test applied to check whether someone has the right to reside in the UK, that someone has been resident for a certain period (often five years), and that they have a 'settled intention' to remain in the UK.

¹⁶ Announcement by coalition government on 8th April 2014 (accessed January 2017): <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/further-curbs-to-migrant-access-to-benefits-announced>.

3.3.2 Enforcement action

Home Office policy

Various developments in recent years have affected the rights of EU citizens living in the UK. One of the most significant changes in the context of this research occurred in May 2016 when the Home Office published updated instructions for 'assessing whether to administratively remove an EEA [European Economic Area] national'. 'Administrative removal' is when 'the Home Office enforces [...] removal from the UK if [someone] does not have the right to remain in the UK'.¹⁷ The guidance issued in 2016 identified rough sleeping specifically as an abuse of the 'right to freedom of movement'.¹⁸ New guidance issued in February 2017 specified that enforcement action on the grounds of someone rough sleeping 'must be proportionate, and action should only be taken where it is apparent that the rough sleeper is misusing their right to reside', taking into consideration factors such as whether the individual is taking steps to find accommodation or has been forced to sleep rough due to 'sudden change in circumstances'.¹⁹ The new guidance cites an example of someone 'doing cash in hand jobs and...continuing to sleep rough to avoid paying accommodation costs' who has had contact with the police relating to anti-social behaviour as an instance where action may be proportionate (depending on other factors).²⁰

Where people are believed to be rough sleeping or suspected of being in breach of their treaty rights (because, for example, they have not found work or the means to support themselves within three months' in the UK), the Home Office's ICE teams can take enforcement action. This includes issuing 'minded to remove' letters; requiring individuals to prove they are exercising their treaty rights; or in cases where there is prima facie evidence that they are rough sleeping, serving form IS151aEEA notification and placing restrictions or requirements on people while they are still in the UK (for example reporting to a Home Office building).

In practice immigration offenders may be detained; people rough sleeping may have difficulty showing they will be able to comply with reporting requirements. Following the issue of removal papers, people may decide to depart voluntarily or, if they do not do so, they may be detained and administratively removed (i.e. the Home Office enforces removal from the UK).

People who are treated as immigration offenders and depart voluntarily or are subject to administrative removal face restrictions on reentry to the UK and are not able to return for 12 months, unless they can demonstrate that they will be complying with treaty rights from the moment of reentry – for example, by having proof of employment. These restrictions were a direct concern for two of the interviewees in this research.²¹

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Act and Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs)

The ASB Act 2014 is a development of the previous ASB Act which develops the concept of the policy response to nuisance, anti-social behaviour and other forms of behaviour which impact on the lives of citizens.²² The 'Community Trigger' is a device

¹⁷ Right to Remain Toolkit (accessed January 2017): www.righttoremain.org.uk.

¹⁸ Home Office European Economic Area administrative removal: consideration and decision instructions for assessing whether to administratively remove a European Economic Area (EEA) national. Version 2 (May 2016) See: (Reg 19(3)(c))

¹⁹ Home Office European Economic Area administrative removal: consideration and decision instructions for assessing whether to administratively remove a European Economic Area (EEA) national. Version 3 (February 2017) See: (Reg 23 (6) (c))

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Homeless Link (2014) Working with EEA Migrants: Good practice guidance for homelessness services.

²² Home Office (2014) Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014: Reform of anti-social behaviour powers statutory guidance for frontline professionals.

under the ASB Act which forces local authorities to address wider community concerns.²³

One of the options available to Local Authorities to tackle ASB is the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO). A small number of local authorities have utilised this power with mixed results. PSPOs are *'intended to deal with a particular nuisance or problem in a particular area that is detrimental to the local community's quality of life, by imposing conditions on the use of that area which apply to everyone'*.

Brent Council has implemented a PSPO specifically seeking to stop people from picking up casual labour in certain areas of the borough, including from outside a large builders' merchants store. This means that anyone approaching people to offer casual employment is subject to an on-the-spot fine. The reasons cited by the local authority were complaints about anti-social behaviour and also the exploitative nature of some casual work.²⁴ This action has been controversial, attracting criticism from sources including the Roma Support Group and a local councillor in Brent, Cllr. Helen Carr, who described the measure as *'draconian'* and ineffective, also commenting that many migrant workers affected are *'exploited physically and financially'*.²⁵

3.3.3 Controlling Migration Fund

The Controlling Migration Fund, announced by the Home Secretary in 2016, provides £140 million that local authorities can bid for to mitigate the impact of immigration on local areas. While the fund is administered by the Department of Communities and Local Government and is intended to increase community cohesion, it clearly has an enforcement emphasis: Home Office Immigration Enforcement has committed £40 million's worth of enforcement activity over four years to meet local authority requests in relation to rough sleeping and tackling abuse by landlords in the private rented sector.

New initiatives to help people move out of rough sleeping and access decent private rented accommodation could be beneficial to the target group for this research. However, crackdowns on rogue landlords could potentially affect the supply of low-cost accommodation, albeit of poor quality and exploitative, to the client group. The £40 million allocated specifically to *'direct enforcement action against people in the UK illegally in order to reduce the pressure on local areas'* could increase the likelihood of enforcement action for the research target group.²⁶

3.3.4 Strategic coordination regarding encampments

A strategic group, chaired by Thames Reach and supported by Homeless Link, was set up in 2015 to promote joined up working on the issue of encampments around the A406/North Circular.

²³ <http://asbhelp.co.uk/community-trigger-anti-social-behaviour-crime-policing-act-2014/> (accessed March 2017).

²⁴ Brent Community Safety and Public Protection Team Community Services (2016) London Borough of Brent Proposed Public Spaces Protection Order: Cricklewood Broadway and surrounding area; <http://wembleymatters.blogspot.co.uk/2016/02/helen-carr-speaks-out-against-pspo.html> (accessed January 2017).

²⁵ Roma Support Group (2016) The use of Public Space Protection Orders (A briefing note from Roma Support Group and AIRE Centre – Advice on Individual Rights in Europe).

²⁶ Department for Communities and Local Government (2016) Controlling Migration Fund: mitigating the impacts of immigration on local communities: Prospectus.

The work culminated in a seminar involving the boroughs through which the A406/North Circular road runs, the Home Office, Thames Reach, Homeless Link, Transport for London (TFL) and the police in November 2015. This was to share best practice in working with people living on encampments (for example considering what housing and advice options might be available to this group) and to achieve better coordination around encampment closures to avoid people simply being displaced.

3.4 Practice context

3.4.1 Contact with those staying on encampments

Visibility of encampments

Encampments are often hidden from public view and/or in places not frequented by the public. For example, an encampment attended during the research was in a wooded area on a large roundabout, not easily visible from the road. Other examples include large areas of land where rough sleepers are dispersed, making it difficult for outreach teams to get an accurate picture of how many people are living there; for example, the Welsh Harp Reservoir and Tottenham Marshes have historically been encampment sites.

People often only return to the sites for a few hours each night to sleep, arriving late at night and leaving early in the morning to seek work. The TRIO team attends sites that are reported by the local authority, police, or public, or areas where there have previously been encampments. In some cases there are public reports of anti-social behaviour and encampments become the source of complaints and negative publicity.²⁷

The TRIO team

Launched in 2013, TRIO (Targeted Rapid Intervention and Outreach) is a pan-London Service funded by London Councils to work with rough sleepers, the hidden homeless and vulnerable women in every London borough. One of the specialist remits of the TRIO team is working with people sleeping at encampments and 'hotspots' (sites where three or more people are sleeping rough on the same date).

For the research target group, the TRIO team checks the welfare of clients and conditions in the encampments. They advise people on the risks of rough sleeping and possible enforcement action, and provide support from a Romanian-speaking outreach worker during ICE operations (for example explaining the documentation and supporting voluntary reconnection home if this is accepted). The remit of the team is to support people to access accommodation and work, and to improve their health, but options for this particular group are currently very limited. For those who wish to leave the UK, TRIO can provide support with voluntary reconnections (i.e. pay for and support the client to return to their home country or somewhere else they have a connection to).

The client group generally prefers to remain as hidden and discrete as possible, so they do not always engage with outreach staff (for example they often do not provide a name and date of birth). In the course of this research, it was clear that some feel that contact with outreach workers might increase the likelihood of enforcement action.

Other homelessness services

Homelessness services including day centres and employment and training services (for example Thames Reach employment services and Crisis Skylight) are accessible to homeless EU migrants, and have been able to help this client group find and sustain employment. There have been several guides on how best to support this group given the limited options that homelessness services have for people with no recourse to

²⁷ For example, see article in the Enfield Independent (2015) (accessed January 2017): http://www.enfieldindependent.co.uk/news/13844067.Outrage_after_third_illegal_encampment_found_in_under_a_year/.

public funds.²⁸ However, findings from this research suggest that the recommended options are often not appealing to the specific group in question. Migrants with poor English language skills who are fit and ready for manual work, and have a strong drive to send money home to support dependents, seek the most immediate way to secure work and do not generally take up longer-term options such as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes.

Home Office Immigration Compliance and Enforcement (ICE) teams

There are 18 ICE teams across the UK, and five operating in London. Their purpose is to 'ensure compliance with immigration laws for the benefit of the community and the economy, and to enforce immigration law'.²⁹ Enforcement action by local ICE teams is intelligence-led and responsive; the trigger for an operation is usually a request from the local authority (often the Community Safety Team) or the police. Requests for operations are assessed in line with current Home Office priorities and the best use of resources.

Since the issue of rough sleeping among EU nationals has risen up the political agenda, and with the commitment made under the Controlling Migration Fund, operations at encampments are likely to be considered a greater priority than previously. TRIO outreach workers have observed an increase in ICE activity at encampments and around builders' merchants stores between October and December 2016.

Casual labour

The participants in this research are largely casual labourers working 'cash in hand', accessing work by attending areas around large builders' merchants stores (for example Wickes and Selco). Those who do pick up people for work have regular contact with the client group and it is likely that store managers or others such as security staff at stores are aware of the practice.

The researcher contacted press offices for Selco and Wickes with some general questions. A spokesperson for Selco Builders Warehouse said: *'We have, and continue to work with local authorities on the issue. However, as the groups are congregating outside of Selco Builders Warehouse property, there are limitations to the measures we can take.'*

Regular cash income should be declared to HMRC for payment of tax and NI.³⁰ Interviewees made the distinction between 'legal' and 'illegal' work. The former was used to refer to the kind of work a small number of interviewees had secured via agencies or directly with employers, with income being paid into a bank account and tax and NI contributions being taken at source. The latter term was used to describe the 'cash in hand' work undertaken by most interviewees. More information about this work is included in Chapter 6.

The 'European Migrant Adviser Toolkit' gives the following advice to those working with European Migrants:³¹

'If [clients]... are working illegally you need to be clear that you cannot be seen to be complicit in this, although you should provide support if they are facing exploitative situations... Routes to regularisation of their status should also be included... They may of course choose to remain illegally and attempt to survive underground, working in the black or grey economy or relying on hand outs from friends and charities. Advisers must be very clear that this course of action is not

²⁸ Homeless Link (2014) Working with EEA Migrants: Good practice guidance for homelessness services.

²⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/contact-details-for-immigration-compliance-and-enforcement-teams> (accessed March 2017)

³⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/report-cash-in-hand-pay> (accessed January 2017).

³¹ Praxis (2014) European Migrant Adviser Toolkit.

advised and carries significant risks and penalties... Regardless of immigration status and even if a migrant is working illegally, they still have rights at work and these are the same as other workers in the same country. Across Europe there are minimum standards at work and health and safety legislation gives migrants the same rights as others to not be in dangerous situations at work. More commonly it means work which is dangerous, without the correct safety measures, underpaid or with other illegal conditions.'

4 Statistical data

This chapter presents information about Romanian rough sleepers contacted in London to provide context to the more detailed data collected by the TRIO team about Romanians living on encampments in north and north-east London.

4.1 CHAIN data: overview of rough sleeping among Romanians in London

Figure (a) shows the stark upward trend in the number of Romanians recorded rough sleeping in London since the early years of EU accession: 24 in 2007/08 up to more than 1,000 in 2014/15. A further increase to more than 1,500 people was recorded in 2015/16.

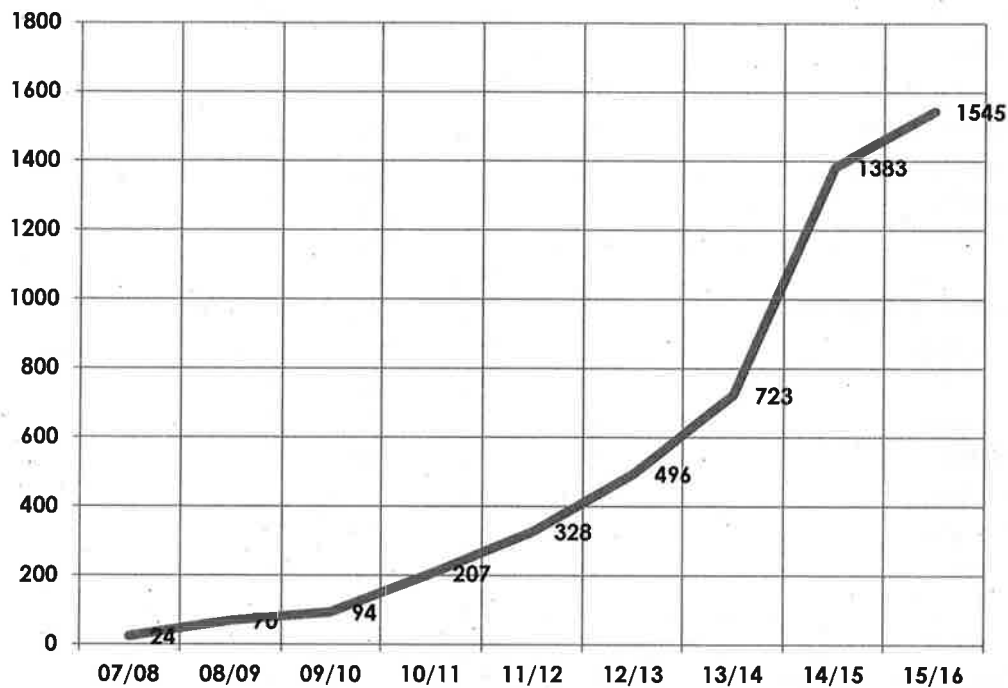
Analysis of ethnicity data for these figures shows that in the early years shown below, the vast majority of people were recorded as 'EU – other'. As time went on an increasing number of Romanian nationals were recorded as 'Gypsy/Romany'. In the last three years shown in the figure, over a third (35%-38%) were 'Gypsy/Romany'. Ethnicity data for this group should be treated with some caution for two reasons: perceived prejudice against Roma people (for example, concerns that Roma ethnic groups will be assumed to be involved in begging) might make people reticent to give their ethnicity as Roma and, conversely, false assumptions that certain Romanian rough sleepers are from Roma groups (source: interview with TRIO worker).

This trend in the number of people seen rough sleeping is set within the wider context of increasing numbers of Romanian people living in the UK overall. This is demonstrated by the fact that Romanians made up by far the biggest group of EU citizens requesting NI numbers in 2015 (179,000 were allocated that year).³² Although exact figures are not available, the overall population of Romanian people living in the UK was estimated at 223,000 in 2015.³³

³² Statistical Bulletin: Office for National Statistics and DWP, Migration Statistics Quarterly Report: May 2016.

³³ BBC News 6th July 2016 (accessed 8th January 2017): <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-eu-referendum-36704783>.

Figure (a) Romanians seen rough sleeping in London, 2007/08 to 2015/16



Source: CHAIN data provided by the CHAIN team, St Mungo's

Note: Table data may differ slightly from previously published figures due to retrospective updates to client data.

Figure (b) shows a breakdown by borough of Romanian people contacted rough sleeping in London between 2012/13 and 2015/16. The boroughs covered by this research are highlighted in grey. Barnet has seen a striking reduction in the number of Romanian rough sleepers contacted and recorded on CHAIN (from a high of 113 in 2013/14 to 27 in 2015/16). Enfield saw a dramatic reduction from 56 people in 2014/15 to 26 in 2015/16. Haringey had few Romanian rough sleepers recorded until 2015/16 when 26 were recorded on CHAIN. The figures for Barking and Dagenham are consistently low, with six recorded in 2015/16. However, these figures should be treated with caution, as section 4.2 explains, because CHAIN does not capture everyone staying on encampments.

Figure (b) Romanian people seen rough sleeping in London, 2012/13 to 2015/16, by borough (also including figures for Heathrow airport)

Borough	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
Westminster	296	367	777	924
Camden	19	21	40	96
Lambeth	15	23	75	92
Southwark	28	41	56	75
Brent	12	74	105	66
City of London	17	36	44	62
Newham	8	12	12	37
H&F	5	7	21	36
K&C	4	15	56	33
Ealing	0	7	16	30
Barnet	59	113	70	27

Enfield	1	6	56	26
Haringey	2	0	6	26
Tower Hamlets	15	11	23	21
Redbridge	4	2	9	19
Islington	1	2	11	15
Waltham Forest	2	3	10	13
Wandsworth	0	0	4	8
Lewisham	13	1	15	7
Heathrow	4	4	19	7
Greenwich	1	5	5	7
Barking & Dagenham	0	0	3	6
Hounslow	6	9	14	5
Harrow	1	0	5	3
Croydon	4	2	4	2
Merton	0	2	0	2
Hackney	2	7	5	1
Hillingdon	1	0	3	1
Bromley	0	1	1	1
Richmond	0	0	2	1
Havering	0	0	4	0
Kingston upon Thames	0	0	1	0
Sutton	0	0	0	0

Note: No totals are given in the table because people may be recorded in more than one borough.

4.2 Data recorded by the TRIO team

The TRIO team faces some unique challenges when gathering and recording data about Romanian people staying on encampments:

- Periods when there are no Romanian-speaking outreach workers make collection of information difficult.
- People often refuse to give personal information, especially those who have been subject to action by the police or ICE teams.
- Often people spend very little time at encampments so the team will only make contact with a small number of the people staying in a particular area.
- Some sites are very dispersed and it is hard for the team to cover the whole area during the night when people are at the sites.
- There are personal safety considerations when attempting to access a tent or shelter if the person inside does not want to engage.

When outreach workers obtain a person's name, and ideally other information including date of birth, they create a CHAIN record. Where potentially identifying information is collected but without a name and date of birth, outreach workers will set up a CHAIN record with this information and update with additional details if they encounter the client again and converse further. Where there is only evidence of a sleeping space with no one present, or the person does not engage at all and cannot be identified by, for example, an item of clothing or distinctive bag, no record will be made. This means that CHAIN provides an incomplete picture of the number of people staying on encampments.

A CHAIN report on 'hotspots' for October 2015 to September 2016 provides information about three instances of contact with Romanian clients. Shift notes from the TRIO team show that more people were in fact contacted during this period (including

many who are very likely to be Romanian), but their nationality was not confirmed. Shift notes from January 2015, for example, report that one person was located and recorded on CHAIN with full name and date of birth, but that the site where he was found had nine tents and was due to be cleared by the council. This would not show up on the 'hotspot' report because only one person was present at the time of the outreach contact.

5 Findings from client interviews

5.1 Demographic profile

Interviews were conducted with 21 people: 19 men and two women. All but one were living on encampments at the time of the interviews. The remaining person had recently been staying in a caravan in an area close to other migrant workers and it was decided that they should be included in the research. Both the women interviewed were staying with their spouses on encampments.

Figure (c) presents an age profile of interviewees: over half were in their 20s and 30s. A quarter were in their 40s or 50s and one person was in his 60s. All were regularly undertaking physically demanding work and appeared to have a good level of physical health.

Figure (c) Age profile of interviewees

Age group	No. interviewees
20s	6
30s	8
40s	3
50s	3
60s	1
Total	21

All those interviewed identified as being Romanian. Of these four had a dual nationality of Romanian Hungarian or Romanian Moldovan. Five described themselves as Romanian Roma (which in several cases meant they had one Romanian parent and one Roma parent).

Figure (d) Nationality/ethnicity

Nationality/ethnicity	No. interviewees
Romanian	11
Romanian Hungarian	2
Romanian Moldovan	2
Romanian Roma	6
Total	21

5.2 Lifestyle in home country and educational background

Most interviewees stated that they were working in construction in their home country before they came to the UK. Eight people also mentioned agriculture – working on small farms. The other jobs mentioned, by one person in each case, were: chimney sweep, engineer, factory worker and car washing.

People were asked if they had any particular skills or trade. Several respondents said they had not or that they had not been to school; several spoke in terms of the number of years they had attended school, which was between two and ten years. A small number of people had specific qualifications, including someone who had studied to be a car mechanic, one who had attended a construction course at college, and someone who had advanced language skills (and had been working in an Italian-speaking call centre).

Most respondents (15) were able to read well in their first language. Five said they only read a little and one person was unable to read. Most people had a little spoken English, but four had good English and three said they spoke no English at all.

Figure (e) Spoken English ability

How much English do you speak?	No. interviewees
A little	14
Quite a lot/a lot	4
None	3
Total	21

All those interviewed lived in their own home or with close relatives in their home country (or in one case in Italy where they had been living). Some gave a little detail about their homes – for example, one said he had a small house that he had built and another person stated that his home comprised just one room.

5.3 Support needs profile

None of the interviewees identified themselves as having a drug or alcohol problem. Some people reported drinking smaller amounts of alcohol, for example up to a few cans of beer after work. One person said he felt depressed, but otherwise interviewees described no mental health problems. Gambling was clearly problematic for two interviewees, one of whom was spending large amounts of money on slot machines, which was affecting his plans for the future. Some other respondents commented that they gambled small amounts or spent time in betting shops without gambling.

5.4 Time spent in the UK

Five of the 21 interviewees had arrived in the UK in 2014 or before; the most common year of arrival was 2015 (nine people) (see figure f). Seven people had first come to the UK to work in 2016. Most people had only lived in London, but one person had stayed in Luton for a long period of time before arriving in London. Most people had come directly from Romania to London. One person had come from France, having stayed there for several years, and one person had come from Italy where his mother lived. One other person said they had spent time living in Spain in the past.

Figure (f) When interviewees first arrived in the UK to work

Year/time period	No. interviewees
2012	1
2013	1
2014	3
2015	9
Jan – June 2016	3
July – Aug 2016	2
Sept – Nov 2016	2
Total	21

Comments about coming to the UK made by interviewees were revealing; mentions of visits to Romania to see family were common. These return visits are one of the ways in which Romanians who have not yet travelled to London hear about the opportunities for casual work there and make the decision to move.

Interviewees were asked about their plans for the approaching cold weather. Most said that when the weather got very cold and work became scarce over the Christmas period, they would return to Romania for several weeks; most suggested they would leave in December and return in late February or early March. A small number (five) said they would stay in the UK regardless of the weather but three of these people said they would find a rented room over some of the winter months.

Figure (g) Plans for colder weather (coded from open responses)

Action planned for colder months	No. interviewees
Find a rented room	3
Return home for 1-3 months	15
Return home for less than one month	1
Stay here	2
Total	21

Figure (h) demonstrated that most people had not spent all their time in the UK living outside. While some did come straight to encampments on arrival to London, most had rented accommodation for a time – usually a shared room in very overcrowded conditions. It is possible that some people underreported the amount of time spent sleeping outside as they feel they are 'not allowed' to be rough sleeping.

Figure (h) Time spent living on encampments

Time	No. interviewees
Less than one month	4*
1 month	4
2.5 months	1
3 months	1
5 months	2
9 months	3
10 months	2
12 months	1
1.5 years	2
2 years	1
Total	21

* This figure includes an interviewee who lived in a caravan rather than a standard encampment.

Seventeen respondents had experience of renting a room during their time in London. Only two cited any other forms of accommodation: one had lived in a church and one had recently stayed in a caravan in an area of encampments but was living in a house at the time of the interview.

Figure (i) Time spent in rented rooms in shared houses

Time in rented room	No. interviewees
Never stayed in rented room	5
Less than one month	2
1-3 months	2
4-12 months	4
1-2 years	3
Not specified	5
Total	21

The most positive experiences of renting in the private sector among interviewees are illustrated by the following quotes:

'I shared one room with one other person. I paid £250 per month while I was working in Luton. Since I arrived to London in June 16, I stay in an encampment.'

'I was living in a rented room in Haringey until the landlord sold the house. I shared the room with my wife.'

More typically interviewees described very poor and overcrowded conditions. When specified, respondents usually reported that they had believed that the accommodation had been sublet or run by Romanian nationals, but sometimes by people of other backgrounds. Several people stated that rooms had been sourced through advertisements in shop windows.

'Most of the time I stayed in the encampment as it was more convenient. It was free. When I stayed in a shared room I had to pay £55 per week and we always had arguments and fights.'

'Initially [I] came with money from selling [my] car in Romania so rented a room in a house found through a card in the off-licence window. It was a Nigerian family subletting. I want to rent a room but people make problems, and [I] want to save the money. In the house there were about 30 people, six or seven in a room. I can't live like that – [it was] better to live outside than that.'

'[I was] staying with a family subletting a room but [I] needed to stay out. There were more rules about times, too many people, bed bugs. It was Romanian people in charge. It was £50 a week plus £200 deposit. There were about 30 people in that house.'

Figure (j) shows the reasons interviewees gave for moving into an encampment. The most common response was lack of work or money for rented accommodation. Five people mentioned the problems they faced in shared accommodation. Several people said they had moved into encampments as a temporary solution, but had decided to stay on rather than look for another rented room because they were able to save money and the conditions in shared accommodation were so poor it was not worth returning to.

Figure (j) Reasons for moving into encampment

Reason (coded from open comments)	No. interviewees
Lack of work/money	10
Problems in shared houses	1
Both lack of money and problems in shared house	4
Landlord sold property, no money for alternative	2
Like being able to save money	2
This was where everyone the interviewee knew was	2
Total	21

People had found out about encampments when visiting Romania from friends and family who had already lived in them, and from other Romanian people they had met at places where they went to pick up work. Most people had contacts from Romania who had

stayed in the encampments they had lived in. These were usually friends or people from the same village in Romania, but in several cases family members. A small number of people did not know anyone who had lived on encampments before they had arrived; they found out about them from people they met when looking for work, for example outside builders' merchants:

'I came from France. [I] didn't know anyone but was told to go to Victoria Bus Station and take bus 32 to Selco to find a job.'

Interviewees were clear that they did not pay anyone to stay in the encampments and reported that no one was 'in charge'. There was a sense that everyone in the encampments was independent and able to find a place to get some sleep, rather than being part of a community or communal life. Meeting up with people to socialize outside working hours tended to happen away from the encampments in places like Tesco's or outside shops.

Some interviewees were asked about their knowledge of central London; one remarked that he wouldn't even know how to get to central London. One person did use a day centre in Kensington and Chelsea, but otherwise people had only been into Zone 1 to work for the day. Although the question was not asked consistently of all interviewees, it seems that the most common route to the outer London area was direct, being dropped off in north London by coaches from Romania.

Interviewees were not consistently asked about whether they or anyone they knew living on encampments had ever begged for money. This was a very sensitive issue in the context of other sensitivities in conducting the research (people initially being wary of taking part for fear of repercussions). One person, who declined to be interviewed, approached the researcher after an interviewing shift to voice his frustration that it was assumed that 'all Roma people beg', stating this was untrue and very unfair – this was one of his reasons for deciding not to participate in the research. Two people who had lived in several encampments were asked directly about begging. They replied that it was definitely not commonplace amongst those staying on encampments and that people they knew did not go into central London to beg. They thought that someone who was desperate might possibly go and beg locally outside a supermarket.

5.5 Enforcement action

Over half (13) of the interviewees had experienced encampments being closed down and having to move as a result. Most stated that they had no particular plans for this eventuality, but just looked around for another place in which to set up their sleeping area, usually very close to the location of the original encampment. Two interviewees who were staying in the same encampment said that they were planning to return to Romania because their ID papers had been retained when their previous sleeping area had been shut down. For one person an encampment closure had precipitated a move back to Romania for a period, after which they had returned to shared accommodation in London.

'We just looked for another space [where] we could put our tents about a couple of hundred metres from the initial site.'

'[I moved] to another site a bit further from the shut-down site. The police closed our initial site [under the bridge] in September.'

'Because immigration [officials] retained our ID card we will go home to Romania but will come back early next year.'

5.6 Type of work and payment

All the men interviewed primarily worked in construction and labouring roles. This was nearly always 'cash in hand' casual work. The average payment per day was between £40 and £60. One person cited a much lower daily rate of between £15 and £20; the highest rate reported was between £40 and £120. People tended to seek work in construction because this was the best-paid work available to them. Interviewees reported that they usually worked on smaller building sites such as houses and small businesses, but that on occasions they would work on larger sites. Two stated that they did some 'loading and unloading' work and several mentioned painting and decorating. One person explained his perception that the work given to Romanian casual labourers, and especially Roma people, was the very hard unpleasant work that others did not want to do. One person had worked in a carwash and said he was paid £10 for the day.

Four male interviewees referred to 'legal work' i.e. formal employment. One person had worked in food production for four months earning £380 a week; another had done construction work for an agency while living in Luton before the work had dried up and he had moved to an encampment in London. He was the only interviewee with a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card.³⁴ Two people (from different encampments) had worked in recycling plants; they had found the work extremely unpleasant with poor working conditions and that it did not provide an appealing alternative to casual labour:

'One month I had paid legal work in a recycling centre. [The] conditions were really poor and the smell was really strong. There was bullying there too.'

One of the interviewees also mentioned that they had not had the correct protective clothing for the work.

The two female interviewees had a different experience of working in the UK than the male interviewees. One had a cleaning and housekeeping job in a central London hotel, earning £1,200 a month paid into a bank account. Another was undertaking casual warehouse work packing food. She was earning £280 a week and was provided with food. Her previous employment had been packing clothes including for two major high street retailers: she described the working conditions there as very poor, including being paid £4.50 an hour and being required to work weekends and until midnight some evenings.

5.7 Finding work

Nearly all (18) interviewees found work through word of mouth or by waiting for work at builders' merchants. Three had sought work through employment agencies and one through a website for Romanians in London.

Interviewees were asked about the longest period they had been without work. Most had only experienced short periods of less than a week out of work. However, the work is not consistent and people regularly experienced weeks with less than five days work.

³⁴ CSCS is the leading skills certification scheme within the UK construction industry. CSCS cards provide proof that individuals working on construction sites have the required training and qualifications for the type of work they carry out. (Source: www.cscs.uk.com accessed February 2017).

Figure (k) Periods out of work

Longest period without work since coming to the UK	No. of interviewees
Less than one week	14
1-2 weeks	3
1-2 months	3
5 months	1
Total	21

Interviewees were asked how they spent their time when not working. The most common responses were: looking for work and going onto the internet, usually in an internet café, and calling home. Other activities included hanging around at Tesco's or at a local shop, wandering the streets, and looking for clothes to send children at home. Several people mentioned having a shower: people accessed showers at local gyms and did washing at launderettes. Three people mentioned going to betting shops: in one case just hanging out and not betting, in one case placing small bets, and in one case losing a lot of money on slot machines.

5.8 Means of payment and exploitation

All but five interviewees had always been paid in cash. Of the five who had been paid electronically, two stated that the payments were put into friends' bank accounts as opposed to their own.

Twelve people had not been paid the agreed amount for the work they had undertaken one or more times. A typical scenario was undertaking an agreed task, but then not being paid the full amount or being told that payment would be provided in the future but this never coming to fruition. Four people specifically mentioned that they had been exploited when working for Irish Gypsies.

'Two times we were taken to work and the employer said he would come and pay us [the] next day but he never came.'

'[I was not paid] more than once. Mainly Irish Gypsies take [us] to work and then [at the] end of [the] day drop [us] in middle of nowhere in [the] street.'

5.9 Work-related documentation

Figure (l) shows that all those interviewed had a form of ID, usually a passport, although two people had had their identification taken from them when they had been encountered sleeping outside by immigration officials. Eleven people had NI numbers. NI numbers can be obtained via a telephone application and sometimes attending an interview with ID and proof of address. They are usually attained while people have an address or can use an address belonging to someone else. The TRIO team finds that many clients obtain NI numbers when they arrive in the UK as they see this as a way to increase their chances of securing formal, long-term work. Only five interviewees had bank accounts in the UK. Four people had a driving license that could be used in the UK. One person had a CSCS card providing them with evidence that they had skills in construction work.

Figure (I) Possession of official documentation

Type of document	No. interviewees in possession of it
ID – passport or ID card	21
NI number	11
UK bank account	5
Driving license	4
CSCS card	1

Base: 21 interviewees

5.10 Using income from work in the UK

People were asked what they were saving money for or what they spent it on. Nearly all (18 of the 21) interviewees were supporting people back home in Romania, usually children and a spouse: five interviewees were supporting a spouse and three children and five interviewees a spouse and two children. Most people cited the everyday basic needs of people in their home country as being the main use of their income. Typically this included food, fuel, clothing and several people mentioned medicine. For one couple most of the money they earned went on paying back debt to a bank at home. Respondents felt that the money they were sending home made a huge impact on the lives of their dependants:

'Spending money on food, fuel, clothes, anything needed like medicine, fuel, bills anything like that. It makes a huge difference because they are having money all the time [now]. At home I would not have constant work and they would suffer without enough money for food and clothing. I am looking after five people.'

'[I am supporting] my parents. [It makes] a big difference as I am helping them buy wood for winter and to live a better life.'

'[I am supporting] my wife and two children. The money I earn here makes a big difference as I can support them with food, clothes and I was able to refurbish our house.'

People were asked to estimate how much money they had saved or sent home to Romania over the past three months and overall in the whole time they had spent working in the UK. Initially people were asked about 'money saved' and 'money sent home', but this distinction was confusing and unnecessary to respondents. Over the past three months most people interviewed had sent home more than £500, including eight who had sent home more than £1,000. Since being in the UK, people had saved between zero and £15,000. Unsurprisingly, those who had saved or sent home the most money had spent the longest time in the UK. Of the seven people who had saved £7,000 or more, one had arrived in 2013, two in 2014 and four in 2015.

Of the three people who had not saved or sent any money home since being in the UK, one had arrived in 2012 and spent a lot of money gambling; one had arrived in June 2015 and had spend several months of this time renting accommodation outside London and working through an agency. Another had been in the UK for nine months and was one of the other people who had undertaken legal work. None of the three people who had not saved any money had dependants in Romania.

Figure (m) Estimated amounts of money saved/sent home

i) Money saved/sent home recently (in £)

Over the last three months (in £)	No. interviewees
0	3
<500	3
500-1K	6
1-2K	5
2-3K	3
Unclear	1
Total	21

ii) Money saved/sent home over whole time in UK (in £)

Total since being in the UK (in £)	No. interviewees
0	3
<1k	4
1-3K	3
4-6K	2
7-10K	4
11-15K	3
Unclear	2
Total	21

Interviewees were asked if they were saving money for anything in particular. Nine said they were using the money to support their family with ongoing expenses such as food, clothing and fuel; ten said they were also saving or using their earnings for house renovations, including roofing work and installing a new bathroom. Two people were working to pay off debts that they had accrued with a bank in Romania.

5.11 Contact with services in the UK

Nearly all (18) people interviewed had had contact with the police. Contact with the police was very consistently reported as involving ID checks, usually while seeking work outside the large builders' merchants stores.

Those who had had contact with immigration officials recounted a range of experiences. Two (from different encampments) had had their documentation checked by immigration officials, but they had only been in the UK for a short while at the time of the checks so no further action had been taken. One was issued with enforcement papers and has not complied with the requirements to attend appointments, and therefore thinks he may be removed from the UK. This is not a major concern for him because *'the worst that could happen is I am sent home'*, although it does affect his decision about whether to make a visit home because he is unsure whether he will be able to get back into the UK. Two interviewees stated that they had been picked up rough sleeping very recently by immigration officials and the police, and therefore *'have to go home'*, but they planned to return to the UK early in 2017.

None of the people interviewed had received any welfare benefits or had had contact with health services. One female interviewee was registered with a GP, but had not used the service. One person commented that his brother had needed hospital treatment. Two people had been to day centres and one person had attended a medical service for homeless people in central London.

Figure (n) Service contact

Type of service/team	No. interviewees with contact
Police	18
Immigration	6
Benefits	0
GP	0
Hospital	0
Day centre	2

Base: 21 interviewees

5.12 Potential areas of support

All interviewees said they would welcome support to find accommodation. All apart from the person working legally in a hotel said they would welcome help to find legal work in or outside London. Most people also said they would like help to open a bank account (16) and get an NI number (11).

Figure (o) Interest in different types of support

Type of support	No. interviewees interested
Help to get an NI number	11
Help to open a bank account	16
Help to find legal work inside London	20
Help to find legal work outside London	20
Help to find a room you pay for (e.g. in a shared house or hostel)	21

Base: 21 interviewees

The amount of money that interviewees would be willing to pay for a room was, on average, between £201 and £300 a month including bills. This was often qualified with the specification that they would only be willing to share with one other person. In several cases people commented that they would only be able to pay the amount stated if they had regular work. Three people said they would only pay between £100 and £200 a month; two people said they would be willing to pay more than £400.

Figure (p) Amount of money willing to pay for a room, e.g. in shared house or hostel

Monthly rate including bills	No. interviewees
£101-200	3
£201-300	16
£401-500	1
£501-1K	1
Total	21

People were asked for ideas about what might help them to succeed better in the UK; generally people found this question quite hard to answer. Twelve people provided an answer: most commonly that help with finding work, housing or understanding the laws of the country from someone with good English skills would be helpful. One person, who was planning to stay in the UK as long as he can, commented:

'We are disconnected here. People pick [us] up to do [the] hardest work. When there are easier jobs they don't hire and don't care, just using them [migrant workers] and leaving them.'

5.13 Motivations for the move to the UK

Respondents were asked why they had come to the UK and why they had left their home country. The questions were asked separately, but answers to both were very similar. All those interviewed had come to earn money and in hope of a better life, either for themselves or for their children. They were often driven by poverty, lack of work and opportunity, or the need to support their families. One couple had accrued debts to a bank in Romania, so their young children were staying in their home country while they worked in the London. They were very successfully paying the debt back and were pleased with the result of their move. Many people reported that they had seen examples of people coming to the UK from Romania and earning money, and were following in their footsteps.

Responses about motivations for the move to the UK included:

'The need for a better life, I couldn't stay and bear to see [my] children asking for food – now the children go to school and they have clothes.'

'[I] didn't have the possibility to support my family at home; I had heard about people making money here.'

'We need to earn money to be able to repay our debts. We heard we could find work in the UK.'

'The possibility of earning more money and helping my family. When I saw other friends who came back with money from England I decided to go as well.'

'In Romania it is hard to find legal employment, especially in rural areas. If you find a salary it is really low – £150 per month. With that we barely support ourselves.'

5.14 Plans for the future

Nearly all respondents said they would stay in the UK 'for as long as I can'; 'as long as I am allowed'; or 'as long as there is work here'. Some commented that their stay in the UK would be punctuated by trips back to Romania to see family. One person commented that they were concerned about Brexit. The outreach worker undertaking interviews reported that he was frequently asked about Britain leaving the EU by people he encountered on outreach shifts.

Most people did not have detailed plans for the future, but rather focused on making money on a week-to-week basis to support their families and themselves. Two people stated that if they could find regular work and a rented home, they would move their families to the UK. One person who did not have dependants said that he felt he could maybe make a career in the UK, whereas he felt that Romania was too 'poor and corrupt' to make that possible at home.

'I will stay for as long as I can, but obviously [I] would choose to go home after two to three months to see family. Ongoing, I would [stay] as long as I can and I am allowed.'

5.15 Perceptions on the move to the London

There was an even split among the interviewees between those who found that life had been easier or a bit better than they expected in London (eight) and those who said it was harder or worse than they anticipated (eight). One person said the experience was as they had expected it would be.

Figure (q) Expectations and experiences of life in London (coded from open answers)

How interviewee has found life in London	No. interviewees
Better/easier than expected	8
Harder/worse than expected	8
Same as expected	1
Not answered	4
Total	21

Responses about interviewees expectations and experiences of life in London included:

'Things are worse than I expected. The cost of living in London is really high; the rent and transport is really expensive.'

'Yes, I knew from home that I will have to sleep in tents to be able to save money. I am happy that I could find work and I was able to refurbish my house.'

'I am grateful that I had the chance to come here. I should have come much sooner. It's good that I can save money and offer a better life to my family.'

'Things were a bit harder than expected. I did not know that rent is so expensive but I am grateful I can save some money and support my family.'

When asked to identify the hardest aspect about their circumstances, most people cited being away from family, and the periods of time when there was no work and they were unable to send money home. A small number of people specified their living conditions, for example citing *'staying in a tent'* as one of the hardest things about their current situation. One person said moving into an encampment had been hard for him. Only one interviewee mentioned the nature of the work they were undertaking as the hardest thing for them.

'I don't really consider that I have had low periods here [in the UK]; it's been OK. Maybe when I lose money. I don't see sleeping out as a really bad thing.'

6 Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

- There is a sizable group of working-age Romanians, mostly men, living on encampments in outer north and east London, who have a distinct profile within the homeless population. Most have low levels of English language skills.
- Information about this group (including the number of people in this situation) is limited and there are significant barriers to improving this.
- Living conditions on encampments are very poor. Interviewees reported that they did not spend a lot of time at sleep sites and often did not see sleeping outside as a major problem as long as they could earn money. People are resourceful in the ways they are coping, for example showering at local gyms and spending time in internet cafes and shops that are open late.
- Encampments are, however, considered to be a major problem by local and central government and by communities. There is also a drive in some areas to stop people congregating to find casual work.
- Policy developments in relation to Brexit are likely to have a major impact on this group, however the nature of this impact is not clear.
- With rough sleeping specified as an abuse of treaty rights (as of 2016 and further clarified in 2017), and the focus on rough sleeping as part of the Government's Controlling Migration Fund (announced in 2016), it is likely that enforcement action against this group will increase over the coming months.
- The evidence collected during this research refutes the perception that there is crossover between Romanian migrants living on encampments in north London and groups of migrants who spend most of their time in central London and are often linked with begging.
- It is also clear from the research that interviewees were in the UK of their own volition and formed fairly loose communities within encampments, with no one organising the sleep sites, arranging work for people or taking money from them.
- People are driven to come to the UK, and more specifically London, by poverty in Romania and easy access to comparatively well-paid casual labour. Many are supporting several people in their home country. Earning money quickly and regularly is an absolute priority because this equates to food, fuel and clothing for family members in Romania. Some people are able to undertake house renovations or repay debts with the money they earn.
- Respondents without dependants have different experiences and are often not managing to save money because life is so expensive in London.
- Options for training and exploring legal work are not attractive to this group if they are to take place during hours when there is a likelihood of securing casual work. Likewise the offer of reconnection through a homelessness service holds little appeal for interviewees who often travel home several times a year to see family and have a strong desire to remain in the UK despite their housing situation.
- This group has very little contact with services except immigration services and the police. None of the interviewees had accessed or tried to access welfare benefits or healthcare.
- Exploitation in the informal labour market is commonplace – for example, not being paid the agreed amount of money and being required to work very long hours for less than the minimum wage.
- A key driver for people staying on encampments is lack of access to affordable, decent private rented accommodation. Most respondents had stayed in very poor, overcrowded and unfit conditions in the private rented sector at some point during their time in London, until they had found themselves unable to pay the rent.
- Interviewees were interested in support with accessing legal work, getting an NI number and opening a bank account. They were also interested in assistance with finding accommodation.

6.2 Recommendations

1. Homelessness services should consider how they could assist this group to access basic accommodation and move away from the informal labour market. Any 'access to accommodation' support must be paired with proactive efforts to help people move into legal employment and the promotion of legal advice services available to migrants.
2. Services targeting this group should take into account the current demands on them – for example, accepting that during working hours people will seek casual labour unless there is an immediate alternative for them. Romanian-speaking staff and weekend or evening services would be necessary to provide a meaningful service to those who were interviewed.
3. Creative, new accommodation solutions, providing low-cost, flexible accommodation to those rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping, who have low support needs but struggle to access private rented tenancies, could be a useful option for this group. To be a realistic offer, accommodation would need to be flexible (probably paid on a nightly basis, or a weekly basis with a cheaper lead-in period) and inexpensive (around £8 a night). Room sharing (preferably with just one other person) and shared toilets and showers would be acceptable and could be complemented by some communal areas including basic food preparation areas (with kettles and microwaves).
4. The police and TRIO team should continue to monitor the location of, and activity in, encampments undertaking basic checks on the welfare of clients, where possible. While those interviewed were healthy and sleeping at the sites of their own free will, the conditions are poor, and the situation could change. Health and safety considerations for outreach workers should be regularly reviewed.
5. Expecting or seeking a very high quality of information about this client group should be avoided because it would be costly and the advantages unclear. However, bringing together existing intelligence across boroughs on a regular basis may provide a clearer picture without being excessively expensive (for example quarterly intelligence from TRIO, Community Safety Teams and the police in affected boroughs).
6. Where enforcement action to address encampments is planned, this should be done using a cross-borough approach to avoid displacement of encampments to nearby sites.
7. This research focuses on a specific group of people who are in good health and able to work on a regular basis. There is evidence that other more vulnerable groups are living on different encampment sites. Follow-up to this report could and should trigger further investigation into these groups. A more sophisticated understanding of cohorts within the population of EU nationals rough sleeping in London would be beneficial in developing service responses and informing policy.
8. The homelessness sector should consider options for raising the profile of issues around the exploitation of homeless migrant workers by employers, through policy and influencing work. This work should engage the migrant rights sector and other relevant organisations including government departments. This report and other relevant information should be submitted to the Independent Review of Employment Practices in the Modern Economy being undertaken for the Department of Business, Industry and Industrial Strategy (DBIIS).³⁵
9. While there was no evidence of modern slavery having been experienced amongst research participants, recent research has highlighted this issue in the UK including amongst homeless Romanian people. Services must remain vigilant and be equipped to identify this.³⁶

³⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/employment-practices-in-the-modern-economy> (accessed March 2017).

³⁶ Keast M (2017) Understanding and Responding to Modern Slavery within the Homelessness Sector, The Passage.

