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Day Centres for Homeless People in the UK: An Analysis of Provision from the Day Centres Directory

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**Vodafone
UK
Foundation**

1. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- There are at least 214 day centres for homeless people in the UK.
- 50% of day centres have been set up since 1990.
- Geographical distribution of day centres varies. For example, a quarter of them (55) are based in London.

Day centre users

- Each day an average total number of 11,250 people visit day centres across the UK.
- The average number of daily users of day centres is 54 people.
- The average age of day centre users is 35 years old.
- 26 (12%) day centres are specifically for young people.

Day centre services

- Over three quarters of day centres are open 5 days a week or more (79%).
- Most day centres provide clothing (79%), showers (77%) or laundry facilities (70%).
- 85% of day centres offer housing advice, and 91% can refer users to emergency or longer term housing.
- Half of day centres (50%) run health care sessions, ranging from an on-site primary health team to regular visits from health care professionals.
- A number of day centres provide specific support around alcohol (47%), drugs (44%) or mental health (36%).
- 70% of day centres provide help around employment, education or training.
- Many day centres rely on volunteers in addition to paid staff - 82% use 1 or more volunteers to help provide services, and many have numerous volunteers.

2. INTRODUCTION

This document presents the first ever analysis of data about day centres and drop-in services for homeless people hostels across the UK. The data comes from research for the new Day Centres Directory¹ published in March 2007. Details about day centres are also available online on the Homeless UK website (www.homelessuk.org) which is the leading source of information about homelessness services.

By bringing together detailed information about day centres, this snapshot of the extent and range of provision adds significantly to the Homeless Places research that examined day centres provision outside London and across England, Scotland and Wales². Together with the analysis of emergency hostels in the UK published in the companion Emergency Accommodation Directory³ and on Homeless UK, this data about day centres gives further information about key frontline services for homeless people.

¹ Resource Information Service (2007): *Directory of Day Centres for Homeless People*. Resource Information Service.

² Sarah Johnsen, Paul Cloke and Jon May (2002): *Homeless Places Project: Day Centre and Drop-in Centre Survey. Summary of Findings*. School of Geographical Sciences, University of Bristol and the Department of Geography, Queen Mary, University of London.
Visit www.homeless-research.org for downloadable reports and documents from this research project.

³ Resource Information Service (2006): *Emergency Accommodation Directory: The UK Directory of Quick Access Accommodation for Homeless People*. Resource Information Service.

What emerges from this analysis overall is a significant amount of diverse provision. Day centres vary widely in terms of size and client groups targeted. Whilst some are only able to offer a few basic but much needed facilities, others provide a broad range of facilities and services. An increasing number of day centres now provide significant support on issues like alcohol, drugs, mental health and employment.

We will update data about day centres in the UK annually and will include any additional services that come to light in future coverage checking. Researched and published by Resource Information Service, the Day Centres Directory has been funded by the Vodafone UK Foundation. Homeless UK is funded by Communities and Local Government.

3. DEFINITIONS

For this research, we defined the term “day centre” using similar criteria from other directories and homelessness literature. With a few exceptions, all are projects that:

- provide services for people who are homeless, insecurely housed or in temporary accommodation
- are building based services that provide shelter and some space to socialise
- provide food/drinks and practical help eg showers, clothing or laundry facilities
- provide some advice and support
- are open at least 3 hours a week

Whilst most of the services are for single homeless people or couples, some services are specifically for homeless families.

4. NUMBERS OF DAY CENTRES

The research for the Day Centres Directory gives entries for a total of 214 day centres in the UK that meet the above criteria. There are several further day centres without full entries and included only in the section introductions of the directory or in an entry for another local day centre service run by the same organisation.

5. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Most day centres are in cities or urban areas where larger numbers of homeless people and those sleeping rough are likely to be found. The following table shows the geographical distribution of day centres by country/region (NB % figures in all tables have been rounded up or down to the near whole number).

Country/Region	No. of day centres	% of day centres
London	55	26%
South East England	31	14%
South West England	24	11%
East Midlands	20	9%
North West England	19	9%
Scotland	14	7%
East of England	13	6%
West Midlands	13	6%
Yorkshire & Humberside	12	6%
North East England	6	3%
Wales	4	2%
Northern Ireland	3	1%
TOTAL	214	100%

Whilst there is some correlation between population size and extent of day centre provision, there are some significant regional variations. There is scope for more detailed analysis of the pattern of provision across different regions in England, and in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

6. AREA SERVED

Most day centres serve the city or town where they are based. Some day centres, however, serve a more specific district or area. Others serve surrounding areas or counties too, and some serve even larger geographical areas or a region. 12 day centres (6%) stipulate that users must have a local connection to the area they serve.

7. PROVIDERS

Apart from one service in Scotland which is local authority-run, all other day centres are provided by charities and voluntary organisations. Most day centres are provided by local organisations that run a single day centre service, although some also provide hostel accommodation or other services for homeless people or those in need of support. A few organisations provide two or three day centres in a particular area. The only national provider of day centre services is The Salvation Army which runs 12 day centres.

For the purposes of the Day Centres Directory, detailed information about funding was not specifically gathered. However, day centres are funded by a variety of sources. Most receive funding from local authorities, and most rely on charitable sources (eg charitable trusts or public donations).

8. YEAR ESTABLISHED

Of the 197 day centres services where date established is known, over half (107 or 54%) have been established since 1990.

Date established	No. of day centres	% of day centres
Since 2000	18	8%
1990s	89	42%
1980s	48	22%
1970s	22	10%
Prior to 1970s	20	9%
Not known	17	8%
TOTAL	214	100%

9. TARGET GROUP

Most day centres in the Day Centres Directory are by their nature for homeless people, those who are inadequately housed or in hostels or other temporary accommodation. Some day centres also provide services to a more general client group of vulnerable, disadvantaged, unemployed, lonely or isolated people and the local community. A few include street drinkers or people with alcohol, drug or mental health problems in their target group.

Some day centres are specifically for particular client groups eg young people, families or women. Others include in their target group and/or have specific support for particular groups (eg sex workers, Irish people or refugees).

Age

Most day centres (187 or 87%) are for adults of all age groups. 26 (12%) day centres are specifically for young people only (usually aged 16-25) - The Day Centres Directory has an index of these projects. One service in Birmingham (Irish Welfare and Information Centre - Older Irish Adults Project) is only for clients aged 45 and over.

121 day centres (57%) can accept 16 year olds, and 8 day centres (4%) have a minimum age of 17. Nine day centres (4%) have a minimum age of 25 or 26.

Most day centres (169 or 79%) have no maximum age for clients.

For the 154 day centres where average age of clients is known, the average age is 35.

Average age of clients	No. of day centres	% of day centres
19 and under	7	3%
20-29	22	10%
30-39	68	32%
40-45	52	24%
50-60	5	2%
Not known	60	28%
TOTAL	214	100%

Gender

There are just two day centres in the Day Centres Directory, both in London, that are specifically for women (Women's Day Centre in central London and U-Turn - Women's Centre in Bethnal Green which is a support services for female sex workers and vulnerable women). Hackney 180 and the Trinity Centre in Winchester also run women only day centre

services. A further 15 day centres (7%) provide women only sessions. The Directory has an index of these projects. Another service (called SW5) in London is specifically for men and transgendered people who sell sex.

Families

12 day centres (6%), 7 of which are in London, are for families or specifically include people with children in their target group. The Day Centres Directory has an index of these projects.

Ethnic origin

Day centres will accept people from all ethnic groups, but 12 (6%) specifically include people from black and minority ethnic groups, asylum seekers or refugees in their target group and/or provide specific sessions or support for them. One of these day centres is specifically for older Irish people in Birmingham.

Sex workers

6 day centres target or have developed specific support for sex workers. The Day Centres Directory has an index of these projects.

People with dogs

60 day centres (28%) allow people to bring dogs into the centre, although some have certain restrictions (eg on the total number of clients allowed with dogs at any one time, only allowed at the discretion of staff, or that dogs must be tied up in the centre’s garden or other outdoor area).

10. NUMBERS OF USERS

Average number of daily users

Day centres vary widely in terms of their size and the number of users they provide services for - see the table below. The largest average number of users a day is 250 and the smallest is 5 a day.

For the 210 day centres where average number of users is known, the overall average of daily users is 54 people. These day centres across the UK have an overall total daily average of 11,252 users.

Average daily no. of users	No. of day centres	% of day centres
Less than 10	11	5%
11-19	12	6%
20-29	33	16%
30-39	29	14%
40-49	28	13%
50-59	23	11%
60-69	21	10%
70-79	15	7%
80-100	14	7%
100-150	14	7%
150+	10	5%
TOTAL	210	100%

Maximum number of users at any one time

Of the 150 day centres that gave a maximum number of users allowed at any one time, these varied from 6 users to 200 users, with an average maximum number of users of 55 at any one time.

Maximum no. of daily users	No. of day centres	% of day centres
Less than 10	2	1%
11-19	11	7%
20-29	22	15%
30-39	21	14%
40-49	19	13%
50-59	19	13%
60-69	9	6%
70-79	10	7%
80-100	12	8%
100-120	20	13%
150+	5	3%
TOTAL	150	100%

11. ACCESS AND REFERRALS

By their nature, almost all the day centres offer drop-in services. For 5 projects, initial contact is by phone, and a further 2 projects are accessible by agency referral only. Some day centres also offer specialist sessions available by appointment/referral only.

Opening hours

The Day Centres Directory includes all times of drop-in opening hours (plus sessions available by appointment only where known). On this basis, 16 day centres (7%) are open 1 or 2 days a week. Most day centres (168 or 79%) are open 5 days a week or more. Of these, 37 day centres (17%) are open daily.

Days open per week	No. of day centres	% of day centres
1	6	3%
2	10	5%
3	12	6%
4	18	8%
5	100	47%
6	31	14%
7	37	17%
TOTAL	214	100%

81 day centres (38%) are open some time over the weekend, usually in addition to being open during the week. Of these, 42 offer services on both Saturdays and Sundays, 19 offer services on Saturdays, and 20 offer services on Sundays.

Opening times vary widely. Some day centres are only open for relatively short sessions of one or two hours a day or just offer morning, lunchtime, afternoon or evening sessions. Others are open for longer hours and/or offer evening sessions. 2 projects (Cowgate Centre

in Edinburgh and Salvation Army's Laurieston Centre in Glasgow) are open through the night.

Wheelchair access

Just over half the day centres (114 or 53%) have full wheelchair access.

Alcohol use and wet centres

Almost all day centres (207 or 97%) do not allow alcohol on the premises and some also stipulate that users must be completely sober or "sober enough to engage with support". Just 7 day centres allow alcohol to be consumed on the premises. These are wet centres or projects with "wet areas" or "wet sessions" where clients are able to drink alcohol. Clients of these projects are often street drinkers or other people with alcohol problems. The Day Centres Directory has an index of these projects.

12. FOOD

All day centres provide meals and/or hot drinks for users. Some day centres provide these free of charge whilst 75 day centres make a small charge for meals and/or drinks. A few day centres have kitchen facilities for the use of clients and some others have kitchen facilities that can be used for cooking classes/with help from staff.

Food	No. of day centres	% of day centres
Breakfast	98	46%
Lunch	144	67%
Evening meal	34	16%
Tea and coffee	135	63%
Coffee bar	94	44%
Kitchen / cooking facilities	18	8%

13. FACILITIES

Some day centres only a range of key facilities that give practical help (The Day Centres Directory has an index of those that have shower facilities).

Facility	No. of day centres	% of day centres
Laundry	150	70%
Showers	164	77%
Clothing	170	79%
Furniture store	23	11%
Storage	57	27%

Adapted toilets and showers

136 day centres have toilets adapted for people with disabilities. Of the 164 day centres that have shower facilities, 48 have showers adapted for people with disabilities.

Other facilities

Day centres have a range of other facilities for clients such as lounges, TVs or quiet rooms. Some offer computers, internet access, a telephone or library for clients to use.

Facility	No. of day centres	% of day centres
Lounge	164	77%
Quiet room	66	31%
TV	103	48%
Internet access / computers	120	56%
Phone	157	73%
Library	58	27%

14. SUPPORT

The following table shows the number of day centres that provide specific support around particular issues or problems.

Support services	No. of day centres	% of day centres
Street outreach	67	31%
Housing advice	181	85%
Primary health care	127	59%
Alcohol	100	47%
Drugs	94	44%
Mental health	77	36%
Employment, education and training	150	70%

Street outreach

67 day centres (31%) reported having their own outreach staff working with rough sleepers or particular links/regular sessions with other street outreach services.

Housing advice

The vast majority of day centres offer their clients advice on housing/homelessness. 181 (85%) offer housing advice and 195 day centres (91%) refer clients to emergency/longer term housing.

100 day centres (47%) offer clients pre-tenancy support, and 100 (47%) offer support around and tenancy sustainment.

Primary health care

About half of the day centres (106 or 50%) provide some sort of primary health care services, have their own health care staff or hold regular sessions/surgeries with a nurse, GP or other health professional. The Day Centres Directory has an index of these projects.

Health care sessions	No. of day centres	% of day centres
Nurse	87	41%
GP	49	23%
Chiropodist	47	22%
Dentist	21	10%
Optician	19	9%
Sexual health	11	5%
Primary health team	6	3%

Alcohol problems

Many day centres see clients who have alcohol problems and just under half (100 or 47%) provide specific support around alcohol misuse (ie not just basic information or signposting to alcohol agencies). The level of this support does vary. Some day centres have their own specialist staff on-site offering assessment, support and referral to alcohol treatment services. Others have regular sessions with staff from specialist alcohol agencies. Others offer more general advice and support. The Day Centres Directory has an index of these projects.

Drug problems

94 day centres (44%) provide specific support for clients with drug problems. The level of support varies. Some day centres have their own specialist drugs workers or provide regular sessions with staff from specialist drug agencies. Some provide a needle exchange whilst others offer more general advice, support and referrals to detoxification or rehabilitation services. The Day Centres Directory has an index of these projects.

Mental health problems

77 day centres (36%) provide specific support for clients with mental health problems. The level of support varies from specialist staff on-site or regular sessions with a community psychiatric nurse (CPN) or mental health outreach staff, to more general advice and support. The Day Centres Directory has an index of these projects. Other projects may have irregular visits from mental health outreach workers.

Employment, education and training

Most day centres (150 or 70%) provide specific support around employment, education or training. This covers a wide variety of support, for example employment advice and jobsearch, computer courses, ESOL, literacy and numeracy classes, and life skills sessions.

Other advice and support

Most day centres (176 or 82%) provide other advice or social support services.

86 day centres (40%) specified providing advice on welfare rights. Some offer advice and specialist sessions on debt or legal problems. Some also mentioned providing sessions with CAB staff and help with form filling, and a couple of day centres offer help with family tracing.

26 day centres (12%) specified offering advocacy for clients and a couple of day centres offer mentoring or peer support. 39 day centres (9%) specifically mentioned offering befriending although many others provide informal social support too. Some day centres offer formal counselling whilst others offer a more informal "listening ear". A few day centres offer pastoral care or spiritual support.

Examples of further personal development and therapeutic services provided include help with smoking cessation, alternative therapies, stress or anger management, parenting skills, life coaching, art therapy, reiki, yoga, massage, and help around relationships, sexuality or domestic violence.

38 day centres (18%) mentioned running groups for particular clients, including women, men, migrant workers, older people, young people, people with mental health or learning difficulties, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered) people, and ex-service people.

Activities

Most day centres (150 or 70%) offer various creative, social, leisure or sporting activities.

Many day centres offer activities around art and crafts, photography, pottery, music, drama, book clubs, creative writing, poetry or story telling workshops. A few offer a discussion group, newspaper and current affairs group, or bible study.

Social activities offered include video/DVD screenings, bingo, quizzes, karaoke, and BBQs. Some day centres organise day trips or cinema and theatre trips for their clients. More unusual activities include an online radio station and circus skills sessions.

Staffing

As with their size and capacity in terms of clients, day centres vary greatly in the numbers of full time and part time staff and volunteers that they have. Some day centres only have one or two staff whilst others employ over 30 full time staff, plus part time staff/sessional workers. Unfortunately, variations in the current data preclude full statistics on staffing levels (for example, some day centres did not differentiate between full time and part time staff). However, the data can be improved in the future.

The data does show, nonetheless, the extent to which day centres rely on volunteers - 176 day centres (82%) have 1 or more volunteers to help run their services and activities. 16 day centres (7%) have no paid staff and are run solely by between 4-80 volunteers (with an average of 27 volunteers).

15. CONCLUSION

This directory and the above information give the first picture of day centre provision across the UK. It maps the extent, nature and geographical location of key provision and will act as a benchmark for future research to track changes and developments in provision. As this data is updated and added to, it will be possible to carry out further analysis and add to our understanding of this important provision for homeless and vulnerable people.

We are currently seeking funding to research further data about homelessness services for our Homeless UK website (www.homelessuk.org). The aim is to cover topics less directly related to access and referral issues (eg capacity, characteristics of clients, funding, quality standards, staff training and development, types and models of support, and outcomes). We will be working with umbrella agencies in the homelessness sector in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to help progress this.

This information about homelessness services should help agencies make accurate referrals and provide a better service for homeless people. We also hope that the sector will use this information to help develop ever better services for homeless people in the future.

16. FURTHER DETAILS

To order a copy of the Day Centres Directory, ring us on the number below. For further information about homelessness services, visit Homeless UK at www.homelessuk.org

Resource Information Service is a national charity and leading publisher of information about services for homeless people and others in need. We produce a range of authoritative directories, websites and information systems. For further details, visit www.ris.org.uk or contact:

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