

Subject: Housing First in London

Report to: Housing Committee

Report of: Executive Director of Secretariat

Date: 2 April 2019

This report will be considered in public

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the background information for a discussion with invited guests on the current delivery of Housing First homelessness services in London.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **That the Committee notes the report as background to putting questions to the invited guests on Housing First in London and the subsequent discussion.**
- 2.2 **That the Committee delegates authority to the Chair, in consultation with party Group Lead Members, to agree any output from the discussion.**

3. Background

- 3.1 Chronic homelessness in London is a persistent and increasing problem¹. The demands placed upon London's crisis service, the criminal justice system, emergency accommodation and hospital beds, and the long-term costs to local authorities and the wider welfare state raise questions as to whether there are alternative effective models of homeless service design. The Housing First model of homeless service design is specifically aimed at ending homelessness for chronically homeless people with complex needs.
- 3.2 The Housing First model provides a homeless person with immediate and permanent housing, with no preconditions regarding engaging in treatment, behaviour or abstinence from drugs or alcohol². Wrap around support services are then offered to the individual: however, crucially they are not compulsory³.

¹ CHAIN Annual Report 2017/18

² Homeless Link. (2016) [Housing First in England: the principles](#) London: Homeless Link.

³ Goering, P. et al.(2014). [National Final report Cross-Site At Home/Chez Soi Project](#) Calgary: Mental Health Commission of Canada

- 3.3 Housing First stands in contrast with the traditional model of homelessness service – often referred to in the literature as a Treatment First approach. Under the Treatment First approach, a homeless person has to progress through a series of different types of accommodation before they are given a permanent home⁴. This progression is based on the service user meeting the requirements for behaviour and treatment⁵. This model has been criticised, as the behavioural requirements of abstinence or engagement with treatment can be intimidating for chronically homeless people with complex needs.

4. Issues for Consideration

The demand for Housing First in London

- 4.1 Combined Homelessness and Information Network's (CHAIN) 2017/18 Annual Report shows an increase in the number of rough sleepers in London that can be defined as chronically homeless. The numbers of people seen rough sleeping across a minimum of two years has risen from 2,474 (32% of rough sleepers) in 2014/2015 to 3,028 (40% of rough sleepers) in 2017/18⁶. This suggests that there is an increasing need for long-term solutions to chronic homelessness.

Housing First Outcomes

- 4.2 There is strong evidence that Housing First provides positive outcomes for tenancy sustainment. An improved quality of life among Housing First service users is also frequently reported⁷. However, the evidence of the outcomes for drug and alcohol misuse among Housing First service users is more mixed⁸. There is also some debate as to whether Housing First offsets the cost of chronic homelessness and whether it is the most appropriate type of service design for a chronically homeless person. A Housing First Report, commissioned by St Mungo's, suggested that Housing First needs to be part of a wider homeless strategy with a range of homelessness services to meet the diverse needs of homeless people⁹.

The current delivery of Housing First in London

- 4.3 In London there are small-scale Housing First programmes running in 11 boroughs. These schemes are run by homeless service providers and supported by councils. The previous Mayor funded three Housing First pilots, from 2012-2015, and the current Mayor provided a grant to Richmond and Wandsworth Housing First service in November 2016.

⁴ Homeless Link. (2016) [Housing First in England: the principles](#) London: Homeless Link.

⁵ Sahlin, I. (2005) The Staircase of Transition: Survival Through Failure, Innovation, European Journal of Social Science Research, 18(2), 115-35.

⁶ [CHAIN Annual Report 2017/18](#)

⁷ Goering, P. et al (2014). National At Home/Chez Soi Final Report. Calgary: Mental Health Commission of Canada

⁸ Collins, S.E. et al (2012). Project-Based Housing First for Chronically Homeless Individuals with Alcohol Problems: Within-Subjects Analyses of 2-year Alcohol Trajectories, American Journal of Public Health 102(3) pp.511-518.

⁹ St Mungo's (2018) [Housing First Report](#)

A Pan-London Housing First service

- 4.4 In the Rough Sleeping Plan of Action released in June 2018, the Mayor states that £316m of funding from the Government is needed over the next five years to fund a number of initiatives to tackle rough sleeping in the capital. One of the schemes that would be funded by this money is a pan-London Housing First initiative¹⁰. The Mayor would develop and commission this pan-London Housing First service, working in partnership with housing providers and London's councils.
- 4.5 The Committee may therefore wish to consider:
- The numbers of chronically homeless people in London who would benefit from a Housing First service;
 - The evidence around the success of Housing First as a method of tackling chronic homelessness;
 - The barriers to establishing and running Housing First services in London;
 - What the Mayor could do to further support the delivery of Housing First in London; and
 - The need for and potential value in a Pan-London Housing First service.
- 4.6 The following guests have been invited to attend the meeting and participate in the discussion:
- Mark Taylor, Assistant Director of Services, The Single Homeless Project;
 - Stuart Nevill, Chief Executive Office, SPEAR;
 - Hannah Gousy, Policy and Public Affairs Manager, Crisis; and
 - David Eastwood, Rough Sleeping Lead Manager, Housing and Land, GLA.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Committee has the power to do what is recommended in this report.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications to the GLA arising from this report.

List of appendices to this report:

None.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
List of Background Papers: None.
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¹⁰ Mayor of London (2018) [Rough Sleeping Plan of Action](#)