

Life Off The Streets Core Group – Minutes

Tuesday 16 November 2021 15:00-17:00

In attendance

GLA, Greater London Authority – Debra Levison (chair), David Eastwood, Emma De Zoete
LHDG, London Housing Directors' Group – Jamie Carswell
LC, London Councils – Michelle Binfield, Aura Di Febo (minutes)
HL, Homeless Link – Pete Smith, Natalie Allen, Vicky Album
NHS HLP, Healthy London Partnership – Jemma Gilbert
DLUHC, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities – Tom Preest, Catherine Bennion
SM, St Mungo's – Petra Salva
LA, Local Authorities – Chris Pelham (City of London), Mark Billings (Hillingdon), Mark Meehan (Hammersmith and Fulham), Emma Casey (Lambeth), Kath Dane (Tower Hamlets)
HJ, Housing Justice – Jacob Quagliozi

Apologies

HJ – Kathy Mohan
LA – Paul Davis (Lambeth)
LP, London Probation – Karen Tipping

Welcome and introductions

Debra Levison welcomed all attendees, noting that this is the second meeting of the new Life Off The Street Core Group, with a slightly changed membership, and the first after the inaugural meeting of the Executive Board.

Minutes from previous meeting (19 October 2021)

The minutes were approved by all parties as a comprehensive and accurate account of the meeting.

Data return

Aura provided an overview of rough sleeping data for October, highlighting a decline in the number of people currently in emergency accommodation and an increase in the among of people currently estimated to be sleeping rough. Aura highlighted an inconsistency in the reasons for the drop in emergency accommodation occupancy, which in some cases was due to a reclassification of emergency accommodation rather than a general decline in the amount of people being accommodated. Aura and Michelle updated the group on the ongoing work to revise the rough sleeping data return to ensure this is capturing the information needed to fulfil the programme's objectives.

Comments from the group:

- Jemma inquired about the accuracy of figures, especially estimates of people sleeping rough. It was observed that while these are usually snapshots so they might be slightly inaccurate, the consistency of trends over the past several months indicates that these estimates are reliable overall.
- David suggested including questions related to winter planning and occupancy of winter beds
- Jamie pointed at the slight decrease in the number of non-UK rough sleepers and wonders whether this might be connected to the work ongoing with the Home Office. Michelle responds that it is likely too early to see the results of that work, but HO colleagues will attend the December meeting to share the outcomes of cases escalated so far.
- Petra noted how the figures primarily refer to clients known to local authorities and providers, but numbers are expected to increase due to a flow of new rough sleepers on the streets. In this regard, a useful addition to the data return could be a breakdown of the rough sleeping cohort between stock and flow.
Petra also raised an issue with the street count happening on different nights in different boroughs, which is likely to cause a duplication of individuals counted. Representatives from local authorities agree with the need to avoid duplication and suggest sharing details of the people that have been counted as a possible solution.

Aura and Michelle will work on a revised survey to be introduced in the new year.

Governance – Terms of Reference, Programme Plan, Risk Register

David and Michelle provided an overview of the documents shared with the Core Group: the Terms of Reference, a Forward Plan for the Core Group meetings, the Programme Plan and a Risk Register.

Regarding the **Terms of Reference**, the main comments related to:

- Associated members – the possibility to add to the ToR a list of representatives of organisations that are not members of the Core Group but may be invited to attend specific meetings to report on joint pieces of work, e.g. Home Office, Children Services (ADCS).
- Sharing documents – the possibility of sharing minutes from the meetings and supporting documents (including the data return) with members' networks was discussed. Members agreed that sharing information is key to ensure transparency and foster collaboration, but there is a need for caution, especially regarding more sensitive data – such as by-borough breakdown of rough sleepers' figures.
- Success measures – Michelle reported on the feedback from the Executive Board which asked for success measures for the programme to be clearly stated in the Terms of Reference. The document has been amended to incorporate this feedback (See Supporting Documents).

Attendees expressed a general agreement regarding the **Forward Plan**, with the caveat that agenda items for future meetings may be revised based on priorities and issues emerging in the upcoming months. Gaps identified by attendees included:

- Catherine suggested adding an item to the March meeting about funding decisions from DLUHC March;
- Petra suggested scheduling some time to discuss lessons learned from DLUHC research on flow.

The **Programme Plan** presented to the Core Group consisted of a more detailed version of the high-level plan submitted to the Executive Board, which breaks down items into tasks that can be allocated to the leading organisations/individuals and RAG-rated to facilitate the monitoring of progress. Members discussed how to best engage with the document going forward:

- Monitoring progress – It was suggested that progress on the different items should be monitored through a combination of regular updates by topics and exceptional reporting on red RAG rated items;
- Prioritisation – As noted by the Executive Board, there is a need to prioritise items and assign timelines (especially for work that has not yet started). Michelle suggested asking a few borough representatives for input on what to bring forward.
- Chris Pelham offered to broker a conversation with ADCS around Care Leavers. This was welcomed.

ACTION: A revised Programme Plan will be presented at the next Core Group meeting.

Michelle provided an overview of the **Risk Register** and asked for comments on the format, risk rating and gaps. Key discussion points:

- Petra suggested changing the rating of the risk related to workforce recruitment and retention to reflect a higher likelihood and a higher impact;
- Tom observed that the connection between the risks currently identified and the ambitions of the programme could be more explicit. This might be a presentational issue – it was suggested that risks could be mapped against the programme objectives (i.e. making rough sleeping rare, brief and non-recurrent) to reflect our ambition more clearly;
- Catherine noted how risks currently identified are mostly focused on intervention, while there is a lack of risks associated to prevention work;
- Supported housing and hostels were mentioned as a missing area;
- A broader risk was identified related to fragmentation within the system, which goes against the need for inclusive and comprehensive strategy/approach to care. This risk was closely linked to funding, as noted by Emma DZ in relations to healthcare: she noted how different services tend to draw from a range of (mostly short terms) funds, resulting in a disjointed approach;
- More broadly, it was observed how funding running out represents a very pressing risk, impacting across a range of areas, as a range programmes will come to an end in

March 2022. Even if funding is renewed bridging between existent and newly commissioned services will pose additional risks.

ACTION: Michelle will update risk register to incorporate suggestions and will present it again at next meeting.

Workforce recruitment and retention risks

Petra and Natalie shared a presentation outlining current challenges faced by the VCS sector in relation to workforce recruitment. Key points:

- The present challenges are stemming from a combination of winter pressures and effects of the pandemic, which altered the natural turnover, increased difficulty in retaining staff (due for example to burnout), discouraged people to go into the sector;
- VCS organisations are competing for a small pool of staff and struggling to attract new resources;
- Short-term funding undermines job security and can cause a loss of experienced staff especially from frontline roles;
- Organisations are exploring solutions to tackle these challenges, including training and accreditation opportunities, changes in recruitment methodologies, involvement of people with lived experience and non-UK citizens;
- Developing a long-term strategy is key but at the moment there is also a need to consider short-term solutions to address this issue as we move into winter planning – a critical moment.

Comments from the group:

- Michelle offered to support the development of a workforce strategy paper and investigate short-term solutions. She also stated a need to adopt a broader approach, since workforce issues are not limited to the VCS sector (at the Executive Board meeting Penny Hobman mentioned workforce shortages in substance misuse services);
- Mark B noted how local authorities face similar challenges in terms of staff retention and upskilling;
- Frontline roles appear particularly problematic: graduate schemes might help to bring new resources in the sector new recruits would lack the experience needed to work with the most vulnerable people;
- The issue of sustainability should be assessed at system level, in relation to pan-London provision. In case of insufficient capacity there will be choices to make e.g. decide to discontinue some services in favour of other priorities;
- Jemma offered to broker a knowledge exchange with the NHS HR Director who dealt with similar challenges.

ACTION: Petra and Pete will facilitate a follow-up conversation about this issue and will come back to the group with a workstream/action plan.

Winter Planning and shelter updates

David announced that the SWEP Review from last year will be published soon and flagged that GLA has decided not to take forward one of the recommendations received about changing the criteria for triggering SWEP (currently SWEP is triggered when the weather is forecast to hit zero in any London borough). He also noted how finding suitable accommodation has proven more challenging this year due to limited availability and higher rates.

David then reported on the issue of some winter shelters planning to use communal areas and the recommendation shared at the Executive Board by Directors of Public Health, who strongly advised against the use of communal shelters, which resulted in the decision to issue a letter to local authorities to advise service providers not to refer people to communal hostels (to be sent out by Jamie and Debra).

The decision to issue a statement was generally welcomed by attendees, but some concerns were raised about balancing the risks posed by the weather and the health risks associated to COVID-19. Members also expressed concerns about existing capacity and availability of self-contained accommodation in the event of a lengthy or recurring period of severe weather.

Kerslake Event

Michelle informed the group about an in-person event to discuss the findings of the Kerslake report and possible implications for London. The event is being organised by Bloomberg, with the Centre for Homelessness Impact and St Mungo's and will take place on December 16th.

AOB






- Tom announced that the RS15 prospectus will be circulated to local authorities and GLA within the week.
- Emma DZ informed the group that they are working on a refresh of Mayors health and equality strategy and this is going to refer to this programme. A case-study on COVID-19 response will be presented at the event where the strategy will be announced.




Outstanding actions from previous meetings

Date Originated	Action Owner	Action	Latest Updates
19/10/2021	Michelle Binfield	Michelle to present the Terms of Reference for the new group at the next meeting.	Completed

19/10/2021	Michelle / Aura	Michelle and Aura to engage with local authorities to test the relevance of the rough sleeping survey and explore changes to its format.	Ongoing
19/10/2021	Michelle / David	Michelle and David to convene a deep dive on winter planning.	Completed
16/11/2021	Michelle/ David	Michelle and David to revise the programme plan based on the feedback provided by the group and present, to be presented at December meeting	
16/11/2021	Michelle	Michelle to revise the risk register based on the feedback provided by the group and present, to be presented at December meeting	

Supporting Documents

Agenda item	File
Minutes from previous meeting (October 19 th)	 1) Life Off The Street Core Group m
Data return	 2) London Rough Sleeping Data - Oct  3) CELC Dashboard 31.10.2021.pptx
Governance – Terms of Reference, Programme Plan and Risk Register	 4) ToR Life Off The Streets Core Group.  5) Forward Plan - draft for Core Group

	 <p>6) London Rough Sleeping Programme</p>  <p>7) London Rough Sleeping Programme</p>
Workforce recruitment and retention risks	 <p>8) Life off the streets Core Group_</p>