

Life Off The Streets Core Group – Minutes

Tuesday 13 December 2021 15:00-17:00

In attendance

LHDG, London Housing Directors' Group – Jamie Carswell (chair)
GLA, Greater London Authority – Debra Levison, David Eastwood, Emma De Zoete
LC, London Councils – Michelle Binfield, Aura Di Febo (minutes)
HL, Homeless Link – Natalie Allen
NHS HLP, Healthy London Partnership – Jemma Gilbert
DLUHC, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities – Tom Preest
SM, St Mungo's – Petra Salva
LA, Local Authorities – Will Norman (City of London), Mark Billings (Hillingdon), Mark Meehan (Hammersmith and Fulham), Emma Casey (Lambeth), Kath Dane (Tower Hamlets)
HJ, Housing Justice – Kathy Mohan
HO, Home Office – Claire Portlock, Murad Mohammed, David Jones
OHID – Gill Leng,
NHSE/I - Huda Yusuf

Apologies

HL – Pete Smith
LA – Paul Davis (Lambeth), Chris Pelham (City of London)
LP, London Probation – Karen Tipping
DLUHC – Catherine Bennion

Welcome and introductions

Jamie Carswell welcomed all attendees to the third meeting of the Life Off The Street Core Group.

Minutes from previous meeting (16 November 2021)

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

Health update on COVID Risks

Emma De Zoete, Huda Yusuf and David Eastwood provided an update on the health risks associated with the increase of COVID rates and the emergence of the new variant (omicron).

- Emma presented an overview of the current position: the Covid-19 case rates are going up and expected to increase rapidly due to greater infectiousness of omicron variant – due to the higher risk of transmission they are expecting a double rate of new cases compared to delta, resulting in a big wave in January. The severity of the new variant compared to Delta is still unknown.

- Huda updated on the vaccination rates – these are going up – thanks to the collaborative work with rough sleeping leads in local authorities – but is still significantly lower than the national average. Among the lessons learned in the past months is the influence of social stigma and mistrust; in this regard continued offer and constant communication proved effective to raise uptake, as did rapport/trust relationships with health practitioners. Other obstacles identified include barriers to access primary care, while partnership with VCS/other organisations emerged as key facilitator. Huda outlined a strategy structured around three pillars: prioritisation, partnership and provision. She also mentioned a statement regarding the vaccination position in London that she is trying to get approved – this might need to be escalated to the Housing Directors group.
- Severe weather worst case scenario – David provided an overview of SWEP provision and assessed needs. While immediate SWEP needs do not represent an issue, the new variant can significantly increase the risk of outstripping supply. David presented a contingency plan for the worst case scenario and two additional options in case this approach fails to deliver sufficient capacity: a) procurement of additional single occupancy hotel; b) use of some shared sleeping arrangements in pan-London overflow. General agreement from participants that option A should be pursued first.

Comments/questions from attendees:

- Tom mentioned that DLUHC is exploring avenues to increase the vaccine uptake among rough sleeping population in collaboration with NHSE&I (e.g. mobile units, vaccine hubs using sites provided by local authorities);
- The refusal rate among rough sleepers is higher than national average. Regarding those who refuse to be vaccinated, Huda noted that building rapport with health practitioners and communicating in clear and lay terms can help win reticence over time;
- Petra stressed the need to set realistic objectives and prioritising: since resources are stretched and covering everything is impossible, we need to identify priorities and channel efforts into key areas;
- Readiness – it was suggested to conduct an exercise to test the capacity. Concerns were raised in relation to SWEP provision – bringing people “In for good” would likely exhaust the capacity of boroughs;
- Besides availability of accommodation ensuring that people maintain isolation is another significant challenge, as learned from the experience of Covid isolation hotels;
- Funding – Tom mentioned some additional funding that may be made available by DLUHC (details still to be defined).

Data Return

Aura provided an overview of rough sleeping data for October, highlighting an increase in the number of people currently in emergency accommodation and a slight decline in the number of those estimated to be sleeping rough. Aura updated on progress in the data review workstream, including ongoing work to revise the data return survey and collaboration with LOTI and Bloomberg to map existing data systems and user journeys (See *Supporting Documents*).

Mapping Immigration Advice

Lidia and Michelle provided an overview of current immigration advice provision in London based on responses to a survey developed by LC and GLA and circulated in November (26 returns). The survey highlighted insufficient availability of good and accessible immigration advice as well as strong support for a sub regional approach. It also identified gaps in the provision (e.g. need for greater flexibility and services catering for complex needs). Next steps include working with local authorities and providers to develop a service spec and submit bids to RSI5 for sub regional advice services. Attendees generally supported the possibility of using LC grant making powers to fund the service instead of going through the procurement route (See *Supporting Documents*).

Prevention

Michelle offer a brief update on progress in the prevention workstream, mentioning that a more extensive update will follow in the January meeting. She asked the group to make a formal request to DLUHC for two data reports to be used for the prevention rapid evidence review (See *Supporting Documents*).

ACTION – Michelle to submit a data request to H-CLIC on behalf the Life Off The Streets Core Group

Workforce and VCS Update

Natalie Allen updated the group on work ongoing to understand and address workforce issues in the voluntary sector. She presented on the outcomes of the working group meeting and a Community of Practice held by HL in December. These conversations allowed to gather insights on present challenges (recruitment patterns, skills gaps, limited volunteer pool, lack of data) and resulted in some actions. Natalie also presented on the work of the VCS working group and next steps (See *Supporting Documents*).

HO Update on Escalation Routes for non-UK Rough Sleepers

Claire Portlock, Murad Mohammed and David Jones presented on the outcomes of the escalation route for non-UK rough sleepers. HO Homelessness team has received 109 referrals from 12 local authorities, the majority of which were escalated by the GLA. Among these, 33 have been resolved and 19 signposted (See *Supporting Documents*). In addition to local authorities, HO is also receiving referrals from third sector organisations (mainly coming from advisers rather than providers). HO colleagues noted that expediting the decision-making process proved more complex than expected, mainly due to factors behind HO control (e.g. police).

Comments and questions from attendees:

- Lidia asked whether HO could do more in relation to P&C, for example accelerate the process to take people through suitability assessments. HO colleagues commented on the sensitivity on this issue but agreed that the matter of the offense would be worthy to explore, especially since the risk for HO in case of minor offenses is lower;
- David Eastwood asked about the geographical distribution of referrals – any gap might signal that boroughs in some areas have not been able to make the referral for some reason;

- Mark Meehan offered help to mediate with boroughs that have not escalated cases yet;
- On comms, Murad added that they are currently trying to distil good case studies to encourage boroughs to escalate cases but also identify commonalities.


Governance










A revised Forward Plan, Programme Plan and Risk Register were circulated in advance to the meeting (See *Supporting Documents*). Michelle outlined the main changes made to the documents, following the conversation at the last Core Group meeting, and invited members to share their comments. These documents will be brought back for detailed discussion at the January meeting.

Outstanding actions from previous meetings

Date Originated	Action Owner	Action	Latest Updates
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
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	Completed
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	Completed
13/12/2021	Michelle	Michelle to submit a data request to H-CLIC on behalf the Life Off The Streets Core Group	

Supporting Documents

Agenda item	File
Minutes from previous meeting (November 16 th)	 1) Life Off The Street Core Group m

Health – COVID Risks	
Data return	 CELC Dashboard 30.11.2021.pptx  London Rough Sleeping Data Return
Update from HO on escalation route for Non-UK rough sleepers	 7) Home Office Homelessness team
Mapping immigration Advice – Michelle Binfield	 6) Sub-regional immigration advice f
Governance – Programme Plan and Risk Register	 2) Forward Plan - draft for Dec 2021 C  3) London Rough Sleeping Programme  4) London Rough Sleeping Programme
Prevention	 5) Prevention rapid evidence review - HC
Workforce issues and VCS update	 8) Workforce and VCS Update.ppt