

Life Off The Streets Core Group

Minutes of meeting held on 24 February 2022

In attendance

GLA, Greater London Authority – Debra Levison (chair), David Eastwood, Emma De Zoete
LC, London Councils – Michelle Binfield, Aura Di Febo (minutes)
LHDG, London Housing Directors' Group – Jamie Carswell
HL, Homeless Link – Jo Prestidge
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), Paul Davis (Lambeth)
HJ, Housing Justice – Kathy Mohan
LP, London Probation – Karen Tipping

For specific items:

NH, New Horizon – Phil Kerry
HL, Homeless Link – Lauren Page-Hammick
BA, Bloomberg Associates – Tamiru Mammo
SM, St Mungo's – Liz McCulloch

Apologies

DLUHC – Catherine Bennion
HL – Pete Smith
LA – Chris Pelham
LA – Kath Dane

1) Welcome and introductions

Jamie Carswell welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

2) Minutes from previous meeting (18 January 2022)

The minutes were approved as an accurate account of the meeting. Noted that the two actions arising from the last meeting have been completed – the winter shelters data has been included in the monthly data return and the bilateral with the Home Office and Rough Sleeping Ministers has been requested, response awaited.

3) Feedback from Executive Board's February meeting

Debra Levison fed back on the Board's positivity around the adoption of the CHI methodology and success measures and their agreement to adopt this approach, subject to further refinement work being taken forward by the Core Group. In addition, three of the programme's active risks were discussed – ie: workforce shortages, limited options for non-UK rough sleepers and the cliff-edge linked to the end of P&V, winter pressures funding and winter shelters. There was an action to link up the workforce workstream leads (Homeless Link and St Mungo's) with key people at London Councils who work on employment support – this has already been actioned.

4) Programme update

Michelle Binfield updated the group on the establishment of two new workstreams – one focusing on women at risk of rough sleeping and the other on improving access to social care through a conversation with DHSC and ADASS. She noted that social care needs and safeguarding/neglect issues were emerging as a significant theme in the T1000 work and women were overrepresented in this group (relative to their presence on CHAIN). Michelle also updated on the programme risks and the progress made with various initiatives since the last Core Group – noting a reduction in rough sleeping numbers in both the annual snapshot and CHAIN. London's snapshot reduction was the biggest nationally.

Jamie Carswell is keen to know more about work with social care, and Michelle offered to bring an update to a future meeting.

Tom Preest asked if there was more that we could do to coach Housing Directors (sitting on Safeguarding Boards) to be aware of best practice in respect of safeguarding concerns around rough sleepers so they can advocate more effectively

around T1000 cases and others – perhaps a briefing. Jamie suggested this could be taken forward and that the focus should be on spreading existing best practice.

Mark Billings highlighted the challenge to come for the partnership around the P&V and winter provision ending and the high numbers of NRPF rough sleepers in accommodation, including GLA hotels, which may not be financially sustainable.

5) Report back from Youth Homelessness workstream

Phil Kerry from New Horizon and Lauren Page-Hammick from Homeless Link were welcomed to the meeting and asked to deliver their presentation.

Lauren fed back on activities/priorities which were being worked on by the Youth Homelessness sub-group, the majority of which appear within the overall Life Off The Streets programme plan. These include an evidence and data review to support a bespoke YP prevention initiative, provision of pan-London youth specific emergency accommodation, and improving the transition from care/prison for YP at risk of rough sleeping. It was noted that YP are underrepresented in rough sleeping data as they are more likely to be hidden from view because of their vulnerability and desire to avoid the stigma of rough sleeping. There seems a disconnect between HCLIC data and CHAIN regarding young people identified as sleeping rough.

The group has prioritised working to remove the need for care leavers to ever sleep rough, working with partners and Children's Social Care leaders to identify and share good practice and working with legal organisations to look at potential effective partnership approaches. A priority will be given to securing the operation of meaningful Joint Housing Protocols across London.

Phil Kerry outlined the work going on to secure the future of the pan-London youth hub, noting that youth homelessness needs to be tackled at pan-London level given the low number in each individual local authority area. Some local authorities have offered financial support for the hub, but this work continues. The biggest sources of funding are expected to be GLA (via an RSI22-25 bid) and Housing Benefit. A new building in Kings Cross has been identified (smaller than the current site but more central) and will be available in the summer. The current hub in Hounslow will close at the end of April.

Phil asked if there were examples of local authorities pooling funding to deliver pan-London initiatives.

Jemma Gilbert supported the idea of ongoing collaborative work on a pan-London level to meet this need and is happy to support around input from health. The Good Thinking platform is collaboratively funded, as is the Find and Treat team – noting that it is possible to achieve good collaboration at a pan-London level. Most examples are led by Directors of Public Health.

David Eastwood noted that the element of the youth hub's work that links to preventing rough sleeping is hardest to get support for, as there isn't a mechanism for pan-London prevention work currently. The GLA's role necessarily focuses on rough sleeping rather than more upstream work.

Jamie Carswell praised efforts to build collective action and is happy to use this governance structure to keep working together. He also expressed a willingness to help champion the conversations that need to happen regarding care leavers and achieving better practice on the part of local authorities (especially if there are geographies of particular concerns).

Michelle Binfield noted the support received from Children's Services Director at LB Lambeth, who plays a convening and co-ordinating role around the Care Leavers' Covenant but Jamie's support with a route into a conversation on the Joint Housing Protocol with Housing Directors would be welcome.

Tom Preest asked if there is a need for specialist services at a pan-London level or whether existing borough or sub-regional services could meet needs. Lauren replied that YP need specialist provision for reasons of safety (YP are vulnerable in adult-centred spaces), trust/engagement and the need for providers to have specialist knowledge of options available to YP.

Tom said it would be good to have data on how many of the T1000 became rough sleepers aged 25 or under.

Mark Billings said that all boroughs should have a Joint Housing Protocol and there is much good practice around young people across London (Greenwich led the way in many respects) and the Midlands. Important to learn from what works.

Jamie thanked Phil and Lauren for the presentation and discussion and asked that they come back to a future meeting to keep the Core Group appraised on progress and any further need for support.

6) End of Protect & Vaccinate and winter services and associated risks

David Eastwood introduced the topic, noting that the partnership was facing something of a 'cliff edge' at the end of March with SWEP provision, winter shelters, GLA hotels all closing and P&V and winter pressures funding to boroughs ending. Noted that this is expected to be a particular issue for non-UK rough sleepers with uncertain entitlements and/or those who have exhausted all immigration options. While progress has been made in escalating casework decisions with the Home Office, many of those accommodated won't get a decision before March.

Michelle Binfield explained that GLA and LC had collaborated on a survey sent to LAs today to ask them how many emergency accommodation placements might be at risk of being ended at the end of March so we can better understand the scale of the challenge. The survey asks how many might end and the reasons (ie: funding, accommodation no longer available, client not engaging, client has no options). She will bring it back to the next Core Group so that the quantum of placements at risk can be understood.

Mark Billings stated his concerns about this end of March cliff-edge – expressing a concern that LAs can't be expected to keep funding open-ended placements for many in this group, especially those with no prospect of accessing public funds. Though the voluntary sector are working with many, he expects to see a big return to the street in six months' time.

Petra Salva noted that apart from the issue of immigration cases not being resolved, it should be noted that the non-UK group is not a homogenous group with low support needs. Those still in hotels this far after Everyone In are much more likely to have mid/high support needs and need supported accommodation, which is generally not available. This needs some urgent attention – there are ideas around relating to making NRPF beds in hostels and supported housing available that need resurrecting and working through.

Kathy Mohan agreed. The HJ-led hosting programme in London has a good success rate but can't meet the needs of those with higher support needs. She stated that she remains concerned about collaborating with the Home Office to get decisions made under the escalation route as there is still a lot of suspicion towards them on the part of faith and community groups.

Emma De Zoete asked if there is a collective partnership ask for this group from charitable or philanthropic funders. Perhaps a conversation with London Funders. Michelle responded that the intention is to hold two meetings in April focusing on the non-UK T1000 cohort which has exhausted all immigration options which will identify those for whom charitable support may be the only way forward.

Tom Preest recognised the issue and said it was one for local authorities to grapple with as there was unlikely to be another offer of funding to put the pain off further.

Jamie suggested that once the picture was clearer, the Core Group should set out the issue for the Executive Board in a letter. Kathy supported this stating that, although they have done excellent work this winter to keep people alive, ending access to accommodation for this vulnerable group is likely to lead to risks to physical health, suicide and death.

7) Prevention

Michelle Binfield introduced the discussion referencing the detailed CHI paper sent out prior to the meeting and working through a series of summary slides, noting that most of the information came from CHAIN using Last Settled Base data and limited HCLIC data. Slides and paper attached below.

Michelle noted that there is not a lot of good data about what happened before people slept rough: questions asked and recorded on CHAIN are imperfect and Last Settled Base data is missing for a sizeable proportion of new rough sleepers, with none collected at all for returning rough sleepers. The HCLIC data doesn't support an understanding of outcomes for single people who are NFA or sleeping rough as this data is available but not published. CHAIN suggests just 29% of new rough sleepers saw a Housing Options service 'in the year prior to first sleeping rough' – which is too open a window to be conclusive about the prevention possibilities linked with Housing Options.

Aura Di Febo gave an overview of the work that has been done with partners on user journey mapping and on qualitatively understanding the common experiences of people prior to sleeping rough. 12 different scenarios were tested, and this provides intelligence about the transition points and some opportunities for intervention. Michelle also highlighted some of the current service interventions and activities underway in support of better preventing rough sleeping, including a planned mystery shopping exercise with ten London LAs which is bespoke to rough sleeping and will test 20 different scenarios per authority.

The group were invited to address the questions on the last slide about what else is available, could be used and needed to improve understanding and reduce flow on to the streets.

David highlighted that there is a lot of useful data within the No Second Night Out services which isn't on CHAIN and could be better used. There is an opportunity there for better join up. Petra agreed there are some quick wins: No Second Night Out provides a good platform for collecting flow data but that does not cover all new rough sleepers and work needs to take place to ensure outreach teams more consistently collect flow data.

Emma stated that the material was interesting, providing clues about where we could focus, but not much on what type of intervention is effective. There is a need to evaluate what works.

Jo Prestidge suggested that more needs to be done around preventing rough sleeping linked to tenancy loss/eviction. Services need to adopt a more trauma-informed approach which means they approach and manage behaviour that may typically lead to eviction differently. There are some good examples across the country – bringing down evictions particularly in supported and social housing should be a goal.

Jemma supported this point. The Royal College of General Practitioners have done a lot of work on trauma-informed care and we need to think very widely about the assets we have available to support people who are struggling, including social prescribing and Making Every Contact Count (MECC). GPs are an important contact point with regard to accessing MH and SM support.

Michelle will take feedback, collect suggested actions and work on developing a prevention action plan to bring back to a future meeting. Partners will be asked to contribute to the actions as appropriate with a view to a prevention working group being established. Emma very happy to support this. David and Petra too.

8) Kerslake event recommendations and next steps

Tamiru Mammo from Bloomberg Associates presented slides on the key recommendations/priorities that were identified during the Kerslake event supported by Bloomberg, St Mungo's and CHI on 31.1.22. It was noted that many in the Core Group were present for what had been a successful discussion. Tamiru explained that the methodology used at the event saw priorities grouped according to both need and feasibility and asked for a volunteer to look at what was produced in the context of applying recommendations to the Life Off The Streets programme plan. Michelle agreed to take on this work, supported by David and Luke from GLA with a view to bringing back suggested inclusions at the next meeting.

Liz McCulloch from St Mungo's explained that the Kerslake Commission was reconvening in March to look at work done in the past year, will publish a new report by September showing the progress made. A national event focused on sharing best practice around prevention is being organised between those local authorities involved in the commission and will take place in March. The event will feed ideas back into this group and into the work of the commission.

9) Data return

Aura presented the headlines from the latest data return showing that the number of rough sleepers in emergency accommodation had jumped significantly (likely as a result of the P&V initiative) and that rough sleeping numbers were down. The data return will be modified next month to align it more completely with the Delta return.

10) Social Impact Bond

Due to a shortage of time, this item was held over to March's meeting where it should have a slot at the start of the meeting to ensure it is not postponed again.

11) AOB

Michelle mentioned that she and Jamie had recently met HM Treasury officials responsible for rough sleeping and homelessness and DLUHC spend to speak about the rough sleeping programme in London. A good meeting and a good opportunity to make the case both for resources well spent and the need for continued investment in prevention. Jemma noted that HM Treasury had failed to continue the funding for the Out of Hospital programme and its benefits should be mentioned if there is a future opportunity.

12) Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday, March 15th 2022 from 3pm-5pm

Outstanding actions

Date Originated	Action Owner	Action	Latest Updates
18.1.22	Michelle	Bilateral between RS Minister and HO Minister	Waiting for response from Ministerial offices
24.2.22	Michelle	Briefing for Housing Directors on using safeguarding panels to make the case for action around vulnerable rough sleepers	Outstanding
24.2.22	Jamie	To support a conversation with Housing Directors about care leavers and the importance of Joint Housing Protocols	Outstanding
24.2.22	Michelle	Get data on how many T1000 clients started rough sleeping aged <26	Data obtained and passed to YP workstream leads. For info: 31 (4%) of the current T1000 cohort are currently aged 25 or under, but 113 (13%) were aged 25 or under when they were first recorded rough sleeping in London.
24.2.22	Michelle David	Complete survey and draft letter for Executive Board showing the quantum of risk around the ending of emergency accommodation placements from the end of March	Waiting for survey results
24.2.22	Michelle David Petra	Resurrect the project on providing high support beds for non UK rough sleepers in hostels/supported housing	Meeting set up to take forward
24.2.22	Michelle	Set up new prevention workstream involving Petra, Jo, David, Emma and develop outline action plan	Meeting set up to take forward
24.2.22	Michelle Tamiru	Look at recommendations from Bloomberg event and ensure they are embedded in LOTS programme plan as appropriate	First meeting has occurred; more work planned
24.2.22	Michelle David Petra	Ensure better join up between the NSNO data on flow and CHAIN and review the data categories around flow	Meeting set up to take forward