

Life Off The Streets Core Group

Minutes of meeting held on 10 October 2022

In attendance

Jamie Carswell (RB Greenwich, Chair), Nicola Forsdyke (DLUHC), Liza Collins (Healthy London Partnership), Will Norman (City of London), David Eastwood (GLA), David Orton (GLA), Debra Levison (GLA), Emma de Zoete (GLA), Rosie Clewlow (LB Camden), David Eastwood (GLA), Caroline O'Brien (DLUHC), Ian Canadine (CHAIN), Paul Davis (LB Lambeth) Jemma Gilbert (Healthy London Partnership), Kathy Mohan (Housing Justice), Liz McCulloch (St Mungo's), Mark Billings (LB Hillingdon), Sarah Crouch (Westminster City Council), James Tompsett (Westminster City Council), Michelle Binfield (London Councils), Amy Withey (London Councils), Rianne Lowe (London Councils), Ben Ridley-Johnson (London Councils), Gill Taylor (LB Haringey), Lorna Brooke (LB Kingston), Tom Preest (DLUHC), Petra Salva (St Mungo's), Ajitha Sajeev (LB Newham), Saskia Pritchard (London Probation), Riad Akbur (LB Tower Hamlets)

Guests

Ian Hamilton (Shelter), Harinder Birring (Shelter), Simon Clifton (Shelter)

Apologies

Juliet Mountford (Crisis), Chris Pelham (City of London), Heather Clarke (Westminster City Council)

1 Welcome and introductions

2 Minutes and actions from previous meeting (28 June 2022)

Minutes approved. On-going actions and updates were circulated. Jamie Carswell noted thanks to all involved in the Women's Census, which was successfully carried out the previous week and noted especially how positive it was that the new Minister for Housing and Rough Sleeping attended one of the census briefings in Westminster and has been made aware of the importance of the work.

3 Mystery Shopping Report and Discussion

Jamie Carswell thanked the 10 local authorities who volunteered to participate in the Mystery Shopping research. Harinder Birring gave a presentation on the findings of the Mystery Shopping exercise that assessed the standard of access and initial assessment offered at the first point of contact to people rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping.

Presentation previously circulated. Conversation/questions followed:

- Petra asked when the shopping occurred. The experience of her services is that things have got worse (ie: housing options services are harder to access) since COVID. Harinder replied that the shopping occurred across June and July 2022.
- David E reported that Streetlink have similar difficulties accessing advice for clients who are rough sleeping. Noted that once past the customer access barriers, the advice is generally very good but accessing advisors has got more

difficult. GLA/No Second Night Out service would be willing to offer training to boroughs as useful and are also keen to participate in the development of the DLUHC sponsored risk tool.

- Lorna stated that Kingston found participating in the exercise very useful. Highlighted things that can be improved upon, which is welcome. Appreciates that their 'contact centre first' approach needs a look to make sure it can work for very vulnerable customers, like rough sleepers.
- Gill reflected on how important the contact with a human and the building of a relationship is for this client group to access and accept support. Haringey have a resource centre which offers in-person support to those sleeping rough or at risk of doing so.
- Mark reflected that Hillingdon's report showed that satisfaction with out of hours contacts (when advisors take phones home) is better than with customer contact centre staff but resource constraints and demand drive LAs into a need to offer this type of triaging system.
- Will asked if the shopping scenarios can be shared with the group. Harinder will do this.
- Michelle reflected on recent Streetlink data that showed that often when LAs are contacted about rough sleepers they are referring people to Streetlink rather than picking up the case. Streetlink can't offer accommodation or a very rapid response and in most cases the person will be presented back to the council days later.
- Tom asked if those present see the suggested risk tool and other recommended actions as useful in the context of prevention rather than tackling rough sleeping. Agreed it is useful for prevention more so – including prevention of repeat rough sleeping.

Action points:

- (i) Report to be circulated to Heads of Housing Options and Housing Directors along with scenarios used.
- (ii) Establishment of a lived experience group to be taken forward to develop understanding further and inform risk tool work.
- (iii) Risk tool work to be taken forward in partnership with a selection of boroughs and with DLUHC.
- (iv) Bi-laterals between Shelter and all boroughs who participated to be offered with a view to taking up suggested improvements where relevant.
- (v) Consideration to be given to training and how this can be offered and most effectively delivered.

4 Prevention: key principles and next steps

Michelle presented summary of outcomes of workshop held in the summer about better preventing rough sleeping. Improving data is key to this and to that end two pieces of work are being carried out, one to make changes to CHAIN to capture better flow information and another to join up data systems across London. She outlined the principles of a prevention strategy and the next steps in relation to this. A strategy will be written to incorporate all of this and brought to a future Core Group.

Will suggested adding the role of partnerships in relation to prevention of rough sleeping.

5 T1000 Update December 2021 – June 2022

Amy Withey provided an update on the T1000 cohort. Noting that significant progress has been made but c.300 of the cohort remain on the streets. Future work was outlined.

Tom asked the group to put their full energy and support behind the work on the T1000 group because accommodating this group is one of the keys to ending rough sleeping.

6 Winter Updates

(a) Severe Weather Emergency Protocol position

David reported that the annual SWEP survey has been sent out. Most of the responses are in from boroughs. The assessed need is 560 SWEP beds with plans in place for 400 LA beds – leaving a shortfall of 160. GLA will be looking at existing funding to provide pan-London beds to fill this gap as far as possible. David suggested that although intention is to provide self-contained accommodation wherever possible, the risk of COVID may need to be balanced against risk of people sleeping outside in dangerously cold weather if we have a shortfall of spaces. Work to increase available spaces is on-going.

(b) GLA position paper on shared observational spaces

Emma informed that the risks remained of using communal accommodation. During SWEP, communal accommodation can be used with appropriate mitigation, where no viable alternative.

Tom noted that responses to apply for funding to transform shelter provision in London had been lower than in other regions. Jim mentioned that transformation is a challenge for some winter shelter providers.

Paper and position noted by the group.

(c) Escalation process in event of public health emergency this winter

Sarah Crouch presented a paper setting out the steps that will be taken to bring partners together should the level of risk increase this winter in relation to COVID or flu and there is a need to change position on sharing and/or activate some form of request to accommodate vulnerable rough sleepers. Process approved by group.

Jamie noted that if escalation meant LAs had to stand up a significant increase in self-contained accommodation there would be financial implications and the cost will be greater than in 2020 and 2021 due to hotel prices having risen. Tom suggested that in this scenario then there should be an ask made of central government for funding. Ben to add to risk register.

Petra suggested that there is a need not just to wait and see but to do some active scenario planning, assuming the worst and we do need to respond. David agreed to bring a scenario planning group together as soon as possible.

7 AOB

Michelle presented data on numbers and source of Home Office decision escalation cases. Escalation referrals are still being made and leading to positive outcomes for clients – in some cases clients who have been waiting a long time – but some councils are not making referrals. This is being picked up with individual boroughs/services.

Michelle also presented latest Delta data on rough sleeping and latest LC data return outputs. There are still a considerable number of people with limited or uncertain entitlement to benefits within the figures.

Action time to be allocated to a more detailed consideration of data and what it tells us about current position in London in a future meeting.

8. Date of next meeting

Next Core Group meeting 13 December 2022 – 3-5pm – likely to be in person and followed by Xmas drinks.

A workshop focused on hostels is being planned for the morning of 17 November. Likely to be at CHI venue in Petty France.

Outstanding actions from previous meetings

Date Originated	Action Owner	Action	Latest Updates
28.6.22	LC/HLP	Follow up on social care asks with sub-regional DASS groupings	Meetings occurred with North Central and South East sub-regions. North West sub-region is scheduled for mid-October. Awaiting dates for South West and North West sub-regions.
28.6.22	GLA	Position statement on shared observational spaces	On agenda for this meeting.
28.6.22	LC/GLA	Funding for data system project manager	Has been secured from GLA for year one. In discussions with DLUHC about contribution to the costs of system build.
28.6.22	David Eastwood/ Pete Smith	New severe weather protocol for London relating to hot weather	Has been drafted and is being consulted on
10.05.22	Gareth Williams	Gareth to work with HLP on updating the directory and adding in the RS leads contact details	This was paused as Gareth left the organisation. Will be picked up by new Policy Officer who started 3.10.22.
10.05.22	David, Petra	David and Petra to meet to discuss reasons for low level of Pan London Substance Abuse referrals.	Ongoing work to promote usage. Lead Commissioner has met RS leads and Michelle has agreed to join steering group and do some focused work on promotion with LAs.
10.5.22	GLA, LC and sub-group	Expand inputting agencies into CHAIN to better capture women rough sleepers	Ongoing. Linked to women's census work which is occurring w/c 3 rd October

24.2.22	Michelle David, Petra	Resurrect the project on providing high support beds for non UK rough sleepers in hostels/supported housing	New Project Manager will take this forward. Working with T1000 manager and GLA.
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	Completed. New flow form introduced in October. Data capture around last accommodation and last settled base also extended to those returning to rough sleeping after a six month break.