Life Off the Streets Core Group

Minutes of meeting held on 13 December 2022

In attendance
Debra Levison - Chair (GLA), Ben Ridley-Johnson (London Councils), Ajitha Sajeev (LB Newham), Amy Withey (London Councils), Rianne Lowe (London Councils), Michelle Binfield (London Councils), Candida Thompson (LB Newham), Christian MacNamara (GLA) Heather Clarke (Westminster City Council), Liza Collins (Healthy London Partnership), David Eastwood (GLA), David Orton (GLA), Eleanor Greenhalgh (Solace Women's Aid), Emma de Zoete (GLA), Ffion Eirug (Streetlink), Jemma Gilbert (Healthy London Partnership), Gill Taylor (LB Haringey), Jamie Carswell (RB Greenwich), Jeremy White (Homeless Link) , Josie Garrett (GLA), Juliet Mountford (Crisis), Kathy Mohan (Housing Justice), Liz McCulloch (St Mungo's), Lucy Campbell (SHP), Luke Oates (GLA), Mark Billings (LB Hillingdon), Paul Davis (LB Lambeth), Chris Pelham (City of London), Peter Boyd-Piercy (Solace Women's Aid), Peter Smith (Homeless Link), Riad Akbur (LB Tower Hamlets), Tom Preest (DLUHC).

Apologies
Petra Salva (St Mungo's), Karen Tipping (London Probation)

1   Welcome and introductions

2   Minutes and actions from previous meeting (10 Oct 2022)
Minutes approved. On-going actions and updates were circulated.

3   Draft Prevention Strategy
Jamie Carswell introduced the Life Off the Streets draft Prevention Strategy and Ben Ridley-Johnson presented the key principles, recommendations, and next steps for the strategy. See circulated paper.

There was a constructive discussion afterwards, including incorporating learning from the No First Night Out project, thinking how we deal with the upstream issues of people coming to boroughs, e.g., Westminster, from outside London and how the success of the work the strategy sets out would be measured in the future. Support was offered with taking forward specific parts of the strategy by several attendees, for example, Crisis are currently involved in several Critical Time Interventions which could be relevant to prevention agenda in London.

Action points:

- Prevention strategy approved
- Follow up meeting on detail of reforming how CHAIN verification is used to avoid it becoming a barrier to services or a driver for people to sleep rough
- Present Prevention Strategy paper to Exec Board

4   Streetlink Referrals
Ffion Eirug and Christian MacNamara informed the group that the service has experienced an increase in the number of self-referrals of households in priority need including families and adults and young people under the age of 18 with many stating

that they have been told to contact the service by LAs. Last quarter 64 clients were referred to Streetlink who were deemed likely to be in priority need. Agreed that these groups should not have been referred to Streetlink by LAs. It seems there is a lack of knowledge of the purpose of the service that drives these inappropriate referrals. Risk of delayed service to families.

Ffion explained that data on local authority inappropriate referrals shows that most come from initial local authority contact teams and often out of hours. Streetlink London have had positive bilateral conversations with individual boroughs using this information and are talking to LAs about Streetlink's purpose.

Christian added that the purpose of the work that has been going on for a year is to reduce these more inappropriate referrals and prevent more people from rough sleeping.

Kathy Mohan stated that inability of people in some areas to get any advice or assistance locally in housing options is the driver of these issues – people are desperate for a workaround.

Mark Billings asked for monthly Streetlink data to be shared with him/boroughs – he has used data previously to make sure practice in Hillingdon is as it should be. Peter Smith said that it should be possible to do this.

Juliet Mountford asked what had been successful in improving outcomes when approaching councils about this. Ffion reported that taking specific data (case level) has been helpful.

Jamie welcomed work and was heartened by the spirit of improvement in which this feedback was received by boroughs. He set out the context in terms of the changing service models of local authority services during and after the pandemic. Having near immediate feedback from Streetlink would be helpful in this regard.

Action point:
Peter Smith (Streetlink) to take forward ask for data on contact by borough level to be shared regularly.

5 Flow of People Rough Sleeping

Luke Oates presented the CHAIN data for the second quarter of 2022, which showed a 24% increase on the comparable quarter last year. Across the year the number of people rough sleeping has increased by 1,000 compared to last year. The key driver of this is increased flow of new people rough sleeping which is up by 35%. The monthly totals show that August and September 2022 were the highest for these months going back to 2015/16. The good news is that the numbers appear to be plateauing somewhat. The projected number of people rough sleeping recorded on CHAIN for 2022/23 is predicted to be around 10,000. Michelle Binfield added that living on the street numbers have not increased at the same rate – the conversion rate remains at around 3% (with some exceptions) but this performance won't hold if flow continues to climb.

6 Women's Census Update

Lucy Campbell provided an update on the completion of the Women's Census survey, the key findings and asks. The Women's Census group worked with researchers,

providers and LC/GLA to devise a new methodology for counting women who were rough sleeping. 184 survey responses were received, 154 responses included in the final report. Findings presented include Women's rough sleeping is often transient and intermittent. 44.8% had slept rough regularly (more than 30 nights was the most common response). These respondents also accessed fewer services. The current rough sleeping definition does not work for women rough sleeping. 79% more women were seen in the census than in the snapshot count in 2021. 59% of boroughs recorded more in the census than in the 2021 street count snapshot. The census figures were also higher than CHAIN reporting of women – with some boroughs seeing more women counted in the census week than in the whole of the previous quarter.

Lucy Campbell highlighted the need to use this methodology more often to demonstrate shifts and trends over time.

More work is required to develop a definition of rough sleeping which works better for women.

Verification guidelines should be changed.

There are six key asks.
1. Repeat census annually in London and nationally – ask for DLUHC to resource Adjust verification practices to ensure equal access to rough sleeping provision for women – working to support women who are not necessarily chain verified, recording this activity using a 'prevention record' to support improved data collection
2. Pilot recording access to CHAIN for agencies more likely to encounter women rough sleeping, improving women's access to services and data
3. Outreach practices in London to change to enable teams to find and work with more women.
4. Minor modifications to change to better record women's experiences, including a way of recording couples on CHAIN and to widen the pool who can input onto chain, starting with a pilot
5. Adjust the definition of rough sleeping to better include ways in which women can rough sleep – a long-term aim.
6. Increase the number of women's services in London including by ensuring boroughs have access to safe emergency spaces for women who are rough sleeping and need to come inside urgently, ensuring every borough has access to gender-informed hostel/ supported housing accommodation for women who are sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough, including women's services for consideration within SHAP.

Debra and Michelle complimented the high quality and well-considered research, recommendations and asks. Michelle suggested that we should press on with the key asks, especially around working with people who are not officially defined as verified rough sleeping and asked whether there were any asks that would be difficult to land.

David welcomed the report and commented that the changes to verification will need to be carefully considered and designed to ensure the right people get services. The request around CHAIN couples categories while a good one will need to be operationalised carefully.

Jamie Carswell welcomed the report's recommendations.

Tom Preest welcomed the quality of the work. He suggested if some asks need finessing, especially around verification, ensuring that this was in line with other thinking about prevention as mentioned earlier. Suggested he can make ask of Minister for the funding of the census on an annual basis. Suggested that funding could go towards resolution of rough sleeping as well as collection of data. On the definition of rough sleeping, Tom said it would be difficult to change this currently, but it is worth asking this at this time.

Debra suggested that work is done on asks and an item agenda is brought back for next meeting so that we can take them forward.

Action points:
Asks of report to be developed, fully itemised and brought to Exec Board

7   RSAP
Debra suggested that this item would be postponed.

8   Winter Planning
Tom Preest spoke on Crisis at Christmas and updated that beds at Good Hotel in Newham will run from 19th December to end of January with outreach referrals accounting for most of placements. This is very positive and game-changing in terms of rough sleeping work – enabling some of the hardest to reach rough sleepers to have valuable time in a setting they appreciate while efforts are made to end their rough sleeping. He thanked all for hard work during SWEP. He asked that outreach teams are focused on referrals are prioritised for those least likely to access mainstream RSI funded services to gain the maximum benefit.

Michelle added that immigration advice services are working in Crisis services across the period.

In terms of SWEP Michelle and David noted we are six days into the current period. It is very difficult to procure accommodation in London currently, meaning that local procurement and GLA pan-London provision is very stretched. The impact of increasing rough sleeping numbers, prolonged severe weather and Home Office procurement of bed spaces has had a significant impact on local authorities' abilities this winter. We have moved to a 'resilience rest centre' model in some places in reaction to these challenges. LAs have around 700 people in SWEP beds across the capital.

David added that all have worked above and beyond this year and thanked all involved for flexibility. He thanked Glassdoor for their input. There are currently over 100 in pan-London provision, significantly more than last year.

Michelle added that we needed to plan for the next period of SWEP immediately after this one finishes. It is clear that the usual approach of procuring hotels or using TA is not viable.

Emma de Zoete noted that ADPH Chairs have sent out a position to all Public Health Directors (as agreed by the Core Group) in favour of bringing people in to shared accommodation during severe weather, despite COVID risks as the 'least worst' option. The guidance contains mitigation advice and a request to continue to accommodate very

vulnerable rough sleepers in s/c accommodation. It would be helpful to be involved in planning for future SWEP periods and discussing the longer-term future plans.

Jemma Gilbert added that reports from A&E services of increased numbers of people bedding down in emergency departments. The Warm Places map was helpful to divert people to places they could stay warm in

Debra noted the fantastic way that colleagues across the sector had worked together.

Action points:
Meeting including Michelle, David, Tom to plan for next period of SWEP
Meeting in new year including the above and Emma de Zoete to discuss longer-term plans for SWEP.

9   AOB

Jamie thanked Debra on her last Chairing of meeting for all her work, commitment and efforts that she over many years, personally and on behalf of the whole group.

Debra is taking early retirement from the GLA. David Eastwood will be moving into her role on an interim basis and taking over as GLA Co-Chair of the group.

8. Date of next meeting
Tuesday 21 February 2023, 15:00 – 17:00. Jamie Carswell to Chair.

Outstanding actions from previous meetings

Date Originated	Action Owner	Action
13.12.22	Solace Women's Aid, SHP	Asks of Women's Census report to be developed, fully itemised and brought to Exec Board
13.12.22	GLA, LC	Meeting including Michelle, David, Tom to plan for next period of SWEP Meeting in new year including the above and Emma de Zoete to discuss longer-term plans for SWEP.
13.12.22	GLA	Bring item on RSAP to next Core Meeting
13.12.22	LC	Prevention Strategy: Follow up meeting on detail of reforming how CHAIN verification is used to avoid it becoming a barrier to services or a driver for people to sleep rough. Present Prevention Strategy paper to Exec Board
13.12.22	Peter Smith	Peter to take forward ask for data on contact to Streetlink by borough level to be shared regularly.

28.6.22	LC/HLP	Follow up on social care asks with sub-regional DASS groupings
28.6.22	LC/GLA	Funding for data system project manager
28.6.22	David Eastwood/ Pete Smith	New severe weather protocol for London relating to hot weather
10.05.22	David, Petra	David and Petra to meet to discuss reasons for low level of Pan London Substance Abuse referrals.
10.5.22	GLA, LC and sub-group	Expand inputting agencies into CHAIN to better capture women rough sleepers
24.2.22	Michelle David, Petra	Resurrect the project on providing high support beds for non-UK rough sleepers in hostels/supported housing