

Life Off The Streets Executive Board

Thursday, 8th September 2022

Minutes

In attendance (members)

London Councils Deputy Chair (Housing and Planning)/Labour Group representative – Cllr Darren Rodwell (chairing)

Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development – Tom Copley

Senior Advisor to the Mayor (Health Policy) – Dr Tom Coffey

GLA, Greater London Authority – Natalie Daniels, David Eastwood

LC, London Councils – Eloise Shepherd, Sam Ashton, Michelle Binfield (minutes)

DLUHC, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities – Penny Hobman, Tom Preest

HMPPS, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service – Angela Gordon

MoJ, Ministry of Justice – Paul Ruff

TR, Thames Reach – Bill Tidnam

HD, London Housing Directors' Group – Jamie Carswell

Homeless Link – Rick Henderson

Liberal Democrat Group representative – Cllr Jayne McCoy

Conservative Group representative – Mayor Jason Perry

ADPH London – Rachel Flowers

In attendance (guests)

Bridget Ackeifi and Tamiru Mammo from Bloomberg Associates

Apologies

GLA, Greater London Authority – Debra Levison

MoJ, Ministry of Justice – Matt Grey

ADASS, ADASS London branch – Beverley Tarka

HMPPS, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service – Kilvinder Vigurs

St Mungo's – Rebecca Sycamore

1) Welcome and Introductions

Darren Rodwell (DR) welcomed all to the meeting and noted the resignation of Eddie Hughes MP from his role as Minister for Housing and Rough Sleeping that morning. Meeting and co-Chairs offered sincere gratitude to Eddie for his leadership and commitment and particularly for getting the rough sleeping strategy published prior to his departure. Decision taken to send a letter of thanks to Eddie from the board.

2) Minutes and Matters Arising (24 May 2022 meeting)

All agreed that the minutes presented for the last meeting were a true and accurate record.

Matters arising noted as follows:

- Cost of living data dashboard is under development: collaboration between London Councils, GLA, London local authorities (pilot areas) and the London Office of Technology and Innovation (LOTI)
- Jobs Fair for the Homelessness Sector: happening at City Hall on 27th September. A collaboration between Homeless Link, London Councils, GLA, Bloomberg Associates and various homelessness charities
- Position paper on shared winter shelters: being developed by Directors of Public Health and GLA and will be considered by Life Off the Streets core group
- Updated programme plan/risk register circulated – feedback/questions to Michelle Binfield (MB)

3) Ending Rough Sleeping for Good: a new strategy

Penny Hobman (PH) from DLUHC presented on the new strategy

(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1102408/20220903_Ending_rough_sleeping_for_good.pdf)

and associated activities noting that it has been published less than a week earlier as a legacy of the outgoing Minister's work and in the hope it would act as a blueprint for the new administration. PH noted that the strategy sets out:

- A £2b funding commitment between now and March 2025 including but not limited to the RSI22-25 funding that has already gone to boroughs and the GLA, the completion of the 6,000 homes targeted to be provided under RSAP, a new programme to develop supported housing for those with complex needs and young people (SHAP), a continuation of the Housing First schemes piloted previously and so on
- A prevention first approach, acknowledging that to end rough sleeping means not just a focus on who is living on the streets but on preventing new and returning rough sleeping
- A new definition and a new set of indicators – noting that London is an Early Adopter and can help make sure the indicators are working
- Extensive cross-governmental working including with (i) health/ICSs and the new duty to co-operate, (ii) MoJ around the new CAS3 service and the extension of AFEO schemes, (iii) Home Office around many issues but principally the relaunch of a new Rough Sleeper Support Service

PH further noted that the launch of the strategy means that there is no longer an embargo on local authorities around announcing/publicising RSI22-25 schemes/funding.

DR invited questions.

Dr Tom Coffey (TCof) noted the strategy refers to a commitment that no-one should be discharged to the streets. He asked PH to confirm whether this included people discharged from A&E departments and also whether there was any specific funding for this, especially with regard to social care.

PH noted the Out of Hospital pilots that are operating jointly and the intention to share and learn from best practice – already seeing improved outcomes in some areas. Happy to get more specific feedback from health colleagues on the detail of the programmes and the new duty and how it will operate.

Rachel Flowers (RF) welcomed the strategy and the systematic approach to prevention set out within it noting that the cost of living crisis was an issue and threat to making real progress and, in London in particular, the number of asylum seekers accommodated and the difficulties around dispersal are a real risk. Thinking seems siloed sometimes and we need to join our thoughts on these difficult issues. DR noted that the pressure for boroughs who are perceived to have more affordable accommodation is intense and there is a risk of wider societal problems if dispersal doesn't work well.

PH noted that the Home Office are currently reviewing and reforming their approach to dispersal and DLUHC are involved, along with LAs and Strategic Migration Partnerships. DLUHC are consistently making the point that housing cost pressures differ across the country.

Jamie Carswell (JC) stated how positive it was to see the strategy released and to see how the conversations around making rough sleeping rare, brief and non-recurrent were landed so well within the document. The focus on prevention is especially welcome, though it is important for us all to acknowledge that this is the area where we have the least data and the most to learn about what works. With regard to funding, JC stated that for the commitment to prevent rough sleeping to be meaningful, LAs need sufficient funding and the consultation on a review of the Homelessness Prevention Grant distribution formula is a real risk to London in this regard. DR echoed this and made the point that, if London is not able to give people the support they need in this area, there may be displacement to other areas.

PH noted that the consultation has brought out some of these points very clearly and these views will be reflected in the shaping of the distribution formula.

David Eastwood (DE) welcomed the moving of the Rough Sleeper Support Service from within the Home Office enforcement division and into customer services. Important for people's confidence in using what could be a very valuable service offer.

4) Prevention: feedback from Core Group

Jamie Carswell (JC) presented on outcomes and recommendations from a recent multi-agency workshop hosted by the Life Off the Streets core group focused on what more we can do to prevent rough sleeping in London. The intention is to use the feedback/outcomes from the workshop to develop a prevention strategy/plan. Noted that the workshop focused only on activities that would improve outcomes and reduce rough sleeping in the period between now and 2024 and involved a mix of homelessness providers, health colleagues, Probation, local authority housing, rough sleeping and public health leads, GLA, DLUHC and the Centre for Homelessness Impact.

JC explained the importance of prevention:

- Spending even a single night on the streets is demeaning and dangerous.
- In London, in 2021-2022, there were 5,091 people recorded as new to rough sleeping. Though lower than during the pandemic years, over 5,000 people new to rough sleeping a year has been the norm since 2014.
- A lot of work/resources goes into making sure that a large proportion of those new to rough sleeping are quickly helped off the streets but, despite, this a quarter go on to be seen rough sleeping multiple times, with a significant minority ending up living on the streets.
- Focusing on prevention will mean collecting better data, doing more to identify those at risk of rough sleeping and asking ourselves more of the right questions about what went wrong for people.
- New DLUHC indicator set will mean local areas will now be asked to report on the number of people new to rough sleeping each month and the number of those rough sleeping after leaving an institution.

JC feedback that the workshop focused on three particular areas of discussion around which recommendations were made:

- What more LAs can do to prevent rough sleeping
- Whether the practice of verification hinders efforts to prevent rough sleeping by creating a reason for people to sleep rough
- What more can be done by local authorities and partners to prevent rough sleeping at the point people leave institutions

JC reported that the Core Group is meeting in October and will develop the workshop recommendations (as per slide set) into a prevention plan/strategy for action over coming months.

DR asked that the work include a focus on the impact of the cost of living pressures given that this is likely to increase debt/arrears and potentially lead to more homelessness.

Jayne McCoy (JM) asked about the accessibility of support for people not yet rough sleeping to avoid tenancy loss/breakdown. The intervention needs to come at an early enough point to be truly preventative and the support needs to also include joined up working around things like poor mental health. JM noted that the Police often have information about who is struggling before councils do and asked if we need to consider Police representation within the programme to make most use of this.

RF also talked about the cost of living crisis and taking every opportunity we can to offer support. Local authorities need to coalesce around a set of core principles on what prevention means and where support can best be provided.

DE suggested that CHAIN figures for quarter 2 of this year confirm the upward trend in new rough sleepers seen on the streets that started in quarter 1 stating that we need to consider what offer we can make around debt/arrears in particular.

TCof highlighted the importance of doing work at the point of transition from prison – prisoners used to be given tents on release and we have to do better than that. Paul Ruff (PR) explained about the new community accommodation tier 3 service (CAS3) likely to be operating in London by January which sees every homeless sentenced prisoner given up to 84 days of accommodation on release, so they have time to sort out benefits, health access and accommodation ideally.

JC said that consistency of relationship between DASSs and Housing Directors is important and a work in progress. He also noted that the Police are very stretched on the ground and enjoy operational links with boroughs on rough sleeping but their strategic role in rough sleeping has not yet been considered and he will take this forward at JM's suggestion.

5) Data development work on rough sleeping

a) CHAIN developments and new DLUHC indicators

DE presented information on the 5 new indicators which DLUHC are introducing in Early Adopter areas (including London) from October and highlighted the changes that will be made to CHAIN to support reporting of these indicators. LAs and outreach teams will be offered training as needed. 3 more indicators are in development for introduction in 2023.

JM enquired whether there is an overlap between B3 and NR1 indicators. DE explained that the groups are all distinct (made clearer in the detailed technical glossary underpinning the work) and that not all groups of people rough sleeping are intended to be captured within the indicator set.

b) New data warehouse proposition

JC introduced Tamiru Mammo (TM) from Bloomberg Associates (live from New York at a very early hour!) attending to take the members of the Executive Board through the work leading to the development of a rough sleeping data warehouse for London.

TM presented on the plans to link three major datasets (CHAIN, Inform and HCLIC) into a single data warehouse in order to create a better understanding of why people sleep rough, what opportunities exist to prevent it and what more we can do to prevent people returning to rough sleeping after losing accommodation when it is provided. Details in the circulated slide set.

The overall intention is to improve understanding, reduce duplication, support better/easier reporting for LAs and improve performance monitoring.

JC highlighted that, although this type of pan-London data sharing has happened previously, there may be difficulties securing the buy-in of all partners to share data for various reasons.

DR and TC indicated their support as co-chairs of the Executive Board and expressed a willingness to help overcome any blockages as the project goes forward.

PH stated that the developments were exciting and agreed to seek support within DLUHC and champion with the new Minister. Noted that it is a long term proposition and we have to be prepared for it to take time. Suggested Bloomberg/LOTI have a conversation with someone who worked on the Troubled Families project as the data linkages there were complex.

Bill Tidnam (BT) and DR both asked what the rationale was around the choice of pilot areas. Michelle Binfield (MB) explained that it was partly willingness, partly the desire to have partners who were distinct in rough sleeping terms and partly related to the presence of a lot of hostels (to test the Inform linkages).

Natalie Daniels (ND) highlighted the importance of learning from other areas that may have tried to do this, even if that requires an international perspective. TM feedback on the experiences that Bloomberg have in working internationally and reported that some of the learning from existing pan-London projects (not relating to RS) is being brought by the London Office of Technology and innovation.

DE pointed out that past attempts to create a minimum hostels dataset failed to lack of buy-in from homelessness providers – need to make sure that support is available this time around. Valuable insights can be gained but it is likely to require long term support as a project.

DR highlighted the work that his own borough has done to link datasets and improve understanding and identification of needs.

6) AOB

DR asked that work be undertaken to maintain a watching brief around the impact of the cost of living crisis on rough sleeping and wider homelessness with information being brought back to the Executive Board as appropriate.

7) Date of next meeting:

Weds, 7th December 2022 from 3-5pm – Tom Copley chairing.