

# Life Off The Streets Executive Board

**Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> May, 14:00-15:30**

## **Minutes**

### **In attendance**

*Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development – Tom Copley (chairing)*

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

*GLA, Greater London Authority – David Eastwood, Emma De Zoete*

*LC, London Councils – Eloise Shepherd, Michelle Binfield, Gareth Williams (minutes)*

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

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

*HH, Homeless Health – Angela McNab, Caroline Shulman, Jemma Gilbert*

*SM, St Mungo's – Petra Salva*

*TR, Thames Reach – Bill Tidnam*

*Crisis – Matthew Downie*

*HD, London Housing Directors' Group – Jamie Carswell*

*Homeless Link – Fiona Colley*

*Liberal Democrat Group representative – Cllr Jayne McCoy*

*ADPH London – Rachel Flowers*

### **In attendance for part of the meeting**

*Eddie Hughes MP, Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing*

### **Apologies**

*Conservative Group representative – Cllr Colin Smith*

*GLA, Greater London Authority – Debra Levison*

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

*HMPPS, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service – Matt Grey*

*ADASS London group representative – Beverley Tarka*

### **Item 1) Welcome and Introductions**

Tom Copley, as Chair, noted the tragic and untimely passing of our respected colleague Steve Douglas. It was agreed by all that his great work will be remembered, and our sympathies are with his family and loved ones.

### **Item 2) How London will make rough sleeping rare, brief and non-current: a discussion with Eddie Hughes MP, Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing**

Tom Copley welcomed minister Eddie Hughes to the meeting and thanked the government for the recent RSI funding settlement over the 2022-25 period. He noted that the joined-up thinking and efforts during the pandemic were a welcome lesson in terms of the way forward. The current proposed Rental Reform Bill in the Queen's Speech, and progress towards abolishing Section 21 is also welcome.

Eddie Hughes began by thanking all present for their incredible work during the pandemic. He stated the pandemic provided the opportunity to engage rough sleepers who would otherwise have not chosen to engage with local services.

Eddie noted that he continues to work to increase and improve cross-departmental coordination and conversations around rough sleeping. He hopes that the RSI funding will allow LAs to undertake greater planning over a longer period than previously.

Eddie outlined the planned work on a new strategy and a new set of rough sleeping indicators and success measures and suggested that Michael Gove – as an experienced and confident Secretary of State – is eager to push forward greater data sharing to properly understand interventions. Eddie also thanked the London partnership for its work as an Early Adopter in this space.

Eddie stated that he was glad for the joint work taking place with the Home Office but felt more could be done. A future meeting with the relevant Home Office minister is being planned.

The programme presented to the Minister some of the key challenges and progress at a London level focused in the three areas that match the department's strategy consultation:

#### Prevention - Jamie Carswell

Prevention is the key issue to get right; if done so it can prevent hardship for individuals, change lives and save public money.

The current work with the new indicator set (prevent, make rare, make brief and non-recurrent) is positive in this regard as it provides a powerful reason to focus more on prevention. However, we need to build the data needed to support prevention – both to prevent new and recurring rough sleeping. There is also a need to take best practice from something like the development of CAS3 and the focus London Probation have given to improving their use of Duty to Refer and apply this at other transition points that can lead to rough sleeping (such as care system, hospitals, asylum support/TA placements ending, etc). Local Authorities need to be at the heart of a system of prevention. However, only around a third of new rough sleepers reported having contact with LA Housing Options prior to sleeping rough, which suggests that more needs to be done to build confidence in LA prevention services and that 'Duty to Refer' is not fully working. Why this is the case needs to be investigated. Local Authorities do not always prioritise this issue as much as they should. One symptom of this problem is various institutions pointing to each other as responsible for homelessness; there needs to be a whole system view of the issue.

Further support from central government is needed, for example with support on benefits and debt and work on dealing with the underlying factors of tenancy loss (ie: better mental health and substance misuse support).

Jamie noted that the Minister's comments regarding data are ones that the Life Off the Streets group agrees with. Jamie also noted that the current state of the conversation across London is the most collaborative it has ever been, and this is hugely positive.

#### Presentation - Complex Needs - Jemma Gilbert, Angela McNab and Rachel Flowers

Those with complex needs who are rough sleeping have a far lower average life expectancy, far more fragile health and have far more frequent interactions with health services. There needs to be joined up work with mental health and substance misuse alongside health and

housing. This cohort also need to come to the attention of health services far faster than they are at present.

There is now a clear vision of what “good” looks like, following the new NICE guidance. Learning is from data collection and lived experiences, and there are a range of service models for each stage of the care pathway. There is a clear need for close working with social care, and to maximise all contacts for health interventions and prevention.

There continue to be clear gaps, however. Prevention is necessary to stop a new flow of people; we need to align the prevention incentives across the activity of the relevant central government departments to prevent siloed thinking and work. It was strongly advised that verification on CHAIN be reconsidered, as it is a huge barrier especially for vulnerable women. More joined-up data sets would allow far greater visibility in all parts of the system of those vulnerable to homelessness and/or those who would benefit from a health intervention. There needs to be national incentives to encourage cross-borough working, especially for those cohorts with the most specialist needs. Currently, there are disincentives to this. The different funding pots need to be aligned to the mainstream NHS priorities. Rachel Flowers stated that complex needs are preventable if they are dealt with early, potentially preventing the needs even developing. There needs to be a move towards the general winter pressures, such as vaccination, and would welcome the government reinforcing that there should be no return to communal sleeping. Finally, there are huge safeguarding issues that need to be considered for young men, and women in their 30s and 40s.

#### Presentation - Restricted Eligibility- Michelle Binfield

This is a recurring theme within the LOTS programme and will be explored further with Eddie and Home Office minister Kevin Foster in a few weeks in the scheduled joint meeting.

There has been a positive working relationship with the Home Office for the last 6-9 months, where there have been many good outcomes from escalating the cases of rough sleepers. The building and maintaining of trust with the immigration advice sector is especially important, since this sector has the expertise and experience that we need to be successful. We are happy with the review of the Rough Sleeper Support Service and will continue to work positively with the HO and DLUHC regarding the proposed changes.

The challenges faced by those with restricted eligibility is not merely an immigration issue, as even where there are successful immigration outcomes, there are issues with accessing benefits. There needs to be the same escalation route as there is with the HO, and to deal with delays around updating the Police National Computer, where this holds up decision-making.

The RSI funding for sub-regional immigration advice services in London is critical to success in ending RS for those who have restricted or uncertain entitlements, allowing all rough sleepers to access this support as needed. ‘Everyone In’ showed that immigration outcomes are easier to achieve with clients who are in accommodation. Therefore, local authorities need to feel more confident in using their existing powers to house individuals, although this does pose funding challenges.

After the presentations, a short discussion followed. Councillor Darren Rodwell raised concerns about the cost of living crisis and the impact it may have on homelessness and rough

sleeping, asking that central and local government, and the NHS, come together before the autumn to create a shield ahead of that time.

Eddie stated that he welcomed thoughts about how to create a data dashboard to identify and articulate to HMT what the greatest risks and pressures will be in relation to homelessness.

Councillor Rodwell stated that Local Authorities have a lot of this information already and could pinpoint things such as food poverty. Rachel Flowers noted the strains in London due to housing around 50% of the countries asylum seekers, as well as the end of the Ukraine sponsorship scheme.

Fiona Colley, on behalf of Homeless Link, stated that making a success of the review of the Rough Sleeping Support Services was critical, and on the question of trust, it may be better located within DLUHC than HO. Restricted eligibility leads to rough sleeping, so new approaches are needed in the community upstream to provide advice to prevent that rough sleeping.

Eddie responded that he was pushing the HO to work more quickly to ensure those who status has been regularised can access their benefits. A huge factor in persuading others about the value of prevention is its significant return on investment. That needs to be shown financially. If the HO can act more quickly or keeping people off the streets saves huge money for the NHS in the long-run, these are key pieces of evidence. He also agreed that building trust to encourage people to engage is vital to processing these immigration cases.

Jamie Carswell noted that the highest risk of rough sleeping will likely be private sector evictions and family breakdown, rather than social renting arrears (in HA and LA accommodation). Jemma Gilbert noted social prescribing work in boroughs is increasingly tilting towards the cost of living crisis, due to patients increasingly struggling to afford prescriptions and are struggling with anxiety.

Councillor Jayne McCoy suggested introducing a policy check across all departments, like Equality and Diversity policy checks, to ensure that a policy does not adversely affect housing and homelessness.

Eddie noted that he had good relations with HO, DWP and DHSC. He regularly speaks to other ministers whose responsibilities overlap with Rough Sleeping. His aim going forward will be to ensure that these relations remain embedded after any reshuffles in the future.

The minister then asked what the biggest change that would enable prevention would be. Bill Tidnam stated that CAS3 was welcome, but it was important to recognise that street homelessness was more closely linked to remand and short sentences. Prevention is about finding people at the right time and intervening at the right time. Two groups should be targeted in the short-term, those who interact with a lot of services without those individual services realising and those who interact with no services.

Angela McNab also commented that it would be hugely beneficial to routinely ask those with mental health and/or substance misuse issues about their housing status and positively link them with support to prevent their housing breaking down.

### **Item 3) Minutes and Matters Arising (February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022)**

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

David Eastwood noted the third Matter Arising being the Core Indicators work and offered an update. There have been several meetings so far for London as an Early Adopter with work now focusing on definitions and ease of collation of data. There is a meeting with CHI on the 30<sup>th</sup> to go through the final core indicators with all London boroughs. There is also a national meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> June with Eddie to formally promote the core indicators to a wider audience. A detailed report will be given at a future meeting regarding that launch.

Councillor Jayne McCoy stated the breakdown of data will better show where people's rough sleeping originated for prevention purposes (e.g. Section 21, Mental Health, anti-social behaviour, etc). David Eastwood agreed and was keen to extend items around CHAIN to work out where people have come from. The issue would be how far to go back to ask when someone was on the streets (2 weeks, 1 week, etc) and the need to match up the data with HCLIC and other hospital data. It could be possible to start small and grow from there.

Eddie Hughes was thanked for his time and contribution and left the meeting.

### **Item 4) Update from the Homeless Health Workstream**

Angela McNab, Caroline Shulman, Rachel Flowers and Jemma Gilbert provided an update on this workstream. Please see the attached slides.

Jamie noted Eddie Hughes query regarding the biggest area for prevention. He suggested that this could be something from within the health presentation – more routinely asking those with mental health and substance abuse needs about their housing situation.

Penny Hobman thanked the health colleagues for the presentation and for its useful data. Penny wanted to follow up the presentation with a conversation with DHSC and the ICS system to find a health answer to the people discussed in the presentation. Angela responded to Penny that every ICP needs to be asked to provide a health inclusion plan, and specifically refer to the homeless as part of that plan.

Fiona Colley stated that Homeless Link will soon be publishing a research report pulling together the findings of Homeless Health Needs Audits across 31 areas over the last 6 years. Homeless Link would be very happy to discuss this report with the Homeless Health group.

Rachel Flowers suggested that safeguarding issues apply to all those rough sleeping.

Bill Tidnam stated that the actual issue here is not health interventions, but about identifying people at risk and having something to offer them at that point which prevents them sleeping rough. Tom Preest requested that this point be discussed at a future meeting. Jemma broadly agreed with this point but also explained that the NHS has short term recovery challenges as well.

Caroline Shulman stated that the problem is that there must be support available for people with a lower level of need. Currently, people with lower levels of need find it very difficult to get any sort of support from their local authority as they are not considered a priority.

Emma De Zoete explained that working out what questions the health system can ask about a person's housing and how it can be recorded and reported is a key task. The codes to record housing status already exist in hospital and primary care datasets but are currently not used.

Richard Chapman asked regarding housing, care and complex needs whether there are currently the right accountabilities at the local level. Is the ICP model the correct solution or is there someone else locally who needs to be responsible? He also requested offline any evidence of what the OOH programme is funding and its outcomes, whether to help Rough Sleepers or free up beds.

#### **Item 5) Programme Update: Risks and Achievements**

Attendees were referred to Slide 13 to see all the programme workstreams.

Officers continue to monitor the potential cliff edge that was noted at the last meeting linked to the ending of the P&V programme. Mostly this has been due to LAs finding funds to continue emergency accommodation placements for those engaging with and close to an immigration outcomes. The escalation work has been important and hard work around resettlement.

The two main risks going forward are the resilience of the workforce, and the cost of living crisis impacting in the autumn/winter alongside usual winter pressures. These issues will be picked up further in the Core Group.

#### **Item 6) AOB**

David Eastwood noted that he has received word that some faith sector shelters are looking at communal accommodation this winter and asked the Executive Board to consider a coordinated response alongside the London Public Health community as happened last year. Rachel Flowers offered to support on this issue.

**Date of next meeting: Thurs, Sep 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022 – 10.00-11.30 – Cllr Darren Rodwell chairing**

Actions from Previous Meetings	Date of Meeting	Status/Update
DLUHC, GLA and London Councils to collaborate on development of a dataset/data dashboard that can support understanding of the impact of the cost of living crisis on rough sleeping/homelessness	May 2022	On-going
GLA, HJ, ADPH to undertake work to dissuade winter shelter providers from offering communal shelters	May 2022	On-going
GLA, HLP and ICPs/hospitals to work on better data capture around housing/homelessness using existing hospital codes	May 2022	On-going
HLP to work with ICPs to embed homeless health in all partnership plans/strategies	May 2022	On-going
Michelle Binfield to put Homeless Link in touch with London Councils employment leads so	Feb 2022	Completed. Relevant staff participated in workforce round table.

they can support the workforce retention/recruitment efforts		
Tom Coffey to put Tech Nation in contact with David Eastwood	Feb 2022	Completed.
Core Group to look further at the CHAIN data in relation to data collected by other agencies (health, criminal justice) and present back to the Executive Board as indicators are developed	Feb 2022	On-going.