MDA No.: 1649

Title: Housing Committee – Response to the Mayor's Plan of Action to End Rough Sleeping Consultation

1. Executive Summary

1.1 At the Housing Committee meetings on 17 October 2024 the Committee resolved that:

Authority be delegated to the Chair, in consultation with party Group Lead Members, to agree any output arising from the discussion.

1.2 Following consultation with party Group Lead Members, the Chairman is asked to agree the Committee's response to the Mayor's Plan of Action to End Rough Sleeping Consultation as attached at **Appendix 1**.

2. Decision

2.1 **That the Chair, in consultation with party Group Lead Members, agrees the Committee's response to the Mayor's Plan of Action to End Rough Sleeping Consultation, as attached at Appendix 1.**

Assembly Member

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members of the Authority.

The above request has my approval.

Signature: Sem Moema

Printed Name: **Sem Moema AM, Chair of the Housing Committee**

Date: **10 December 2024**

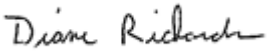
3. Decision by an Assembly Member under Delegated Authority

Background and proposed next steps:

3.1 The terms of reference for this investigation were agreed by the Chair, in consultation with relevant party Group Lead Members, on 13 September 2024 under the standing authority granted to Chairs of Committees and Sub-Committees. Officers confirm that the report and its recommendations fall within these terms of reference.

3.2 The exercise of delegated authority approving the report will be formally submitted to the Housing Committee's next appropriate meeting for noting.

Confirmation that appropriate delegated authority exists for this decision:

Signature (Committee Services): 

Printed Name: Diane Richards, Committee Officer

Date: 10 December 2024

Email: diane.richards@london.gov.uk

Financial Implications: NOT REQUIRED

Note: Finance comments and signature are required only where there are financial implications arising or the potential for financial implications.

Signature (Finance): Not Required

Date: Not Required

Legal Implications:

The Chair of the Housing Committee has the power to make the decision set out in this report.

Signature (Legal): 

Printed Name: Rory McKenna, Monitoring Officer

Date: 10 December 2024

Email: Monitoringofficer@london.gov.uk

Supporting Detail / List of Consultees:

- Lord Bailey of Paddington AM and Zoe Garbett AM (Deputy Chair)

4. Public Access to Information

4.1 Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the FoIA, or the EIR and will be made available on the GLA Website, usually within one working day of approval.

4.2 If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary.

4.3 **Note**: this form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 - Deferral:

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? **NO**

If yes, until what date:

Part 2 – Sensitive Information:

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA or EIR should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form? **NO**

Lead Officer / Author

Signature: Sarah-Jane Gay

Printed Name: Sarah-Jane Gay

Job Title: Senior Policy Officer

Date: 10 December 2024 2024

Email: sarah-jane.gay@london.gov.uk

Countersigned by Executive Director:

Signature: 

Printed Name: Helen Ewen

Date: 10 December 2024

Email: helen.ewen@london.gov.uk

Appendix 1

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Sem Moema AM
Chair of the Housing Committee

Sadiq Khan,
Mayor of London
Sent via Rough Sleeping Commissioning Team
(sent by email)

Response to the Plan of Action to end rough sleeping consultation

10 December 2024

Dear Sadiq,

I am writing as Chair of the London Assembly's Housing Committee. Please accept this letter as our response to the consultation into your Plan of Action to end rough sleeping in London by 2030.

In October 2024 the London Assembly Housing Committee held an evidence session on the topic of rough sleeping in London, and heard evidence from sector experts:

- Michelle Binfield, Rough Sleeping Programme Director, London Councils;
- Jasmine Basran, Head of Policy and Campaigns, Crisis;
- Molly Bishop, Head of Implementation, Centre for Homelessness Impact;
- Simone Strachan, London Hub Strategic Lead, Shelter;
- Alexia Murphy, Chief Executive Officer, Depaul UK.

The Committee then heard from GLA representatives:

- Tom Copley, Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development;
- David Eastwood, David Eastwood MBE, Lead Manager – Rough Sleeping;
- Megan Life, Head of Specialist Housing and Services.

This evidence session forms the basis of the Committee's response to this topic. In addition, the Committee will refer to evidence heard at a session on the topic of housing options for women leaving prison, held in November 2024, where evidence was received from John Plummer, Coordinator at the London Prisons Mission; Natasha Clough, Female Lead for the Community Accommodation Service, Tier 2 (CAS-2) accommodation at Nacro; Sam Julius, who is Head of

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Influence and Communications at Clinks; and Rachel Ozanne, Director of Programmes and Partnerships, Women in Prison.

The Committee's March 2024 report *London's Temporary Accommodation Emergency* and the Committee's March 2023 report *Unsafe and unregulated: London's rogue supported housing providers* will also be referenced, and we encourage the consultation review team to take these into account.

We take the consultation questions in turn, below:

1. **Is this definition of our goal the right way to frame and articulate ending rough sleeping in this Plan of Action?**

The goal to end rough sleeping in London by 2030 is ambitious, but ambition is necessary – the rise in rough sleeping in London is at crisis point after sustained increases in recent years. The GLA's own Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) data shows there were 4,223 people sleeping rough during the first quarter of 2024-25, representing an increase of 29 per cent from the first quarter in the previous year.[1]

The Committee agrees that this is unacceptable, and that no one should have to sleep rough in London. There was strong agreement among our guests at the October meeting that there is ample opportunity for the GLA to maximise its convening role in rough sleeping in London, and that cross-sector co-ordination is and will continue to be key to efforts to end rough sleeping.

The Committee's concern with the GLA's definition of its goal is how this is communicated to Londoners. Where a manifesto commitment has been made to 'end rough sleeping', the expectations of Londoners may be that rough sleeping will no longer exist, and that any visible signs of rough sleeping mean that the ambition has failed. **The Committee recommends that the GLA conduct primary research with Londoners to understand how the policy aims have been understood, and to inform a communications plan around what Londoners can expect from this policy.**

There is also a key question about how London will work with the rest of the country on this goal. It is well known that London, and Westminster in particular, is a 'hot spot' for rough sleeping, and that people who are rough sleeping elsewhere in the country travel to London for various reasons including access to services. The definition in the proposal states; '[d]elivering this ambitious goal requires co-ordinating partners across London behind a shared understanding of the causes, challenges and solutions required to address them,' however, partnership and co-ordination will need to reach well beyond London. **The Committee recommends that GLA develop its understanding of rough sleepers' place of last residence, and where there are non-London trends, targeted collaboration should be developed with those local and combined authorities, with the aim of providing more options out of rough sleeping for affected individuals and support efforts to coordinate preventative measures across the country.**

[1] London Datastore, CHAIN reports, Greater London 2024/25 Q1

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2. **How can we make best use of data and evidence in how we design and deliver services, accommodation, and strategies?**

During its meeting in October 2024, the Committee discussed data – particularly CHAIN data - at length. CHAIN is a multi-agency database recording information about people sleeping rough in London. CHAIN counts people as sleeping rough if they have been encountered by a commissioned outreach worker bedded down on the street, or in other open spaces or locations not designed for habitation, such as doorways, stairwells, parks or derelict buildings. It does not include people from "hidden homeless" groups.

The Committee heard that CHAIN is the best data collection on rough sleeping nationally, and among the best in the world. Guests also outlined areas where CHAIN could be improved and its findings used in a more nuanced way. Key to this – and relevant to the call for evidence questions around cross-sector collaboration – is allowing CHAIN to capture more insights from the third sector, so that a better understanding is developed of the number of people sleeping rough, their experiences, and who is more likely to be hidden or not in touch with services.

Molly Bishop, Head of Implementation, Centre for Homelessness Impact, said;

> "We are currently using data, especially CHAIN, as a very blunt tool to design and deliver services in a way that it probably is not intended or best used to do. We also see that, because verification and counting is such a central part of our data approach, that it also is then driving the delivery of outreach services and a lot of outreach services spend a lot of time going and finding people who have been reported and having a conversation with them so that they can be verified.
>
> What we need to be doing more is that insight piece, is that analysis piece of what is this telling us about what is happening, what is it not telling us about what is happening, and what is it saying about what works and what other evidence do we need."

Jasmine Basran, Head of Policy and Campaigns at Crisis outlined that there is a gap between data gathered by CHAIN and data gathered by non-statutory services and community services. Jasmine Basran gave the example of an approach in Brent called 'Built for Zero', which pulls information about people who are rough sleeping from a wider pool of information from a broader range of services. This resulted in Built for Zero finding 24 per cent more people sleeping rough than in the CHAIN data. She explained;

> "If we look at the data that we collected in Brent over the period of October 2023 to June 2024 of people sleeping rough in the borough and compared it with CHAIN data, we found we had a **24 per cent increase** in the numbers of people. Largely, that is accounting for people who are not being picked up by statutory services and people with NRPF. We think there are ways of improving and building on the CHAIN database, working with the community."

Specific groups, such as people with no recourse to public funds (NRPF), women and young people, were flagged by the panel as people unlikely to be picked up by CHAIN. This has an impact on services, which are designed around the people and needs detected by CHAIN, and can only be

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accessed by verified rough sleepers. The Committee heard about the Women's Rough Sleeping Census, run by Solace Women's Aid and the Single Homeless Project across all London boroughs. The Women's Rough Sleeping Census accounts for the fact that women are more likely to be transient and to sleep in hidden places to avoid danger.

Alexia Murphy, Chief Executive Officer at Depaul UK, highlighted how young people can face similar issues to those faced by women. Depaul's Youth Census – a pilot run in three boroughs – found that **28 per cent of young people identified as sleeping rough were had not been counted or verified by CHAIN.**

The Committee recommends that the GLA interprets and adopts recommendations made by Solace following their Women Rough Sleeping Census as part of the development of its Plan of Action.

Across the panel, our guests agreed that the current counting and verification system hides deep inequalities and drives the development of services mismatched to need. Michelle Binfield, Rough Sleeping Programme Director, London Councils explained the drive within London councils to move to a more intelligence-led approach:

> "A lot of London boroughs are moving towards an intelligence-led approach, such as the type that the Women's Census offers, where you bring people together and you do not just think about the people you see, but you think about all the people you do not see.
>
> We learned from the Women's Census, which all local authorities collaborated on and embraced, we are doing the same with the Young [People's Rough Sleeping] Census, and we are talking to West Midlands and Greater Manchester about whether there is merit in doing that for non-UK or NRPF rough sleepers who are similarly hidden because it is not safe to sleep out in the open.
>
> Our view is that counting the sort of bedded-down verification obsession that we have about rough sleeping, it masks a lot of problems underneath. Say 10,000 people sleep rough in a year, but not everybody is created equal. What that hides is deep inequality for some groups. Some people spend three hours on the street and are never seen again, and some people are living on the street with very complex needs."

David Eastwood, Lead Manager - Rough Sleeping at the GLA explained that the GLA has already made some changes to CHAIN based on the Women's Census recommendations, and outlined the GLA's openness to making changes to CHAIN 'to ensure the data is as robust as can be'. However, he warned that any data requested must be meaningful and useful; data changes must lead to CHAIN being used more strategically. David Eastwood also referenced the Strategic Insights Tool, which brings together CHAIN data, Homelessness Case Level Collection (the data local authorities fill out when someone presents rough sleeping),and Inform data (data when someone enters a hostel).

The Committee recommends that the GLA prioritises strategic analysis of datasets across different sectors – and identifying where further data collection will be needed – as part of the Rough Sleeping Plan of Action.

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3. **How can we ensure work to end rough sleeping in London is sufficiently integrated with work to end wider forms of homelessness?**

According to Crisis, rough sleeping is considered the most visible and dangerous form of homelessness.[2] Unlike hidden homelessness or those living in temporary accommodation, rough sleepers are exposed to extreme risks, including violence, harsh weather conditions, and health challenges – the average age of death for a man who is street homeless is 45, and for women it is 41.[3][4]

While it is right for the Plan of Action to focus on this most dangerous form of homelessness, it must be undertaken in conjunction with work to end wider forms of homelessness. This will be a central part of the 'prevention' interventions within the Plan of Action.

Taken at the broadest level, a key aspect to ending homelessness is supply of social and genuinely affordable homes. This includes development of new homes, but also availability of affordable housing within the Private Rented Sector (PRS). Guests at the October meeting identified the PRS as one of the key drivers of homelessness in London. Michelle Binfield explained;

> "As we see in London Councils, there is a crisis across the capital linked to mostly the system issues, supply issues, particularly access to the PRS and the issues that colleagues have referred to around that affordability gap with rents rising faster than benefits and income. That is causing debt arrears and a lot of that loss of PRS accommodation is linked to just an inability to afford rent, getting into debt, and getting evicted."

Guests discussed the Renters' Rights Bill and their hopes for its impact on homelessness reduction, such as giving people more time to prevent their homelessness when faced with eviction. However, guests felt that the Bill does not go far enough in terms of affordability, which is a key driver of rough sleeping and wider forms of homelessness in London. Jasmine Basran outlined Crisis' concerns in this area;

> "While there are provisions in the Act that will allow for people to challenge what is termed as 'unreasonable rent increases' and I know the Government is looking at the tribunal system and how this works, we still have outstanding concerns about the strength of that and whether that will prevent people from having to leave a property because of the affordability of the rent.
>
> We are asking the Government to explore looking at limiting in-tenancy rent increases as a first measure to give strengthened rights to people because it is as yet unclear how this will work through if it relies on the tenant to feel confident and empowered and know enough about their rights to take forward a challenge to the landlord."

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[2] Crisis, Types of homelessness
[3] Crisis, 'I always kept one eye open': The experiences and impacts of sleeping rough, 2023
[4] St Mungos, St Mungo's responds to homeless death statistics

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Michelle Binfield stated that the West Midlands combined authority is undertaking research to understand landlord behaviour and intention in light of the Bill, as a short-term reduction in available PRS properties is expected due to landlords leaving the sector.

The Committee recommends that the GLA commission similar research in London in order to estimate and plan for the impact of private landlord behaviour on available private rented sector homes in London.

The welfare system is another broad policy area that interacts with homelessness and rough sleeping. Michelle Binfield stated that only a very small amount of London's PRS is affordable to people in receipt of benefits, and as a result Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)[5] is one of the few tools local authorities have in order to assist Londoners in securing tenancies. Guests across the panel encouraged a pan-London DHP system to bring clarity to Londoners about what support can be accessed.

The Committee recommends that the Mayor work with London Councils to develop a pan-London approach to discretionary housing payment.

Your thoughts

4. **Do you agree that these three areas capture the priority areas for action to end rough sleeping?**

> Preventing rough sleeping: supporting 'upstream' interventions to stop someone sleeping rough in the first place.
>
> Making rough sleeping as brief as possible: providing everyone with an immediate route off the streets.
>
> Stopping people returning to rough sleeping: providing sustainable accommodation and ongoing support.

Prevention is key to this work. Some aspects of prevention – particularly collaboration - have been touched on in previous answers. In addition, the Committee heard from guests at the October meeting that lessons learned from the pandemic and the national 'Everyone In' policy are key to reframing the work that is done to prevent and intervene in rough sleeping.

Molly Bishop stated that part of the reason that 'Everyone In' was so successful was that rough sleeping and homelessness were viewed as a health emergency;

> "Homelessness and rough sleeping as a health emergency was a key enabler of the Everyone In response, and there is no reason that it should not still be a core enabler and key foundation for driving and accelerating work to end rough sleeping on an ongoing basis. Rough sleeping is a health emergency and there is significant damaging impacts of

[5] Local authorities can award Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) to households receiving the housing costs element of Universal Credit or Housing Benefit, if they need further financial assistance with housing costs. Annual DHP funding for England and Wales was fixed at £100 million per year from 2022/23 until the end of 2024/25.

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> health for even one night spent rough sleeping, let alone multiple, and that is well evidenced."

Working within this context and with a very clear goal - to get everyone in as quickly as possible - enabled frontline and voluntary organisations to not be held back by barriers such as policies, procedures, verification, and assessments that are imposed in usual working conditions. With some of the process challenges lifted, frontline workers were able to take the fastest route in terms of prevention and intervention. This was echoed by Jasmine Basran, who noted that flexibilities introduced within the welfare system, as well as cross-regional collaboration on direct letting of social housing to people at risk of or experiencing rough sleeping meant that prevention and intervention could happen much more quickly than usual.

The Committee recommends that the GLA works with London Councils and the voluntary sector to identify where barriers that were overcome during the 'Everyone In' policy period have re-emerged now that the pandemic is over, and what can be done to foster a more agile response to prevention. In line with the Mayor's 'health in all policies approach', the conclusion of this work should set out what specific 'upstream' interventions the Mayor will take to prevent people being forced into rough sleeping in the first place.

In relation to viewing homelessness and rough sleeping as a health emergency, the Committee reiterates its March 2024 recommendation: **The Mayor should use his convening powers and responsibilities on health inequalities to ensure that people living in Temporary Accommodation are part of inclusion health plans, which are produced by health authorities to reduce healthcare inequalities and improve healthcare for inclusion health groups (a term used by the NHS to describe people who are socially excluded, including people who experience homelessness). People with lived experience of living in Temporary Accommodation should be involved in the creation of these plans.**[6]

Effective prevention work will need significant funding. Michelle stated that London councils are spending £4 million a day on temporary accommodation (TA), equating £1.6 billion a year. She stated that this is 'sucking all of the resource out' of prevention work, and councils cannot spend money on what they feel they should be spending money on, such as "preventing people coming out of prison and going to the streets, preventing people from losing their PRS tenancy, and preventing people from getting into debt issues". The Committee developed several recommendations for improving TA in London in its 2024 report *London's Temporary Accommodation Emergency*, which we now highlight as part of this submission to the Plan of Action.[7]

In terms of stopping people returning to rough sleeping, there must be adequate supply of suitable housing, be it temporary accommodation, general needs, supported housing, or very specialist

[6] London Assembly Housing Committee, London's Temporary Accommodation Emergency, March 2024
[7] London Assembly Housing Committee, London's Temporary Accommodation Emergency, March 2024

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housing such as Housing First[8]. In the past, exempt accommodation – some of it poor quality, as investigated by the Committee in 2022 – may have filled some of this gap but in the light of new legislation, some exempt providers are leaving the sector. While the closure of poor-quality provision is welcome, Michelle Binfield noted that this does create a short-term shortage of accommodation and identified this area as another opportunity for you to use your convening role to analyse provision of supported housing and identify gaps. As recommended in our 2023 report *Unsafe and unregulated: London's rogue supported housing providers*:

The Committee recommends that the Mayor should create a pan-London database of supported housing stock, provision and need, which can be broken down by client group.[9]

This could then be used to identify gaps in service, looking at the distribution of supported housing across the capital and, in particular, to identify need of provision for marginalised groups.

5. **Thinking of activity happening in these three areas now, are there any areas where you think current practice is working well?** Please include any particular examples of good practice that you would like to see being used more widely.

In terms of prevention, guests at the October meeting identified the GLA's 'No Night Out' work as good practice – Molly Bishop stated that No Night Out is 'one of the few genuine prevention-based rough sleeping services which is immediate or very quick re-housing support either into PRS or re-connection elsewhere'. However, they identified the issue that this programme currently runs in the areas with the highest concentration of rough sleeping – which ends up exacerbating problems as people leave their local area in order to access the scheme.

The Committee recommends that that GLA uses data available to identify areas of London where people are most likely to be at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping, and targets more prevention services in these areas.

Michelle also mentioned London's targeted services for 1,000 of the city's most complex rough sleepers, identifying successes – she stated that being able to flexibly provide support across local authority boundaries enables that complex group to access support and eventually housing.

> "We have good services in London, again where we have collaborated well, the target priority group, for example, 1,000 of London's most complex rough sleepers who move around a lot are given a dedicated case working officer that is blind to geographical boundaries, follows them wherever they go within the city, and working with the GLA funded team we have made quite good progress to get 70 per cent of that group indoors. We have got a long way to go. Local connection is of course a problem for this group and other groups because of the mobility, but we are not applying it in the same way to rough

[8] Housing First is an approach to ending homelessness through housing and support provision. It prioritises access to permanent housing with tailored, open-ended, wraparound support for the resident that emphasises choice and control. It focuses on a specific group of people with histories of repeat homelessness, very complex needs, experience of multiple disadvantage and for whom other services have not been successful in ending their homelessness.
[9] London Assembly Housing Committee, Unsafe and unregulated: London's rogue supported housing providers, March 2023

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sleepers as we do within statutory legislation. It is much more flexible. We are doing the best we can with very limited resources."

The Committee recommends that wherever possible, rough sleeping support in London is flexible and not restricted to local authority boundaries.

6. **Again thinking of current activity across these three areas, where are the major gaps in funding, services and support?** Please give specific examples if you can.

Points about funding for housing, temporary accommodation, welfare and support have been made earlier on in this response.

A key additional area of need is for non-UK nationals, in particular newly qualified refugees, and people with no recourse to public funds. The situation for these groups came across as particularly stark during our evidence session. Molly Bishop explained:

> "For non-UK nationals specifically, we can see that the numbers of non-UK nationals who are sleeping rough has gone up significantly and we now have 41 per cent of UK nationals rough sleep in London, but the share of people from Asia and Africa has increased from 4.8 to 9.4 and 6.1 to 14.9 [per cent] respectively. Of non-UK nationals, the highest nationality group is Eritrean, six per cent, Poles, five per cent, and then people from Sudan, four per cent. Within that you have different cohorts, and this is one of the challenges of talking about non-UK nationals rough sleeping is that you have people from the European Economic Area, from European Union countries who do not have the same rights as they did pre-Brexit. Then you have also got people from other areas of the world, the vast majority of those who are rough sleeping in London are either newly accepted refugees or failed asylum seekers, and that is where the No Recourse to Public Funds challenge comes in."

Simone Strachan, London Hub Strategic Lead, Shelter noted that the rise in rough sleeping in London in recent months is largely down to rises in newly qualified refugees having to leave National Asylum Support Service (NASS) housing with little notice, meaning that they do not have the time or support to arrange other accommodation or reach out to their local authority. Alexia Murphy stated that within the Young People's Census that Depaul conducted, nine of the 40 young people they spoke to had come straight from asylum seeker accommodation.

The Committee heard that you have delivered effective work in specialist immigration advice and support. However, Michelle Binfield outlined that the sheer rise in numbers means that current services cannot make enough of an impact; 'We have immigration advice, housing and support in every London borough for people who have uncertain immigration status and that is incredible, but it is like trying to empty a bath with the taps running, if I can use that analogy'.

The Committee recommends that the Mayor's specialist immigration advice and support is scaled up through the new Plan of Action, alongside working closely with the Government and particularly the Home Office to identify opportunities for prevention of rough sleeping for non-UK nationals.

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As recommended in the Committee's 2024 report into TA, **the Committee also recommends that Mayor should use his convening role to bring together the Home Office and London boroughs to collaborate on the procurement of temporary accommodation properties, and use consistent standards and pricing.**[10]

7. **What new interventions and policies are needed to achieve a step-change in impact across these areas, including for groups who may be less able to access generic services?** These can be actions for central government, the GLA, or local authorities.

In addition to the groups already mentioned in this response, the Committee would like to draw the GLA's attention to the experience of women leaving prison, where there is great opportunity to improve current provision. In our November Committee meeting on the topic of women leaving prison, guests outlined the extreme challenges faced by women seeking to rebuild their lives after imprisonment.

Rachel Ozanne, Director of Programmes and Partnerships, Women in Prison highlighted that the Community Accommodation Service Tier 3 (CAS accommodation) is not made available for women who have been imprisoned on remand, meaning that immediate accommodation options for these women are minimal. In relation to sentenced women Rachel Ozanne said that their organisation receives very few referrals for accommodation support, and where it does happen, it is often too late; 'there is a real gap there around getting that timely referral for women before they are coming out to London'. Sam Julius, Head of Influence and Communications, Clinks, also raised the issue of CAS-3 accommodation[11] not being fit for purpose for some women; "a lot of women going into these spaces do not fulfil the criteria for CAS-3, essentially, they are too unwell to be taken in by CAS-3. There is not the level of support required in order for them to successfully be placed in CAS-3 provision. Their options are somewhat limited."

Guests across the panel raised the issue of varying support and provision across boroughs. Rachel Ozanne explained that women leaving prison tend to have multiple needs; 'domestic abuse, mental and physical health, finance, benefit and debt issues, and then potentially parental issues, immigration, and other issues', but tailored and appropriate support varies across London. The Committee heard from both its panel guests and the women we met at our visit to Bronzefield Prison, that women often need single sex accommodation due to their experience of male violence. However, provision of single sex accommodation varies across boroughs, and the Committee heard of some cases of women being placed in mixed-sex accommodation leading these women to leave the accommodation and begin sleeping rough.

One of the key barriers raised by the panel was the lack of priority housing need for women leaving prison; Sam Julius stated 'there is no uniform definition that is applied objectively across all boroughs'. Even where the woman should be classified as priority need – for e.g. experience of domestic abuse – this does not always happen.

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[10] London Assembly Housing Committee, London's Temporary Accommodation Emergency, March 2024

[11] Community Accommodation Service Tier 3 (CAS3) is a service that provides temporary accommodation and support for people leaving prison who are at risk of homelessness.

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What came across most strongly were the challenges caused by different approaches across London boroughs. John Plummer, Coordinator, London Prisons Mission explained that across London boroughs provision for resettlement is poor, as is the understanding of the issues faced by women leaving prison, and how these issues interact with offending behaviour;

> "Beginning this exercise in 2017/18, we went around all the London boroughs either by post or 21 of them in person and interviewed the senior management and the officers responsible for resettlement and found generally the standard was very poor. Most of them had no processes for receiving applications in respect of a woman shortly to be released at all.
>
> Many of them said, "Well, are you really suggesting we should give these women priority over things like domestic violence and other emergency cases?" We say, "But just a minute, these women have largely been victims of domestic violence, and that is part of their offending behaviour, let us get that right", which surprised them because they had not done much work on this."

John noted that the exception is the London Borough of Lambeth, which has a Prisons Release Navigator, and set processes for receiving housing applications from prison leavers.

The Committee recommends that the Mayor prioritise women leaving prison in the rough sleeping Plan of Action. The Mayor should work with London Councils to standardise boroughs' approach to providing housing support to women leaving prison, including a pan-London commitment that women leaving prison are given priority need for housing.

8. **How can the GLA and the Mayor use their role and powers to support different public and voluntary services to work together in a co-ordinated way?** We would welcome examples from other cities in the UK and across the world.

Throughout the Committee's evidence session on rough sleeping, guests made several suggestions for areas where you and the GLA could improve rough sleeping prevention and intervention. These include:

- Working with local authorities and third sector agencies to collect richer data on rough sleeping in London, particularly in relation to marginalised groups.
- Working with local authorities and third sector agencies to collect richer data on supported housing in London.
- Working with local councils to set clear goals around rough sleeping in London, to enable frontline workers to work in a targeted, joined up way.
- Collaborating with boroughs to ensure that services are delivered across London, not just in certain 'hotspot' areas, which results in reinforcing that area as a hotspot.
- Working with boroughs on a joined-up approach to DHP, including working with national Government on welfare change.
- Developing pan-London approaches to supporting non-UK nationals.
- Developing pan-London approaches to supporting rough sleepers that remove the requirement for local connection to a specific London borough.

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- Working with local councils to develop a pan-London approach to returning rough sleepers.
- Working with councils, landlords, and social landlords to increase the supply of genuinely affordable housing particularly for highly complex and high need groups.
- Continue to invest in the pan London Rough Sleeping Initiatives (RSIs).

Jasmine Basran and Molly Bishop also gave examples of work taking place in the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), such as the New Housing First Unit, which seeks to increase the supply of homes and drive-up standards in the private rental sector, so that there is a supply of good quality homes available in the event that someone needs a quick intervention. Alongside this work, the Mayor of the GMCA Andy Burnham has worked with probation to prevent homelessness occurring upon release. Finally, guests mentioned the Street Engagement Hub that brings together local authorities, the police and the third sector to deliver interventions at the intersection of begging, street activity, and rough sleeping.

There is a clear role that you and the GLA could take to respond to unexpected or emerging trends. During its meeting in October 2024, and in written submissions provided by the New Horizons Youth Centre, the Committee heard that responses to emerging causes of rough sleeping were not being cohesively monitored and managed at a pan-London level - for instance, the wave of evictions from exempt supported accommodation. A lack of consistent guidance for councils - which might have been provided by the GLA - meant councils approached the issue in different ways, creating uncertainty for individuals affected and charities trying to support them.

Yours,

Sem Moema

Sem Moema AM
Chair of the Housing Committee