

Minutes

‘No Nights Sleeping Rough’ taskforce, 2 November 2017, City Hall

Attendees

Mark Baigent	LB Tower Hamlets	James Murray (chair)	GLA
Fiona Darby	DCLG	Chris Pelham	City of London Corporation
Matt Downie	Crisis	Tom Preest	LB Camden
David Eastwood	GLA	Jonathan Qureshi	GLA
Deborah Halling (notes)	GLA	Howard Sinclair	St Mungo’s
Matt Harrison	Homeless Link	Jeremy Swain	Thames Reach
Val Keen	DCLG	Jennifer Travassos	Westminster City Council
Debra Levison	GLA		

Apologies

Paul Davis	LB Lambeth	Jon Sparkes	Crisis
Rick Henderson	Homeless Link		

1	Welcome, introductions and apologies	
2	Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising	
	<p>The group agreed that the minutes of the last meeting are accurate.</p> <p>On plans for an event to share learning from the final evaluation of the No First Night Out (NFNO) pilot phase, a joint ‘No Nights Sleeping Rough’ taskforce (NNSRt) and London Councils event took place 1 November 2017. Will Norman from the City of London Corporation presented on NFNO and representatives from a number of DCLG-funded Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer projects on those. Members of the taskforce who attended noted the need for these projects to focus on outcomes as they become established, as well as the challenges of recruitment and coordinating commissioning of consultants. London Councils is committed to facilitating ongoing sharing of learning from Trailblazer projects. DCLG’s new homelessness and rough sleeping advisers, appointed as part of the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA), will also do so.</p>	
3	Draft London Housing Strategy	
	<p>Deborah Halling (DH) provided an overview of the Mayor’s draft London Housing Strategy (LHS), with a particular focus on proposals related to rough sleeping, using the appended slides.</p> <p>The group made the following comments, which GLA will take into account alongside other feedback received through the consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They were largely strongly supportive of the draft LHS and welcomed the inclusion of a specific chapter addressing homelessness and rough sleeping. • They stressed that the Mayor’s capital investment in hostels needs to be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ carefully aligned to assessed need, not least because it is unclear that additional spaces for rough sleepers are needed – other than perhaps on a short-term basis, for assessment and reconnection; ○ subject to requirements around the quality of accommodation; and ○ in locations where there are no or few hostels. <p>The group also noted that its effectiveness depends on future funding arrangements for supported accommodation.</p> • They agreed that LHS could say more about the role of the health sector, including Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships, in preventing 	GLA

	<p>homelessness and helping people off the streets, nothing that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the HRA requires health services to refer those at risk of homelessness to local authorities; and ○ appropriate health provision is important to sustaining those with complex needs in accommodation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● They welcomed the move to define affordability more clearly and meaningfully, though expressed some concern that those with the most complex needs will not necessarily benefit from an increased supply of affordable housing, unless homes are designated for them. ● They endorsed the draft LHS’s linkage of the instability and high cost of the private rented sector with homelessness and rough sleeping, suggesting this link could be made more forcefully. ● Some highlighted the value of prevention/tenancy sustainment support for private tenants, suggesting that the Mayor should commission a pan-London service for this purpose – particularly as the HRA’s prevention duty carries no local connection criterion. 	
<p>4</p>	<p>Rough sleeping and the Homelessness Reduction Act</p>	
	<p>Val Keen (VK), Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), introduced the question of how best agencies can work together around the fundamental changes that the HRA introduces. She presented the appended slides.</p> <p>VK encouraged taskforce members to respond to the Government’s current consultation on a new draft Homelessness Code of Guidance for local authorities, which closes on 11 December 2017.</p> <p>VK highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New reporting requirements for local authorities will mean single homelessness is documented much more fully than it has been to date – something that should improve our understanding of various factors, including the extent to which those seeking assistance from local authorities are sleeping rough at the point of doing so. ● DCLG’s Homelessness Advice and Support Team, headed by Jo Beck, is holding a series of meetings around the country, talking to councils about their plans for implementation and what support they need from DCLG. DCLG is exploring with councils how it could assist with recruitment. ● Early reports from Southwark, which has been piloting much of the HRA, include an increase of between 29 and 40 per cent in caseloads, a shift from a binary decision-making process to a problem-solving approach, extensive joint work with agencies, and success in reducing rough sleeping – by providing emergency accommodation. ● Although London boroughs are the most concerned about resources, recruitment and the speed of changes in reporting, they are also the furthest ahead with changes – although the separation between housing options services and rough sleeping services is striking. <p>The group made the following comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The supply of affordable accommodation, exacerbated by welfare reform and growing competition for private sector tenancies, is the biggest barrier to local authorities assisting people. ● Establishing reliable arrangements for covering housing costs in hostels is vital to boroughs’ capacity to accommodate homeless people. ● Although the Act encourages partnership work, the reality of separate 	

	<p>funding streams for health, adult social care and housing can make collaborative approaches to individuals with complex needs difficult.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is positive that boroughs seem keen to place staff from, for example, Thames Reach within their Housing Options teams. • The Act might be helpful in encouraging early intervention, as well as flexibility around local connection, although, on the latter, boroughs will inevitably be concerned about the costs of assisting people over time. • Boroughs will incur costs to their General Funds, including for legal cases likely to result from review requests. With pressures on funding, there is a risk that budgets for specialist services for rough sleepers, including supported accommodation, will be redirected to covering the costs of implementation and more generic accommodation. This poses a particular risk to the GLA, as it commissions rough-sleeping services that complement those funded by boroughs. Therefore, David Eastwood (DE) will seek to establish a picture of how much different boroughs spend on rough sleeping services. 	<p>GLA</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Commissioning Framework - refresh</p> <p>GLA has reviewed its Rough Sleeping Commissioning Framework, as agreed at the last meeting of the taskforce. The tone of the document has changed considerably, with two specific changes that were highlighted. First, there is a new cross-cutting priority to promote employment, training and volunteering among rough sleepers. Howard Sinclair (HS) suggested ensuring that the former encompasses apprenticeships. Second, the cross-cutting priority relating to faith and community groups has been broadened. DE to circulate the revised Framework to the group for comment by the end of November.</p>	<p>GLA</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>Winter campaign</p> <p>JM explained that the Mayor will campaign on rough sleeping over the winter. He will build on his focus on StreetLink and Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEPE) during winter 2016/17, highlighting the scope for Londoners to get involved in helping rough sleepers. He will provide a facility for donations to a coalition of rough sleeping charities (to be coordinated by St Mungo's).</p> <p>In response to questions, Debra Levison (DL) and HS confirmed that the coalition will determine the allocation of donations; that GLA will expect expenditure to be broadly in line with the priorities set out in GLA's Rough Sleeping Commissioning Framework; and that organisations will be able to spend donations on services for those with No Recourse to Public Funds.</p> <p>Chris Pelham (CP) noted the need to extend engagement beyond winter. JM confirmed that this is the GLA's intention, with the campaign's timing simply seeking to harness seasonal interest in rough sleeping.</p> <p>Some borough representatives expressed an interest in promoting the campaign. JM confirmed that the GLA would welcome this and DH that the campaign had been covered at the recent meeting of local authority rough sleeping leads. Fiona Darby (FD) and Mark Baigent (MB) suggested that GLA also seek to involve London Councils.</p>	
<p>7</p>	<p>Sub-groups update</p> <p>The dashboards that DE circulated to the group will be used to provide quarterly updates on the work of sub-groups, subject to comments from the taskforce.</p>	

	<p>Mental health: The sub-group has identified the risk to rough sleepers of charging overseas visitors to access health services and recommends that the taskforce requests that rough sleepers are exempted from charges. The group were broadly sympathetic to this request. The sub-group will work to define this request in more detail before circulating it to the taskforce.</p> <p>Data: The sub-group has completed research on the growing number of rough sleepers who return to the streets, by asking outreach services to interview identified individuals. Group to review key findings, which may be relevant to the Hostels Sub-Group, at its next meeting. JS also to share with the taskforce the analysis of the fall in numbers of Central and Eastern European nationals sleeping rough that the sub-group asked CHAIN to complete. Members of the sub-group are now developing plans to assess the characteristics of rough sleepers who stay away from the streets.</p> <p>Hostels: As there is no single source of information on the number of hostel spaces commissioning by London boroughs, the sub-group will conduct a survey later in November. It is exploring the scope for a standard set of data on hostels.</p> <p>Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI): The sub-group comprises two working groups, one looking at quality and the other at maximising supply and move-on accommodation. The former is working on a best practice guide and developing service level agreements. The latter has asked directors of G15 housing associations to make some units available or move on from Clearing House.</p> <p>JM suggested that the taskforce discuss at its next meeting whether existing groups should continue and/or new ones are needed. Members will be asked to suggest potential topics. FD suggested one consider public awareness of rough sleeping, including begging,</p>	<p>PD</p> <p>GLA/ JSw</p>
<p>8</p>	<p>Any other business</p> <p>The group’s Terms of Reference are to be reviewed annually. The group agreed to these remaining the same, with the exception of adding Newham to the list of members, in view of the sharp increase in rough sleeping there. JM also requested the addition of a Health representative.</p> <p>HS suggested that the group meet more frequently, but JM questioned the practicality of this, in view of substitutions for and absences from this meeting.</p> <p>The group agreed to explore the option of responding to the Government’s current consultation on future funding of short-term supported accommodation. DH will contact the group to this end.</p> <p>DE encouraged borough representatives to ensure that their outreach teams are using Tenancy Support Teams’ high support provision.</p> <p>Jonathan Qureshi outlined that the Mayor is asking boroughs to open SWEP when freezing temperatures are forecast for a single night. Most are willing. GLA will circulate draft guidance, along with a letter from JM. Alongside this, GLA is working with CHAIN to improve recording of SWEP usage, which should assist with assessing the role of SWEP in helping people off the streets.</p> <p>GLA to confirm a date for the next meeting in March 2018.</p>	<p>GLA GLA</p> <p>GLA</p> <p>GLA</p>