

HARSAG WINTER INITIATIVE – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Scottish Government set up the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (“Action Group”) in October 2017 to recommend short and longer term solutions to eradicate rough sleeping and homelessness, and to transform the use of temporary accommodation in Scotland. The Action Group was asked to shape its recommendations around the following four questions:

1. What can be done to reduce rough sleeping this winter?
2. How can we end rough sleeping?
3. How can we transform the use of temporary accommodation?
4. What needs to be done to end homelessness?

2. The Action Group moved quickly to consider its proposals in response to the first of these questions and published its recommendations¹ in November 2017 for actions to reduce rough sleeping in the winter of 2017/18. The Action Group considered a wide range of potential responses, but prioritised actions on the basis of the ability to implement at speed; and the potential impact to minimise rough sleeping.

3. The Scottish Government accepted the Action Group’s recommendations and additional funding of £328,000 (£262,000 from Scottish Government and £66,000 from Action Group members²) was made available to help deliver the winter initiative, with allocations made to local authority and third sector frontline services in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen in accordance with the recommendations of the Action Group to safeguard rough sleepers over the winter. The actions taken last winter were:

- capacity was increased in temporary and emergency accommodation in Edinburgh by expanding the winter shelter capacity from 60 to 75 and deliver an additional 12 rapid-access beds (only accessed via street outreach workers) – total additional cost £142,000 - £25,000 covered by Social Bite.
- Outreach capacity and the number of front line workers was increased in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen to help people access temporary accommodation and immediate support while their longer term needs could be met. In Aberdeen, a new Assertive Outreach Service was established. Total additional cost £106,000 – for non-Aberdeen actions, £11,000 covered by Simon Community and £15,000 covered by Govan Law Centre.
- Better use was made of Edinburgh Nightstop, run by the Rock Trust, to increase referrals and placements for young people (mostly 16/17 year olds) and ensure they had a safe place to stay; while longer term solutions were identified. A new Nightstop service was launched by Simon Community Scotland in Glasgow in January 2018.

¹ Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group recommendations for reducing rough sleeping winter 2017/18: <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-rough-sleeping-recommendations/>

² £262,000 was provided by the Scottish Government and £66,000 was provided by other members of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (Social Bite (£25,000), Simon Community/Streetwork (£11,000), Govan Law Centre (£15,000) and Crisis (£15,000))

- Partnership working across agencies was strengthened through adopting 'by name' lists to ensure high awareness of and shared responsibility for people sleeping rough. More power was given to front line workers to provide direct access to services and dedicated accommodation.
- Personalised budgets and flexible emergency funds were made available to front line staff so that they could be flexible in meeting people's immediate housing and wellbeing needs and establish trust for addressing the longer term support required to achieve a sustainable successful outcome – total additional cost £50,000
- Flexible provision, such as extreme weather packs, was made available during times of extreme weather for people who would not use winter night shelters, despite all efforts to encourage them to do so – total additional cost £15,000.
- Additional engagement was undertaken across Scotland through the Aye We Can consultation project to hear the views of people with lived experience of homelessness and rough sleeping and to inform the Action Group's recommendations – total additional cost £15,000 covered by Crisis, with staffing contribution from Glasgow Homelessness Network.

4. **An independent review of the impact of the winter initiative was commissioned by Simon Community Scotland, Edinburgh Streetwork and Aberdeen Cyrenians and has been published online at: [http://www.simonscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Views-from-the-Frontline -The-2017 18-Winter-Initiative-Report.pdf](http://www.simonscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Views-from-the-Frontline-The-2017-18-Winter-Initiative-Report.pdf).** Other organisations involved in the winter initiative have also published their own separate reports covering their services specifically. Links to the reports which are published online are provided at Annex A (and below, where relevant) and a report, from **rock trust**, on Nightstop is provided at Annex B.

Some of the key outcomes highlighted in the reports were:

Increased temporary and emergency accommodation in Edinburgh

5. The increased capacity in the **Winter Care Shelter** run by Bethany Christian Trust in Edinburgh (from 60 to 75) had meant that the care shelter did not need to turn people away due to over-capacity and being able to operate from a new fixed venue at Meadowbank had provided easier access to link people to the Streetwork Hub and personalised budgets for early support.

6. Increased funding had also enabled staffing levels to be raised from 3 to 4 per night, giving more opportunity for staff engagement with those using the shelter and to provide increased in-reach from the Streetwork Street Team for five mornings a week. The Care Shelter has strong multi-disciplinary partnerships with support provided, not only through Bethany's own professional team, but also through long standing partnerships with Cyrenians, Streetwork, Crisis Skylight, Rock Trust, Shelter Scotland, NHS through access to a Practice nurse and Mental Health nurse, GP volunteers and the City of Edinburgh Council. Staff from the City of Edinburgh Council's Access Point were co-located twice a week to offer housing and homelessness advice, direct referral and signposting for people with multiple complex needs.

7. The Care Shelter ran from 9th October 2017 to 22nd April 2018 and the service was used by 722 unique individuals (an increase of around 2% from the previous season) with an average of around 43 attending each night. Fewer individuals than last winter stayed at the Care Shelter for more than half the season (99 nights or more). The number had halved from 3.6% in 2016-2017 to 1.8% this season and Bethany would have expected the average length of stay figure this winter to have exceeded the previous winter but for the measures taken to implement the Action Group's recommendations. 33% of people stayed only one night at the Care Shelter across the winter period, and 70% stayed for seven nights or less. Bethany plan to increase the duration of the Care Shelter season by four weeks next winter which would reach, on average, another 22 individuals per additional week.

Bethany Christian Trust has published a detailed report on the activities of the Edinburgh Winter Care Shelter which is available online at:
<http://www.bethanychristiantrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Care-Shelter-Annual-Report-2017-2018-Final.pdf>

8. The model of direct and **rapid access accommodation** provided by City of Edinburgh Council at Hopetoun Crescent in Edinburgh was particularly valued for its ability to work with multiple complex needs of those likely to be excluded from other types of accommodation. Residents of the 12-room facility that accommodated up to 14 people (including pets and one room for couples) appreciated that it could be accessed 24 hours a day with no curfew in place.

9. Crucially, access was managed via the Streetwork Street Team, enabling front line outreach staff to assertively target the most vulnerable and immediately offer a place without further recourse to other parties. A 24-hour staff team, with experience in managing behaviours that may not be accepted in other types of facility, was available, as well as a Housing Officer from City of Edinburgh Council. Since opening on 11th December, during the initial 90 days of the service, 46 unique individuals had stayed in the accommodation and around 35 people had moved on to positive destinations, which was a 73% success rate in helping people move off the streets. In recognition of its success, the Scottish Government extended funding (£77,000) until end June 2018 and Edinburgh City Council has since agreed a 38-bed pilot rapid access accommodation service to reshape an existing homelessness accommodation with support service to focus on people with 'complex needs' and rough sleepers. This will operate from August to March 2019. After March 2019 the Council expect to commission a service under a 4-year contract. Procurement is currently underway.

City of Edinburgh Council has published a detailed report on the Rapid Access Accommodation which is available online at (see Item 7.8):
http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/4413/housing_and_economy_committee

Glasgow Winter Night Shelter

10. The Winter Night Shelter, run by the Glasgow City Mission, offers overnight shelter and food during the winter months and therefore a significant opportunity for direct engagement and action for people at risk of rough sleeping, offering around 40

places a night. The Night Shelter ran from 1st December 2017 to 31st March 2018 and there were typically 32 people per night and 597 individuals accommodated during the period, which was similar to recent years.

11. The preceding season of the Night Shelter had shown a substantial increase in partnership working and cooperation with increased legal advice, other charitable support, and closer working with co-located Glasgow City Council housing officers. The effectiveness of this joined up working drove the agenda to build it into the 2017/18 winter season. Indeed high rates of transition away from the Night Shelter for service users were often achieved; yet, on occasion, when local authority and/or other partners were unable to provide staff the effectiveness of outcomes was noticeably curtailed.

12. There was also a successful trial to have nurses from NHS Hunter Street attending the night shelter each morning and the street team would often support this by helping escort guests to the Hunter Street for consultations and presenting to the homelessness casework team. This was seen as a step-change that helped move people away from the shelter and into other housing options and helped ensure their wellbeing, with approximately 200 individuals receiving medical intervention from NHS Hunter Street – 1/3 of the total night shelter guests. Personalised Budgets were used by the Night Shelter to provide support in some instances, as well as for funding rental costs and starter packs for new tenancies.

Glasgow City Mission has published an extensive review and report on the Glasgow Winter Night Shelter which is available online at:

<https://www.glasgowcitymission.com/admin/resources/report-gwns-2017-18-v2.0.pdf>

Expanded Outreach Capacity

13. A key feature of the Winter Initiative was the rapid deployment of resources to extend the capacity and enhance the reach of existing outreach services and set up new ones, such as the Assertive Outreach Service in Aberdeen. Additional staffing resources and extended outreach helped to better co-ordinate and enable access to temporary and long term accommodation, with wrap around support as a key condition. The new Assertive Outreach Service in Aberdeen was established by Aberdeen Cyrenians, from 4 Dec, for people who sleep rough in Aberdeen and has been described as a 'game changer' which has enabled front line outreach workers to develop better relationships and understanding of people's backgrounds, their particular circumstances and complex needs. The service prevented 76 people from rough sleeping during the period of the winter initiative, with offers of wraparound support and direct access to accommodation provided by Aberdeen City Council. This had helped build relationships of trust and a better understanding of individual circumstances and needs to help identify person-centred solutions to support people out of rough sleeping and into accommodation, benefits or employment. In recognition of its success, the Scottish Government extended funding (£52,500) until end June 2018.

Nightstop

14. The Rock Trust has been running Nightstop as a project in Edinburgh since 2010. Geared towards preventing young people entering the formal homeless system and staying in temporary bed and breakfast or adult hostel accommodation, the Nightstop service aims to provide young people between the ages of 16 and 25 years with emergency accommodation for up to 2 weeks in the homes of approved volunteers so that support can be put in place. Over the course of the 2017/18 winter initiative, the Nightstop service in Edinburgh accommodated 10 young people over 59 bed nights. Of the young people who accessed the accommodation: 5 returned home, following support from the Nightstop worker; 3 moved to long term accommodation; 2 moved to age appropriate temporary accommodation. An additional young person was accommodated for the duration of the winter, in a longer placement. Glasgow Nightstop was launched in January 2018 and options are now being considered for Aberdeen. A report from **the Rock Trust** with further information on Nightstop, including case studies, is provided at Annex B.

Agency Partnership Working

15. The Inter-Agency Networks in Glasgow and Edinburgh worked well and brought a consistent focus on people who sleep rough, through increased coordination, collaboration and cohesive networking. Crucially, it kept people on the radar of mainstream services and helped determine person-centred support. The network was already an established structure in Glasgow since April 2017 coordinated through the Street Team of Simon Community Scotland, with partners from day centres, addictions, criminal justice, health, Police Scotland and housing. However, actions from the Winter Initiative empowered the multi-agency group to jointly take rapid action based on shared knowledge about people of most concern. A similar network was introduced in Edinburgh on 19th December 2017, based on learning from the experiences in Glasgow, and engaged in a similar role to jointly assist the people of most concern. It is reported that the impact of the network was described by some as a '*system change*' for organisations in Edinburgh.

16. Ultimately, the stronger inter-agency working has driven local implementation of the Winter Initiative in both cities and has provided the platform for a quick, flexible and co-ordinated multi-agency response to ensure people at risk are tracked and provided with the person-centred support they need. The networks also provided effective and co-ordinated oversight of the use of personalised budgets and interventions during extreme weather to ensure people had safe and warm options, through some of the most extreme weather conditions in Scotland for many years.

Personalised budgets and flexible emergency funds

17. Personalised budgets and flexible emergency funds were used to find quick interventions and solutions to provide the targeted help people need as part of a wider package of wrap around support. It is clear from the assessment of its impact that this has been viewed as a trail blazing innovation, empowering front line staff to make timely on-the-spot decisions to end rough sleeping. The ability to use personalised budgets, as required, at the most opportune time was reported as crucial and viewed as the deciding factor in encouraging people off the streets and into accommodation with wrap around support services. It has enhanced the chance

of positive engagement with entrenched rough sleepers by building confidence and trust with outreach teams. Which, in turn, has allowed front-line staff the scope and latitude to use, often relatively small sums, to immediately engage people to encourage them into services, accommodation and employment, as well as helping some with travel back to their family or place of origin.

18. An important point highlighted by the evidence is that in the majority of interventions a modest amount of expenditure was used in a cost-effective way to produce remarkable results by immediately preventing rough sleeping, increasing repatriation, enabling employment and providing access to wrap around support services. Total spend across Edinburgh and Glasgow was a modest £17,247 from the original £50,000 allocation the Scottish Government had earmarked. Some examples of how these interventions have literally changed people's lives are highlighted through the case studies in the commissioned report and, to give a flavour of what has been achieved, we have reproduced some of those case studies at Annex C. In recognition of its success, the Scottish Government extended funding (£15,000) of flexible budgets until end June 2018.

Consulting people with lived experience

19. Learning from the experiences of people with lived experience of homelessness was an essential element of the work of The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group. The Action Group consulted with those with direct, personal experience of homelessness through the 'Aye We Can' consultation project co-ordinated by Glasgow Homelessness Network. The project consulted with around 425 people across Scotland through five local consultation events, Focus Groups, 1:1 conversations and an online survey. This was an important part of developing the Action Group's recommendations, as it is only by listening to those who have experienced homelessness that we can develop better solutions and systems. We will continue to consult with people with lived experience to provide ongoing input and scrutiny as the recommendations from the Action Group are implemented.

The 'Aye we Can' project published a final report in March 2018 which is available online at: [http://www.ghn.org.uk/shien/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/11/Aye We Can Final Report 2018-1.pdf](http://www.ghn.org.uk/shien/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/11/Aye_We_Can_Final_Report_2018-1.pdf)

The 'Aye we Can' project had also published an earlier update report in December 2017 after the 5 consultation events which is available online at: [http://www.ghn.org.uk/shien/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/12/Aye we can dec 17.pdf](http://www.ghn.org.uk/shien/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/12/Aye_we_can_dec_17.pdf)

Conclusions

20. The focus on improving coordination, increasing capacity and empowering staff were key principles of the Winter Initiative. As the independent report highlights, the changes implemented this winter were not in themselves particularly novel or large scale but they were designed to respond quickly to boost and expand existing effective models of practice, strengthen collaborations and share learning to focus attentions and actions on helping the most vulnerable. The additional resources, whilst relatively modest, delivered remarkable life-changing results and were important in driving decisions, enabling rapid implementation and acting as a catalyst

for quick and co-ordinated action. Annex B and Annex C set out some anecdotal stories provided by organisations running the Winter Initiative, which illustrate the human impact of this work.

21. The key changes in approach this allowed were the establishment of an Assertive Outreach Service in Aberdeen for the first time, the expansion of night shelter space and provision of rapid access beds in Edinburgh, and giving those on the front line the resources and power to act quickly and flexibly to provide targeted support and sustainable solutions to the vulnerable people that they meet and work to engage with each and every day. In particular, it was widely recognised that the introduction of Personalised Budgets had significantly empowered front-line staff and produced very promising early results. All of these were viewed as successful interventions that should be continued.

22. The independent report highlights the positive impact of the additional actions this winter and how lives have been changed. It also emphasises that many of those assisted off the streets as part of the winter initiative had had long histories of experiencing rough sleeping, extremely poor health and a consistent struggle with engaging with the support which was available. As a direct result of the enhanced approach, and the relationship of trust that has built, many more people did not spend the night sleeping on the streets of our three main cities, many more received much needed health interventions and many more found sustainable person-centred resolutions to the circumstances and issues they faced.

23. Indeed, it is widely accepted that, as result of the extra capacity provided this winter, coupled with the dedicated efforts of front line staff going the extra mile, lives were saved during some of the most challenging winter conditions we have seen in Scotland for some time. The Scottish Government was pleased therefore to make available a further £150,000 to continue to provide some services to the summer.

24. It is important to recognise that these additional interventions this winter only served to enhance and boost the excellent and ongoing work front line staff and agencies engage in to support and find resolutions for people at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping. That work continues and it is important that we take forward learning from the actions this winter and implement the other recommendations of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group in a way that ensures front line staff are provided with the level of support, training and empowerment they require. The organisations involved have taken on board this learning and are seeking to embed the lessons learned as they plan their future rough sleeping initiatives.

25. The Scottish Government will work with local authorities and partners to ensure the rest of Scotland can benefit from the learning of winter 2017-18 and minimise the harm of anyone who finds themselves rough sleeping, while also working to implement the rest of the recommendations of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group to end homelessness in Scotland altogether.

**Housing Support and Homelessness Unit
Scottish Government
August 2018**

LINKS TO INDEPENDENT REPORTS ON THE WINTER INITIATIVE

An independent review of the impact of the winter initiative was commissioned by Simon Community Scotland, Edinburgh Streetwork and Aberdeen Cyrenians and has been published online at: [http://www.simonscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Views-from-the-Frontline -The-2017 18-Winter-Initiative-Report.pdf](http://www.simonscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Views-from-the-Frontline-The-2017-18-Winter-Initiative-Report.pdf)

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Nightstop and Emergency Youth Service - Edinburgh Winter Actions 2017/18

Nightstop has been running as a project in Edinburgh since 2010. Historically the council have not engaged with the service and found the quicker access to B&Bs and hostels allowed them to meet their targets easier. We have supported the council workers in making referrals to Nightstop, emphasising the need for appropriate accommodation, as well as immediate access.

Over the course of the winter actions, Nightstop accommodated 10 young people over 59 bed nights. Of the young people who accessed the accommodation: 5 returned home, following support from the Nightstop worker; 3 moved to long term accommodation; 2 moved to age appropriate temporary accommodation. An additional young person was accommodated for the duration of the winter, in a longer placement.

Nightstop Case Studies

A young woman, aged 20, walked into our Duty Service with nowhere to sleep that night. She had been sofa surfing for the previous 6 months, at various locations and had ran out of friends who could accommodate her. She had received an offer of a tenancy from City of Edinburgh Council, but was concerned that she was going to have to use the Night Shelter, or worse, sleep rough until she could move into her property. She was assessed and placed in Nightstop, where she remained until her tenancy was ready for her to move into.

We received a referral from Sahelyia for a 17 year old young woman, who was still at school, who was suffering domestic abuse at home. She wanted to be safe, but was fearful of ending up on the street if she left home. She was placed with Nightstop for 2 weeks, but when the situation at home improved, she wanted to move back. She is being supported by the Nightstop worker to address the conflict at home and to find suitable move on accommodation.

The emergency youth service supports young people aged 16 and 17 who present to the City of Edinburgh Council as homeless, and have no support in place. Over the winter the service worked with 22 young people, 11 of the young people returned home and the remaining 11 were supported into accommodation and are working on longer term goals.

We continue to work with the City of Edinburgh Council Housing Officers, to encourage them to use Nightstop as a first choice for young people who meet the criteria, but unfortunately it continues to be a last resort, when other forms of temporary accommodation are full.

Securing funding for next winter has provided some stability for the service. We are continuing discussions with Aberdeen City Council regarding the start of a service later in 2018, as part of the Aberdeen City Council Housing & Homelessness Strategy.

PERSONALISED BUDGETS - CASE STUDIES OF SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES

R&G - a couple with dog from North Ayrshire fleeing violence from dealers. RSVP (Street Team) supported as sleeping in tents initially on main shopping street before police moved on so they moved their tents to Clyde. They had no local connection to Glasgow so lots of work done around applying for transfer. In December a well-wisher paid for accommodation over Christmas with the dog in a hotel for a few days. We then used winter monies to continue this hotel placement while we sourced a private let. Through our partnership with Homes for Good (social letting agency) we sourced a private let and paid one month deposit and month upfront. At the same time, through our street pharmacy, both were stabilised on methadone. They moved into flat at beginning of January and are both thriving.

BM - Had become homeless following separation and has gambling debts. Had job but couldn't afford rent deposit so was sleeping in car for several weeks. Using WI money and support through budgeting, a private let was sourced and first month paid. BM has now settled in his flat and instead of waiting on a council house is thriving and continuing to work away. He has went out and bought himself a name/number plate for his house. He had been unable to access accommodation/emergency accommodation due to working and the cost being too expensive. He is now also having regular contact with his little girl who comes to visit and stay with him.

Long term male rough sleeper who rarely engaged was put in hotel for night during cold weather. Would not accept support or much needed health intervention. Following night in hotel and a break from rough sleeping, accepted staff support to hospital where he was admitted for minimum 6 week period. Is thriving and engaging with addiction services and hospital liaison staff for when he is ready to be discharged.

RJ was rough sleeping for several months in city centre and would not link in for support or to present at casework due to previous experiences. Was in poor physical health and getting worse. Accessed WI (PB) money to book him into a hotel for a couple of nights during cold winter months with the agreement that he would go to hospital. This didn't happen straight away but after a couple of weeks, working with casework team we took homeless application to him and completed risk assessment meaning he could be referred for accommodation. He was accommodated and later admitted to hospital the residential rehab. He links in regularly with staff through the street pharmacy now also.

Male who was became homeless, lost his job and subsequently had his car broken into and tools stolen. Was rough sleeping in car with dog. Man also recently had cancer diagnosis but not linking in with health services. Had no ID, benefits or even knowledge of NI Number. We accommodated with dog for a few nights while supporting to get NI number, new ID, benefits applied for and ultimately a homeless application taken - he was thereafter accommodated in TFF

GT - Long term rough sleeper (several years) who access Winter Night Shelter every year. Has no local connection and has lots of rent arrears. Not entitled to benefits but works through agency when shifts available. He was given a flat which had basic provisions. We used the money to get a starter pack for him and helped with rent shortfall until agency work picked up and he could self-support.