

HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING ACTION GROUP – 2 NOVEMBER 2017

Minute of meeting

Present:

Chair: Jon Sparkes (CEO, Crisis)

Members: Maggie Brunjes (GHN), Mike Dailly (Govan Law Centre), David Duke (Street Soccer), Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick (Heriot Watt University), Josh Littlejohn (Social Bite), Lorraine McGrath (Simon Community/Streetwork), Susanne Miller (Glasgow City Council), John Mills (Fife Council & ALACHO), Shona Stephen (Queens Cross Housing Association), Alison Watson (Shelter Scotland).

In attendance: David Signorini (Deputy Director, SG Better Homes Division), Catriona MacKean (Head of SG Housing Support and Homelessness Unit), Marion Gibbs (Team Leader, SG Homelessness Team), Julie Stuart (SG Homelessness Team), Lynn McMath (Crisis).

Apologies: Russell Barr (Church of Scotland).

1. Welcome

Jon Sparkes welcomed the members to the second meeting of the Action Group. He outlined this meeting would specifically discuss question 1, what can be done to end rough sleeping this winter, and look for endorsement from members of the cluster work done to date.

Dave Signorini gave brief feedback from Kevin Stewart, Minister for Local Government and Housing's appearance at the Local Government and Communities Committee's inquiry into homelessness on Wednesday 1 November.

2. Measuring Impact

The Action Group discussed how the work of the group should be evaluated and how progress could be measured. Immediate focus will be methodology for question 1 with a more robust measurement framework for questions 2, 3 and 4 being agreed at future meetings.

For the purposes of measuring question 1, it was agreed that looking at data from statutory sources along with third sector and frontline providers was important. Work on this approach has previously been carried out by Group members in Glasgow, which could be further developed across the key cities in Scotland.

ACTION: Maggie Brunjes, Lorraine McGrath and Susanne Miller will work together to produce a paper to share with the Group. Scottish Government can then advise how to support taking this forward for this winter.

3. Involving people with Lived Experience

Maggie Brunjes gave a brief overview of the Scottish Homelessness Involvement and Empowerment Network's (SHIEN) proposed approach on Collaborating with People with Lived Experience for the Action Group to consider.

The Action Group were overall supportive of the proposal and highlighted the need that the focus groups should involve and engage people in a way which recognises that homelessness is a dynamic, with people moving between different housing situations as circumstances change. The focus groups should cover a mixture of homeless experiences including people who are currently homeless, people who use the night shelters this winter and people who have been homeless, covering a range of timescales. It was noted that there are number of organisations, including Action Group member organisations, that actively employ people with lived experiences that can help. Action Group members offered their services for the focus groups, with Crisis underwriting costs so that work can start immediately.

ACTION: Scottish Government will consider and seek views on funding and Ministerial attendance at the focus groups.

4. Mobilising Person Centred Approaches

Lorraine McGrath provided a summary of the paper for developing interventions, capacity and increased activity to reduce rough sleeping, particularly in the four main cities in Scotland. This included By Name Lists which can be used to prioritise and provide a more effective triage from frontline services. The Action Group members strongly endorsed the approach outlined recognising that work can be done on this quickly in response to this winter but also lay the ground work longer-term.

ACTION: Lorraine will refine the paper into a practical proposal, including costs and resources. Alison and John will collaborate with Lorraine, looking at what can be developed in Dundee.

5. The Role of Night Shelters

The Group considered the role of night shelters highlighting the link with the previous paper on person centred approaches. The Action Group discussed a range of issues including security, access, capacity, outreach services and personalised budgets. Members recognised that the Action Group's remit for the long term is to eradicate the need for winter night shelters but that current provision should have a minimum standard in order to provide dignity and support for individuals. The Edinburgh night shelter is exceeding capacity at times and the Action Group are aware of new plans to increase provision this winter. Social Bite has offered £25,000 for the Edinburgh night shelter in order to contribute to increased capacity.

ACTION: Susanne, Maggie and Mike will develop an operational paper to address the role of night shelters this winter, including costs and recommendations and also include the Edinburgh night shelter proposals on additional capacity.

6. The Role of Local Communities

Suzanne Fitzpatrick led a discussion on the role of local communities, particularly around supported lodgings such as Rock Trust's Night Stop. Members agreed there was scope to expand this type of provision but accepted there are challenges in recruiting hosts which could be improved with better infrastructure. It was suggested that, for this winter, Action Group members and the Scottish Government could assist in encouraging and promoting increased uptake of current provision. Beth Watts (HWU) is doing some work in this area and will be asked to lead the working group.

ACTION: Establish a working group to take this forward and include relevant partners.

7. Community Based Social Provision

Recognising that people need social activity and interaction as well food and shelter, David Duke outlined the suggestion for each city to have an interactive map which would contain relevant and useful information about available services and provisions. Members were in agreement and highlighted the value in also being able to connect to libraries and link into other things such as social activities. It was also suggested consideration to be given to digital versions as well as learning from other cities/countries that have similar things.

ACTION: A small group to be established to consider further.

8. Structural factors with a role to play

John Mills provided an overview of the ALACHO survey on enhancing cross boundary working to reduce rough sleepers in the main cities this winter which highlighted concerns such as costs and pressure on services. It was agreed that, for the long term aims of the Action Group, wider engagement across local authorities as well as active engagement with the Scottish Housing Regulator is key. Members also agreed that the work of the Housing Options Hubs was important and there was a recommendation that the hubs could be asked to consider arrangements for more collaborative cross boundary working. Members agreed to engage with the Housing Options Hub leads.

ACTION: John to host a joint meeting between the Action Group and the Housing Options Hubs leads and to also consider wider engagement with ALACHO members.

9. Public Perception

Alison Watson outlined the approach proposed to address the public perception of rough sleeping. Members agreed that having a clear message and making strong public statements at a high level has significant impact. Opportunities to get the message out should be capitalised on, for example by using social media or high profile events like the Social Bite sleep out. It was agreed to add a column to the paper under target audience overview to note the action taken against each target group.

ACTION: Lynn McMath to coordinate activity with Action Group Members comms. teams to agree and produce key messages and narrative and to also develop a plan to engage and communicate with elected members.

10. Next meeting

In summing up Jon stated that the proposals discussed will be bundled together into a set of recommendations with key priorities and key actions around the four questions the Action Group has been focusing on.

At the next meeting, scheduled for 22 November, the Action Group will consider and sign off a final set of recommendations for question 1 and start to address questions 2, 3 and 4.

Ian Brady will attend the next meeting to share his experience with the Rough Sleepers Initiative and Rough Sleepers Unit.