

HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING ACTION GROUP – 18 JANUARY 2018

Minute of meeting

Present:

Chair: Jon Sparkes (CEO, Crisis)

Members: Russell Barr (Church of Scotland), David Duke (Street Soccer), Lorraine McGrath (Simon Community/Streetwork), John Mills (Fife Council & ALACHO), Alison Watson (Shelter Scotland), Suzanne Fitzpatrick (Heriot Watt University)

In attendance: David Signorini (Deputy Director, SG Better Homes Division), Marion Gibbs (Team Leader, SG Homelessness Team), Hazel Bartels (SG Homelessness Team), Stephen O'Connor (SG Homelessness Team), Lynn McMath (Crisis), Jane Bryce (Social Bite).

Apologies: Susanne Miller (Glasgow City Council), Mike Dailly (Govan Law Centre), Maggie Brunjes (GHN), Shona Stephen (Queens Cross Housing Association), Josh Littlejohn (Social Bite)

1. Welcome

Jon Sparkes welcomed members to the fifth meeting of the Action Group and invited roundtable introductions.

Jon followed this with an update on his meeting the previous day with the Minister for Local Government and Housing. Jon also highlighted that a key item on this meeting's agenda was to consider and agree preparations for the forthcoming stakeholder event on 30 January.

2. Discuss and agree consultancy work to support the development of rapid re-housing recommendation

Jon Sparkes invited members to consider an outline proposal from Maggie Brujnes to commission consultancy bids to develop an implementation framework for the Action Group's draft recommendation on rapid re-housing. The Action Group discussed in detail and agreed to 're-tender' for consultancy work with an extended deadline to May and revised indicative budget of £35k. The Action Group also agreed to invite bids from an increased pool of consultants who were housing professionals, with expert knowledge and able to propose innovative solutions, and set out clearly what support is needed for the Housing Options Hubs and Local Authorities. Social Bite agreed, in principle, to fund the work.

ACTION: Maggie/Suzanne to commission consultancy work to develop an implementation plan for the Action Group's draft recommendation on rapid re-housing, with a focus on how to make the necessary changes in practice

ACTION: Suzanne/Maggie to share the scoring system for consultancy bids with the Action Group

3. Updates on Q2 workstreams – focusing on how we transition from emerging ideas to firm proposals

Jon Sparkes invited updates on Q2 (how to end rough sleeping?) workstreams, highlighting that, having reached the halfway point in the Action Group's considerations of the question, there was an opportunity to consider the momentum and general direction towards making firm proposals.

Alison Watson updated the Action Group on the Q2 workstream to consider prevention of rough sleeping in Scotland. The Action Group had a detailed discussion and agreed to develop a clear 'prevention map' which identified people at particular risk of rough sleeping and set out what was already in place (previous reports or existing frameworks), to inform the Action Group's recommendations. The Group agreed the purpose would be to identify existing recommendations, processes and pathways (e.g. Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone (SHORE)), which the Group could reinforce, to ensure there are similar pathways for people leaving every public system or institution and to identify issues/gaps where it would be necessary for the Group to make fresh recommendations.

The Action Group recognised that the mapping exercise needed to also consider that the time of leaving a public institution is not the only point at which people become homeless or at risk of homelessness. The Action Group also discussed how to build on the success of Housing Options, by ensuring timely assessments and assistance are carried out by the most appropriate agency. The Action Group agreed that interventions should be hardwired into the system in order to provide pathways to support people into stable housing with the support they need.

ACTION: Alison Watson/Workstream to draw up a prevention of rough sleeping map and invite Action Group members to provide input from their areas

Lorraine McGrath updated the Action Group on the workstream to consider the issue of frontline support for people who are already sleeping rough and learning from the immediate actions being implemented this winter.

The Action Group welcomed the impact of the immediate short-term actions put in place this winter and anticipated that the success of intervention work would lead to a lasting change in behaviour and attitudes. The Action Group agreed that more work was needed to drill down into evidence from the initiative with a view to extending learning and good practice nationally. It was agreed that the SG Homelessness Team would initiate work to capture the learning from the front-line workers involved in implementing actions this winter in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow, and that the results could help put in place the right principles, processes and guidance to support a longer-term change in practice and to develop the Action Group's recommendations about how to end rough sleeping for good. The Action Group also agreed to seek further information on rough sleeping in Dundee.

ACTION: SG Homelessness Team to initiate research work to capture learning from the front-line workers implementing short-term actions this winter, and share results with the Action Group

ACTION: Alison and John to visit Dundee City Council (David Simpson, Chief Housing Officer) to discuss rough sleeping in the city

In Maggie's absence, there was no update around housing access, Maggie to be contacted about working up recommendations.

ACTION: SG Homelessness Team to contact Maggie re writing up recommendations

Suzanne Fitzpatrick led a discussion on measurement. The Action Group had a detailed discussion on what needed to be in place to measure and monitor rough sleeping, and to enable Local Authorities and other agencies to take timely action in response to changes in the scale and nature of rough sleeping in different places. The Action Group considered that street counts were not an ideal way to capture data that was reliable or useful. The Group agreed that a national system like the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) model, a multi-agency database recording information about rough sleepers and the wider street population in London, could be considered for Scotland, while recognising the need to develop and test whether it would work practically.

ACTION: Suzanne Fitzpatrick to bring forward a paper to Action Group on proposals to measure progress towards ending rough sleeping and improving homelessness prevention

The Action Group considered the workstream looking at the potential need for legislative change and agreed in principle that there was a case for looking at a legal prevention duty for public bodies, to underpin and overcome any major barriers to implementing the Group's other recommendations. The Action Group agreed the workstream should continue to explore the potential options and build a compelling case, while noting that legislation takes time so, even if a change in the law was considered necessary, there would also need to be a parallel focus on re-wiring existing systems, leadership, culture, guidance and applying best practice. This was reinforced by the evidence tabled by Shelter highlighting cases where service delivery seemed to have fallen short, and there was a perception of 'gatekeeping' from statutory service providers.

ACTION: Mike Dailly/Workstream to continue with work to build the case for legislative change.

4. Discuss approach to Q3 – consider what, if any, further work we need to initiate on Q3

Jon Sparkes invited members to consider the Action Group's approach to Q3 – how to transform the use of temporary accommodation. Members agreed that, in order to answer the question, it was essential to establish and understand in more detail how temporary accommodation operated across the country. The Action Group agreed to

commission detailed research work to assess the current position on the use and standards of temporary accommodation in Scotland - including use of B&B, furnished flats, hostels, short-term tenancies etc. It was agreed that the research would help the Group determine the optimal use of temporary accommodation in an environment where a housing-led approach is the default. It is likely that this work will be completed outwith the lifetime of the Action Group but an interim report could help inform recommendations. Social Bite has agreed, in principle, to fund the work.

ACTION: Suzanne Fitzpatrick to re-work a fully costed research proposal for looking at the current position on accessing temporary accommodation

5. Discuss and agree approach to achieving buy-in for the proposals being developed by the Action Group

Jon Sparkes invited members to consider the work required to ensure its recommendations were comprehensive and coherent, and to ensure the Action Group considered how recommendations would be implemented. The Action Group noted that the recommendations would require changes in processes and systems, perhaps in legislation, but most crucially in the culture and behaviours of the people who are part of the homelessness system. It was agreed that the Action Group should continue with the work to engage with and hear from the wider stakeholder landscape. It agreed to develop its engagement plan, and members would share out the workload to engage and promote proposals with key contacts in sectors across the homelessness and housing sector, health and social care, local government (ALACHO, SOLACE, COSLA etc), police, charities and others involved with key groups at risk of homelessness. The Action Group also agreed the importance of gaining the approval and buy-in of Ministers across government departments.

ACTION: SG Homelessness Team to circulate a list of groups and individuals that the Action Group could contact and extend an invitation to meet

ACTION: Action Group to discuss and agree engagement plan that shares workload and allows the group to engage with a broad range of stakeholders

6. Discuss approach, timing and preparations for Q4 work

The Action Group agreed to invite feedback on Q4 at the stakeholder event on 30 January and to discuss in detail at the subsequent stakeholder event scheduled for 27 March.

7. Agree content, arrangements and approach for stakeholder meeting on 30 January

Jon Sparkes invited members to consider arrangements for the stakeholder event on 30 January. The Action Group agreed it was important for the event to be a genuine two-way conversation, with the Action Group explaining the direction of proposed recommendations and stakeholders able to influence the thinking and work of the Group, both at the event and through a short survey feedback for those that may feel less able to make their voices heard at the event. The event would be held at Norton Park Conference Centre, Edinburgh and the Action Group agreed it should cover:

- What people with experience of homelessness are telling the Action Group (*evidence from Aye We Can workshops*)
- Feedback on what stakeholders said at last event, and presentation of emerging recommendations
- Group exercise and feedback on what will make the recommendations on rough sleeping work and what will stop them working
- Group exercise and feedback on what else AG needs to address as it comes to Question 4 – How to end homelessness
- Short feedback survey from attendees

Other Agreed Actions:

- **SG Homelessness team to circulate the agreed timetable of Action Group meetings and locations, and that, where possible, arrangements should not be changed once agreed**
- **SG Homelessness Team to contact HMP Edinburgh to follow up on offer to host an Action Group meeting**
- **SG Homelessness Team to circulate notes of Action Group meetings as quickly as possible after meetings**

Next meeting – 7 February 2018. A full stakeholder event will also be arranged for 30 January.