

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND STRATEGY GROUP (HPSG)

14 June 2018, VERITY HOUSE, COSLA

Attendees:

Cllr Elena Whitham (Community Wellbeing Spokesperson, COSLA, co-Chair)
Kevin Stewart MSP (Minister for Local Government and Housing, co-Chair)
Ann Landels (on behalf of Jon Sparkes, Crisis UK),
David Duke (Street Soccer)
Lorraine McGrath (Simon Community/Streetwork)
John Mills (ALACHO)
Neil Hamlet (NHS Fife)
Sally Thomas (SFHA)
Gavin Yates (Homeless Action Scotland)
Adam Lang (Shelter Scotland)
Peter Barry (SOLACE)
Dave Signorini (Deputy Director, SG Better Homes Division),
Catriona MacKean (Head of SG Homelessness Unit)
Marion Gibbs (SG Homelessness Unit)
Hazel Bartels (SG Homelessness Unit)
Lynsey McKean (SG Homelessness Unit)
Nicola Dickie (COSLA)

Apologies: Janice Stevenson (LGBT Youth Scotland); Jon Sparkes (Crisis UK)

Introductions: Cllr Whitham welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

Item 1: Minutes of last meeting: Agreed, any matters arising will be covered by the meeting's agenda.

Item 2: The emerging homelessness change programme

Members agreed they were content with the proposed approach to developing a homelessness change programme, with a high level action plan to be developed over the summer with oversight from HPSG by correspondence (no sub-group) and a detailed implementation plan to be co-developed in the autumn. Group members were keen to emphasise that plans should reflect the findings of the Health and Homelessness in Scotland report published on 19 June as well as insights from those with lived experiences of homelessness and of the frontline.

Members were particularly alive to the importance on ensuring clear communications, and that messaging needs to be consistent but tailored to members' stakeholders. The Group agreed a stakeholder mapping exercise should be carried out.

Action: SG officials to facilitate stakeholder mapping activity, aligned with programme planning work.

The Group also highlighted the need to clarify the role of the Scottish Housing Regulator. The Minister spoke of his regular engagement with the Regulator and said once the full set of HARSAG recommendations have been published, that a meeting should be secured to enable in-depth consideration of the recommendations.

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Action: SG officials to facilitate further engagement with the Regulator on how to take forward HARSAG and LGCC recommendations.

There was a discussion on the role the Housing Options Hubs have in facilitating collaboration between all partners. There was recognition that some Hubs were moving in this direction, but that more senior officers, particularly finance officers, will need to be involved to generate the significant step change needed. However, the Group also recognised that not everything will require money and that shifting behaviours and attitudes will be a fundamental part of generating change.

Action: The Minister and Cllr Whitham to meet local authorities to open the conversation on how the HARSAG recommendations will be implemented, demonstrating the clear commitment to collaboration. (The Minister and Ms Whitham led a meeting with Housing Conveners and Heads of Housing on 22 June)

Action: Consideration to be given on the need for a health economist (Neil Hamlet to advise SG Homelessness team further on the scope/benefits of such an approach)

Item 3: Communications and stories from the winter, options appraisal for Homelessness impact on measuring rough sleeping

Consideration and discussion was given to each of the three papers presented under this agenda item:

Communications Strategy update and Winter Actions:

There was discussion about the importance of radically reforming society's negative perceptions around homelessness. We need to communicate the personal stories that people empathise with, to move people away from the idea that the homeless person is somehow 'at fault' for their situation. The stories in this paper relate to rough sleeping; the Group agreed case studies of broader homelessness or great housing need should also be brought together.

The Group approved the proposal to develop a formal communication strategy alongside other planning documents, which will include development of consistent but tailored messages that are relevant to and communicated via local as well as national media.

Action: All members to send stories of wider homelessness to SG homelessness team.

Options appraisal proposal from Centre for Homelessness Impact

Members considered this to be a very good piece of work and were encouraged by the approach set out. They suggested the need to consider frontline staff and other users in the development of measurement solutions should be more prominent, and that the team should consult widely with Public Health Scotland, frontline and third sector colleagues as any new system is developed. Members encouraged the CHI to consider existing systems rather than developing a new 'gold plated' solution, and were keen to see and new system be mobile to facilitate ease of use and impact on the front line.

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ACTION: SG homelessness team to feed back to CHI.

Item 4: Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans (RRTPs)

A useful discussion took place around how the approach to engaging with partners and developing these plans could be improved. In particular, since the scope of RRTPs is far reaching, the engagement underpinning their development will need to be similarly broad based. In particular, the Group felt Health and Social Care and Housing Association partners needed to be more prominent in the engagement activity. It was suggested it might be valuable to develop a summary paper bringing together the most useful charts and tables from the recent Health and Homelessness data linkage report.

Members agreed with the suggested membership of the proposed sub group on RRTPs, with the addition that suggested John Mills of ALACHO should Chair, and there should be further representation from the NHS, the social care sector, SFHA and Directors of finance within local authorities.

Action: SG Homelessness team to continue to develop the approach for introducing RRTPs within local authorities taking the above comments into consideration, including the further development of the sub-structure.

Item 5: Update on wider context: recent HARSAG and imminent recommendations

A general discussion took place about how the work of HARSAG had informed question four – ‘How to end homelessness for good’ and how the recommendations from the first three questions had flowed well into developing this paper. The report was subsequently published on 27 June.

A.O.B

Neil Hamlet asked how we can exploit links with existing health datasets. The Homelessness team agreed to investigate this further with guidance from Neil.

Date of next meeting – 11 September 2018