

No Going Back

Breaking the cycle of rough sleeping and homelessness

July 2014



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Foreword



Nobody should be left sleeping rough on London's streets for more than one night. This aim has been broadly supported since Homeless Link proposed the target in 2006.

But in this report we look at what happens after the first few nights and, why one third of the people picked up by 'No Second Night Out' workers end up on the streets again.

The Mayor has shown strong leadership and strategic coordination for the No Second Night Out services, and his initiative to help entrenched rough sleepers who have been living on the streets has achieved considerable success. But he has done less for those people who fall in the middle, those who struggle to move on from emergency hostels to a stable home, job and life.

Many of those people returning to the streets are single, and are owed no duty by councils. We think this should be changed, perhaps following the example in Scotland.

We have heard that the support services offered to former rough sleepers can be inadequate or even inappropriate. There is a big variation in provision across different boroughs, and often a serious shortage of accommodation for people moving on from emergency hostels. Coordination with other services such as the NHS is also often poor, letting vulnerable people slip through the gaps and onto the streets.

This is reminiscent of the problems in outreach services for rough sleepers, and would benefit from the same strategic coordination the Mayor has brought to bear there.

We have also found that these problems are made worse by barriers such as 'local occupancy' rules which can bar rough sleepers from qualifying for social housing; housing benefit rates which don't recognise the cost of renting in London; and benefit sanctions which can cut off vital financial support to people whose lives are too unstable to always meet the regimented requirements of Jobcentres.

The Mayor should join us in lobbying for reforms to ensure that every former rough sleeper is given the right help to sustain a home and stable employment.

In such a wealthy city, we must end rough sleeping once and for all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'D' and 'J' followed by a long horizontal line.

Darren Johnson AM
Chair, Housing Committee

1 Introduction

London's Mayor is committed to ending rough sleeping in the capital. The No Second Night Out (NSNO) project, launched in December 2010, was designed to ensure that no-one would sleep a second night out on London's streets. NSNO has seen some success in addressing the needs of new rough sleepers and the Mayor also oversees a range of further projects focusing on London's most entrenched rough sleepers. But the statistics on rough sleeping collected for the CHAIN database indicate not only that the number of people sleeping rough in London continues to grow, but that a sizeable subset of these people are intermittent rough sleepers, returning to the streets on and off, sometimes over a period of years.

During 2013-14 the London Assembly's Housing Committee undertook an investigation into rough sleeping and single homelessness in the capital. A range of expert guests attended two meetings in May and October 2013 to discuss the key issues and offer advice to the Committee. This was followed by a site visit to a homeless hostel in January 2014.

The report which follows documents the findings of this investigation, drawing conclusions and making recommendations on how the Mayor and other key players in the field of homelessness could work together more effectively to make a difference.

Ending rough sleeping is an extremely bold aim and one which the Committee endorses. The conclusions and recommendations in this report are intended to support the realisation of that ambition.

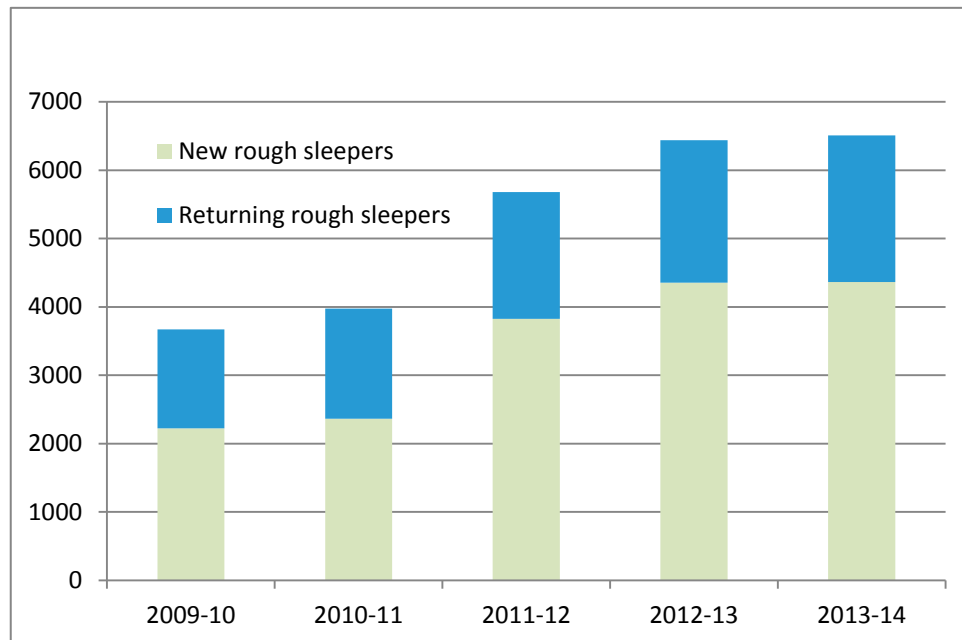
In this report the case study names used are fictional although the cases describe real people's experiences.

2 The Plight of Single Homeless People

In England there is no statutory duty placed on local authorities to provide accommodation for 'single homeless' people unless they meet strict priority need criteria. This means that men and women without dependent children must be deemed particularly vulnerable (by virtue, for example, of their age or a disability) in order to be eligible for housing. Otherwise, single homeless people are entitled only to advice. Longstanding concerns over the quality and availability of this advice have been compounded recently by funding cuts, leaving single homeless people particularly vulnerable to rough sleeping.

In London the number of rough sleepers has grown substantially in recent years. Some 6,500 people were seen sleeping rough in London at least once during 2013-14, a 64 per cent rise on 2010-11.

Growing Numbers of People Sleeping Rough in London



Source: Street to Home Report, Broadway, June 2014

Of these, one third had also been seen sleeping rough in previous years, a proportion which has remained stable over the last three years.¹

¹ Street to Home Report, Broadway, June 2014

The No Second Night Out initiative was developed in support of the Mayor's commitment to ending rough sleeping in London.

No Second Night Out

NSNO was launched by the Mayor in December 2010. It ushered in a new approach to addressing rough sleeping within the sector, establishing contact with clients as soon as they appeared on the streets and making a single coordinated offer of assistance. It links those who migrate to London back into support located where they are most likely to sustain life away from the streets, while also providing offers of accommodation (based on the assessment of each individual's needs) where appropriate. Having begun as a six-month pilot project in 2011, it has been operating pan-London since June 2012. It is currently funded until 2015.

Over the last three years, around six in ten rough sleepers have only slept one night out, and of those who attended NSNO, the vast majority (85 per cent in 2013-14) had not been seen sleeping rough again,² illustrating that NSNO has seen some success. But since around one third of those found sleeping rough in London have also been seen sleeping rough in previous years, it is clear that NSNO, though beneficial, needs to be complemented by similarly intensive efforts to help people move on. There are deeper-seated issues here which require more extensive investigation and longer-term management. This report looks at two areas where the Mayor could make a difference: the provision of better-tailored services and an increase in hostel and 'move-on' accommodation.

Single homeless Londoners who are found sleeping rough and are entitled to claim benefits are usually offered 'direct access' or emergency hostel accommodation. Such hostels may deliver a range of services or simply respite from the streets, until the client is ready to move on to 'second stage' or 'move-on' accommodation. Move-on projects offer transitional accommodation with support to assist clients in moving to independent living. The focus is on rehabilitation and resettlement programmes.

Our investigation revealed a range of issues which hamper clients' recovery from homelessness during this transition phase. Tackling these

² *Street to Home Report*, Broadway, June 2014

issues will help to ensure that many fewer single homeless Londoners end up on back on the streets.

One particularly powerful new initiative can be found in Scotland where the 2012 Homelessness Commitment legislation has now been introduced, effectively abolishing the priority need criteria. This means that all unintentionally homeless people now have a right to settled accommodation. The legislation is still in the early stages of implementation, but the Scottish Parliament's Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee published a progress report in March 2012 which noted that working towards the 2012 commitment had facilitated a culture change. In oral evidence, Rebecca Maxwell of the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives said that the "culture shift has been to recognise from a whole-council perspective that homelessness is not just a housing issue but something that we need to take a corporate approach to and which is a significant part of the agenda".³ It is this kind of cultural shift at regional and borough level that we are seeking to foster, where the silos of service provision are broken down to ensure an appropriately tailored service is provided for those who might otherwise repeatedly end up on the streets. This might involve a wide range of services, from education and skills to health and probation.

Access to the right support

Many homeless people have a dual diagnosis, for example they suffer from mental health problems as well as being alcohol- or drug-dependent. Yet evidence from Homeless Link suggests that homelessness services are increasingly generic rather than specialist in their offer and may exclude those with the most complex needs. For example, the proportion of projects offering specific services to those with mental health problems has fallen dramatically from around one in five (22 per cent) in 2011 to one in 25 (4 per cent) in 2013.⁴ And the number of projects refusing access to people whose needs were too complex for them has risen again in the last year, from 63 per cent in 2013 to 74 per cent in 2014.⁵

Furthermore, faced with severe financial pressure and the disappearance of ring-fenced funding to support homelessness services, boroughs are increasingly applying local connection clauses to their provision, offering access only to those who reside within the borough boundaries. In 2013

³ *Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee, 2nd Report 2012, Homelessness in Scotland: the 2012 Commitment*, Scottish Parliament, March 2012

⁴ *Survey of Needs and Provision*, Homeless Link, March 2013

⁵ *Support for Single Homeless People in England*, Homeless Link, April 2014

only just over half of London homeless projects accepted clients from outside the borough.⁶

Case Study: Local Connections

Louis is a homeless man in supported housing who has been living in the same borough all his life. He has HIV. Due to a recent deterioration in his health he is now taking antiretroviral drugs to delay or prevent the onset of AIDS but this also means he needs specialist help and a higher level of support which is not available in his home borough.

The combination of local connection clauses and complex needs means that many homeless Londoners are finding it more difficult to access the provision required to manage their particular circumstances. The loss of sub-regional funds from government has not helped. Not every borough needs each type of service and providing specialist services is unlikely to be economic at an individual borough level. But Duncan Shrubsole of Crisis told us that we do need a strategic overview to ensure that the necessary provision is available in the capital, either at a sub-regional or pan-London level.⁷

From the third sector providers' viewpoint fragmentation of provision borough by borough is also problematic, particularly for outreach services. Many such providers tender for contracts in a number of boroughs, yet each borough has its own commissioning system and process, with which the provider must grapple in order to submit their tender. Equally, in terms of project outcomes and validation, each borough has its own targets – there is no common standard for what success looks like. This means that providers must adapt their operations and outcomes measures for each circumstance, which is very resource-intensive. Indeed, one third sector provider told us that as much as ten per cent of their service cost is spent on the commissioning process. In short, a very localised model is unhelpful to homelessness service providers.

The Mayor's NSNO project is a good example of a service which can most effectively be provided on a pan-London basis, but it does not always receive the level of support from all the London boroughs that it should.

⁶ Fifty-six per cent of London projects accepted people without a local connection compared with 72 per cent in England as a whole (*Survey of Needs and Provision*, Homeless Link, March 2013)

⁷ Transcript of London Assembly Housing Committee meeting, 17 October 2013

Some boroughs are increasingly unwilling to take on responsibility for hosting the London-wide NSNO hubs which are essential to this provision, even where appropriate sites have been identified, presumably because of fears that the hubs would act as a magnet, drawing in more homeless people with little local return – though there is no evidence to substantiate those concerns.

We want the Mayor to examine the case for further pan-London or sub-regional commissioning to take place through the Greater London Authority. Clearly, where boroughs can offer more effective service provision on a sub-regional basis they need to work together to do so. Otherwise the Mayor may need to step in to ensure the necessary services are available in the right places.

In particular, the statutory mental health service does not traditionally work well with people abusing drugs or alcohol. This in turn excludes many homeless people from the health services they need for recovery. Working with experts on the London Health Board, the Mayor should look at how he could support the commissioning of mental health services for repeat rough sleepers who also suffer from substance abuse.

Recommendation 1

The Government should amend the priority need conditions to entitle single homeless people in England to settled accommodation. This should not affect boroughs' ability to manage their housing allocations, though they may wish to review them as appropriate, taking into account local circumstances.

Recommendation 2

The Mayor should monitor and report on boroughs' contributions to GLA-funded homelessness programmes such as No Second Night Out to encourage active participation in this pan-London challenge.

Recommendation 3

The Mayor should begin discussions with the Government and London Councils to establish pan-London and sub-regional commissioning arrangements for services supporting single homeless people and rough sleepers. The Mayor should be responsible for these arrangements. This will ensure that rough sleepers have access to a properly coordinated suite of services to help them stabilise their lives.

Recommendation 4

The London Health Commission should assess how health services can be made to join up with and complement other services which support rough sleepers and single homeless people, including whether the Mayor needs a statutory responsibility and power to achieve this.

3 Developing Supportive Systems and Policy

The reasons people become homeless are many and varied and their needs are equally individual. A 2013 report by Homeless Link assessing effective and economical innovations in tackling rough sleeping found that collaboration between agencies to increase capacity and enhance provision is a vital ingredient in successful resettlement: “People with multiple and complex needs often fall between the gaps of statutory service provision, who find it difficult to know how to support them.”⁸ The same report also concludes that because the additional demands placed on the system by entrenched rough sleepers are considerable,⁹ a tailored support offer drawing together many agencies is also cost-effective. Yet the systems of support offered by our public service provision, including access conditions, continue to be siloed and inflexible. For example:

- A Department of Health commissioned report in 2012 found that only a third of homeless people admitted to hospital in England had received any support around their homelessness. Many homeless patients were discharged straight back to the streets, often without their housing or underlying health problems addressed, resulting in frequent readmissions.¹⁰ Recent research by Homeless Link suggests some improvement has been made since then but nonetheless finds that 36 per cent of homeless patients had nowhere suitable to go on leaving hospital.¹¹
- Homeless people are much more likely (31 per cent) to suffer benefits sanctions than other Job Seeker’s Allowance claimants (3 per cent) and the most common reason for the sanction is failure to attend a JobCentre Plus (JCP) interview.¹² The Government has recently laid down welcome regulations which allow JCP work coaches discretion to disapply sanctions for up to four weeks for newly homeless people provided they are taking reasonable steps to find accommodation. But there are often valid reasons why people in hostels or other temporary

⁸ *A Year of Transition: Innovations to end rough sleeping*, Homeless Link, June 2013

⁹ Arising for example from repeat eviction, hospital admission and criminal justice costs

¹⁰ *Improving Hospital Admission and Discharge for People Who Are Homeless*, St Mungo’s and Homeless Link, March 2012

¹¹ *The Unhealthy State of Homelessness*, Homeless Link, 2014

¹² *A High Cost to Pay*, Homeless Link, September 2013

accommodation fail to attend interviews: letters may not reach their intended recipient in a hostel or the person may already have moved on, the chaotic behaviour of people with complex needs may prevent them from keeping appointments, and so on. So the regulatory easement should apply to all homeless people, not just those who are newly homeless, and for the duration of their hostel stay, not just the first four weeks. Work coaches also need to take a supportive approach when assessing whether clients are actively seeking accommodation.

- Although the principle of outcome targets applied under the Work Programme has merit in getting some people into jobs, this system tends to disadvantage vulnerable groups such as homeless people who are far from job-ready and so least likely to be supported by providers chasing targets. A recent Work and Pensions Select Committee report into the Work Programme found that “the Work Programme appears not to be reaching the most disadvantaged jobseekers”. It advocates additional support for homeless people to prepare them for engagement with the Programme.¹³ In fact within a year of its inception, St Mungo’s withdrew from the Programme as there was no call for its specialist support. The prime providers were passing over homeless clients in favour of those who might become job-ready more quickly, so no homeless clients were being referred on to St Mungo’s.

Case Study: Benefits Sanctions

Caroline is a mental health client who was assessed as fit for work. Her medication was changed when her health deteriorated affecting her sleep pattern and metabolism. As a direct result of this, she woke late on the morning of an interview with DWP, missed her appointment and was sanctioned.

Positive examples do arise of flexibilities being designed into services where partnerships are developed between the range of relevant practitioners. The YMCA, for example, has developed local partnerships with JCP staff to work to make the sanctions regime as flexible as possible. But such relationships are developed ad hoc and are therefore time-consuming for the individuals and organisations concerned.

¹³ *Can the Work Programme Work for All User Groups?*, House of Commons Work and Pensions Select Committee, May 2013, p6

Case Study: Finding Creative Solutions

The Assembly's Housing Committee visited a homeless hostel as part of our investigation and this demonstrated the value of a strong partnership between borough, third sector provider and other public services in managing these challenging times creatively. There, St Mungo's Broadway, the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham and the local police and health services are finding ways to work together to resolve issues arising from service and budgeting boundaries and cuts, which might otherwise prevent them from offering the services they know really help. For example, arrangements have been made to commission the hostel's work with clients over five years (instead of the normal two) because its residents have complex needs which take time and intensive support to address. Small personalised budgets supplement existing support services allowing the hostel staff a measure of flexibility in the service offer they can make to each individual. The Borough has worked with the local NHS Clinical Commissioning Group to make arrangements for a peripatetic nurse to attend the hostel, which would not otherwise have been possible. Where resources are effectively shared across services, managers need to be able to demonstrate a payback at some level, albeit elsewhere within the budget. Accordingly, hostel staff collect the data which monitor wider cost savings; for example, one resident had visited the local A&E on 292 occasions during the year prior to arrival at the hostel but this fell to 15 in his first year of residence, saving A&E around £32,000.¹⁴

Homeless people may also be subject to discrimination and false assumptions when accessing or engaging with public services, including the police.¹⁵ This means they are less likely to achieve positive outcomes and more likely to reject or abandon an offer of help made before positive progress can be made.

Policy problems

Our experts identified a number of policy clashes which can prevent support reaching those who are vulnerable to repeat rough sleeping. For example:

¹⁴ Based on an average cost of attendance at A&E in England of £114 (Source: *Reference Costs 2012-13*, Department of Health, November 2013)

¹⁵ See for example *Improving Hospital Admission and Discharge for People Who Are Homeless*, Homeless Link and St Mungo's, March 2012 and *Police Seize Possessions of Rough Sleepers in Crackdown on Homelessness*, *The Independent*, 24 May 2013

- The caps on household benefits and the extension of the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) to under-35s are likely to mean that more people become vulnerable to homelessness. Research by Homeless Link in 2013, for example, found that less than six per cent of properties in London are affordable to those receiving the SAR,¹⁶ suggesting that many will struggle to find accommodation in the private rented sector (PRS).
- The Social Fund (which previously offered the crisis loans and grants homeless people often used to pay for rent in advance or rent deposits) was devolved to local authorities in 2012 but not ring-fenced. This means that many local authorities have become reluctant to fund welfare assistance, and around half the financial year's allowance nationwide, including in London, remained unspent in February this year.¹⁷ The Department for Work and Pensions has also announced that it will no longer fund the schemes at all from 2015. Yet the PRS is increasingly needed to house homeless people in the absence of social or other supported housing. In fact Ieuan ap Rees of the West London Housing Partnership told us that the PRS is now the primary tool in homelessness prevention¹⁸ and all our October meeting guests attested to the importance of rent in advance and rent deposits in securing a PRS tenancy.

Case Study: Putting Together a Private Rented Sector Deposit

Frank needs to stay in his home borough as his children are at school and nursery there. His home borough does not offer assistance with rental deposits. However, he can only save £2 per week via a Credit Union towards the deposit required to move into the PRS. The alternative to speed up this process would be to approach a high APR lender but the repayments are unlikely to be affordable.

See chapter 5 below for more on the use of the PRS.

¹⁶ *Nowhere to Move*, Homeless Link, May 2013

¹⁷ See for example: *The Crisis in Welfare Assistance Explained*, theGuardian.com, 20 April 2014

¹⁸ Transcript of London Assembly Housing Committee meeting, 15 May 2013

Recommendation 5

The Mayor should write to the Ministerial Working Group on Rough Sleeping to highlight the need for greater flexibility in the design of JobCentre Plus and NHS systems, for example, to enable homeless people to participate in and realise full benefit from them.

The Mayor should also lobby the Department for Work and Pensions to broaden the easement to the Jobseeker's Allowance (Homeless Claimants) Amendment Regulations 2014 so that it covers all homeless claimants, not just those who are newly homeless, and for the duration of their hostel stay, not just the first four weeks, so that vulnerable people without stable accommodation are best supported to acquire and sustain accommodation and employment.

And **the Mayor** should lobby Government to maintain welfare assistance payments (the former Social Fund) and to be allocated a tranche of these funds which would help support access to the PRS for single homeless people across London.

In recent years, homelessness projects, especially those offering accommodation, have relied heavily on Supporting People funding. However, this funding stream is no longer ring-fenced and since 2011 has been rolled into the formula grant provided to the boroughs. Significant reductions in central government funding for local authorities have resulted in cuts to homelessness projects with over half of those experiencing funding cuts nationally reporting a reduction in keyworker support (as the bulk of project costs relate to staffing).¹⁹ Projects in London have been no exception. Borough commissioners are inevitably pressing for keen pricing which means that contracts are often bid down. Duncan Shrubsole of Crisis told us that this results in a 'race to the bottom'.²⁰

Clearly, the level of funding has a direct bearing on the quality of provision and positive client outcomes – although volunteers and peer mentors make a very valuable contribution to support programmes, core professional staff are vital, and professionalism must be paid for. Moreover homeless people often need personal coaching based on a one-to-one relationship to get to grips with the challenges they face; a schedule of discrete housing or medical interventions alone, offered by a

¹⁹ *Survey of Needs and Provision*, Homeless Link, 2013

²⁰ Transcript of London Assembly Housing Committee meeting, 17 October 2013

multiplicity of providers is simply ineffective. These services need to be linked and tailored to match client needs. Keyworkers are focused on the needs of their clients, developing an in-depth knowledge of each individual's strengths and abilities as well as their challenges. They develop a trusting long-term relationship which enables clients to take risks and engage in ways they would otherwise be unlikely to do. And they are flexible, able to recommend the particular type and method of support which will help their clients progress towards independent living.

Case study: Supporting Alex to Sustain a Tenancy

Alex had a long history of rough sleeping. He was a volatile individual, always on the brink of an outburst, with no long-term relationships he could rely upon. He had been in and out of prison. Alcohol abuse had often seen him thrown out of hostels. Since 2010 he has been working with Thames Reach keyworkers. His life has not been turned round overnight; these things take time and tenacity. Having achieved a supported tenancy in West London, he was again evicted, because of his offensive and drink-related behaviour. But the trusting relationship he has developed with his keyworker provides coherence and stability to counter the vestiges of a chaotic lifestyle. Because of this bond, his relapse was quickly addressed and he agreed to book into a rehabilitation hostel. Intense pre-tenancy support followed, building his skills for independent living. He is now managing to sustain a private rented sector tenancy and is undertaking courses which should help him on the road to recovery.

To be effective, then, keyworkers need a wide range of skills and personal qualities, together with extensive knowledge of available support systems. So funding to support qualified keyworker staff is vital in securing London's homelessness services and in minimising the demands homeless clients will otherwise make upon other public service provision.

Ten London boroughs are already accredited London Living Wage employers and two more are in the process of accreditation. Islington, for example, was one of the first two authorities to become accredited in 2012 and 92 per cent of its contractors now pay the Living Wage. The Mayor has committed to making the Living Wage the norm in the capital by 2020;²¹

²¹ 2020 Vision: Ambitions for London, GLA, June 2013

boroughs should consider whether they could support his commitment by ensuring the Wage is paid to their keyworkers.

Recommendation 6

The Mayor should continue to make the case with the boroughs for a Living Wage procurement standard, emphasising the positive impacts the Living Wage would have on keyworkers as well as the longer-term cost savings effective keyworker support offers to the boroughs and other public service budgets. He should also write to the Ministerial Working Group on this issue.

4 More Hostel, Especially Move-On, Accommodation

All of our expert guests highlighted the lack of move-on accommodation – non-emergency hostel or supported housing places – as a key issue for homeless people in London. Accurate data on rough sleeping and homelessness is hard to come by, given the essentially hidden and shifting nature of the problem. However, the most robust London data available backs up the reports made to our meetings: the number of beds, both for second stage (move-on) and direct access (emergency/night shelter) accommodation, fell by one quarter between 2011 and 2013.²² This compares with the growing number of rough sleepers noted earlier, up by 64 per cent between 2010-11 and 2013-14. In all some 6,500 individuals were seen sleeping rough at some point in London during 2013-14.²³

The Mayor is spending money on an important programme of hostel refurbishment and modernisation in London, replacing dormitory-style accommodation with self-contained units. These offer residents the privacy and independence which support speedy recovery, but also imply a loss of bed spaces as unit density is reduced. The Committee fully supports this renewal activity but notes that it serves to intensify the pressure on hostel places – London needs more hostel accommodation.

²² *Atlas of Services for Homeless People in London*, London Housing Foundation, 2011 and 2013

²³ *Street to Home Report*, Broadway, June 2014

Case Study: Arlington

Arlington in Camden is a successful mixed community facility housing social enterprises, a conference centre and a range of sub-market rent accommodation for low-income workers and homeless people. It offers support services on-site including education and training to help homeless people who are relatively close to the job market to progress towards independent living. However, with other central London hostels having been closed for refurbishment or sale (for housing), the facility has taken on residents with more complex needs who are unable to benefit from the services it offers. So the lack of hostel accommodation is in this case directly affecting the productivity of other services.

The dearth of move-on accommodation means that hostel residents can remain in emergency provision for some time, risking the institutionalisation this may cause and hampering their progress towards independent living. On average, accommodation projects in England report that one third of their clients are ready to move on but have been unable to do so, and of these, one fifth have been waiting for more than six months.²⁴ There are serious knock-on effects for those who are sleeping on the streets because the limited emergency hostel places available are blocked. The relative success of the Mayor's NSNO project could therefore be jeopardised if the supply of move-on provision further lags behind the growing need for direct access hostel places.

This issue will be compounded if move-on to the PRS continues to become more difficult. With social housing increasingly scarce, the PRS has become the first port of call for homeless people looking to move on from hostel accommodation. But our guests were all agreed that active brokerage is vital to facilitate a move into the PRS. This is needed both to enlist and incentivise landlords who, in a buoyant sellers' market, may not otherwise consider renting to a tenant who was previously homeless, and also to support tenants through the process of change and in managing their finances and new responsibilities. The Government is supporting some initiatives to assist with accessing the PRS, as are some third sector and borough providers. But in London's over-heated rental market, the purchasing power of those dependent upon capped Housing Benefit or the Shared Accommodation Rate is declining month by month, moving the PRS increasingly beyond their reach. So although in principle the PRS can offer a valuable solution to the squeeze in move-on accommodation,

²⁴ *Support for Single Homeless People in England*, Homeless Link, April 2014

its usefulness is in practice currently limited in London. Termination of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy is now the primary cause of statutory homelessness,²⁵ suggesting an increasing failure rate among vulnerable households moving into the PRS. Recent evidence to our investigation into the impact of the welfare reforms on London also identified a four-fold increase in the number of tenancy terminations since 2010.²⁶ St Mungo's Broadway therefore considers move-on to the PRS an unsustainable solution in the current environment.

Despite the pressing need for more hostel places, there is no new dedicated funding stream within the Mayor's Affordable Housing Programme 2015-18 comparable, for example, with Homelessness Change, which previously provided some £13 million of funding. The Department of Health has, however, allocated £40 million in the 2013 Spending Review to hostel places nationally. It remains as yet unclear how much of this will come to London or for what. London currently offers 28 per cent of England's total bed spaces²⁷ and the data noted earlier demonstrates the growth in need in the capital.

Moreover, in the last spending round, the Mayor received around £8.5 million per annum from the Department for Communities and Local Government to support revenue projects tackling homelessness in London.²⁸ No such funding has yet been confirmed beyond 2015, but this money is desperately needed to support vital homelessness projects.

²⁵ Most recent DCLG data indicates that termination of an AST was the reason for homelessness in 36 per cent of cases in London during the first quarter of 2014, a figure which has almost quadrupled over the last four years (GLA Homelessness Dashboard analysis of DCLG Detailed Local Authority Level Homelessness Figures)

²⁶ *Assessing the Consequences of Welfare Reform*, London Assembly, April 2014

²⁷ *Survey of Needs and Provision*, Homeless Link, 2013

²⁸ This funding supports the NSNO project as well as, for example, a rapid assessment service and emergency beds for entrenched rough sleepers, a Housing First pilot offering accommodation for entrenched rough sleepers without requiring them to go through a fixed hostel pathway, and a range of other London homelessness projects. The Mayor also received £5 million of DCLG funding over three years from 2012 to support a Social Impact Bond using money from external investors to fund a payment by results programme.

Falling off a cliff edge? Future funding for homelessness programmes after 2015 is still uncertain

Name of funding	Total funding available for London (£m)	Period covering	Description
Homelessness Change Programme	13	2011-15	Capital funding to provide eight specialist supported housing schemes across London. The programme runs until March 2015.
Rough Sleeping Services	33.8	2011-15	Revenue funding of £8.45 million per year for rough sleeping programmes. This funding is only guaranteed until 2014-15.
Social Impact Bond for Rough Sleepers	5	2012-15	Revenue funding whereby the GLA pays two providers based on their results in achieving specified outcomes (such as reducing homelessness).
Department of Health funding for new hostel places	40 (nationally)	2015 to 2018	Capital funding for new hostel places announced in the 2013 Spending Round. The Department of Health has not yet allocated London its share.

Recommendation 7

The Mayor should press hard for at least a proportionate share of Department of Health hostel funding for London which has by far the largest number of rough sleepers and single homeless people in the country. He should also press DCLG to clarify urgently what revenue funding will be available to support homelessness projects in London for 2015-16 and beyond.

Recommendation 8

The Mayor should monitor and report on the availability and location of different types of hostel accommodation in London over time to enable a strategic view to be taken on what provision is needed and where. As part of this he should assess whether the Arlington model, of low-support housing and training facilities combined with social enterprise space, could usefully be replicated in each sub-region.

Recommendation 9

As indicated in our April 2013 report *Assessing the Consequences of Welfare Reform*, **the Government** should ensure Local Housing Allowance rates are regularly reviewed and properly take account of the higher rental costs in London than elsewhere in the country.

5 Culture Change by Focusing on Prevention Rather than Cure

There is good evidence demonstrating that early intervention not only effectively prevents homelessness but also saves public money where a duty to house is owed.²⁹ A focus on prevention will drive the culture change we are so keen to promote. Government's cross-departmental ministerial working group also says that prevention should be prioritised. The Berkeley Group's 2013 debate on tackling homelessness identified prevention as one of its key issues. The Welsh Government has recently introduced a bill which will require councils to take reasonable measures to prevent homelessness. And following consultation with the Assembly, the Mayor's new Housing Strategy has been adjusted to include a new policy "to ensure that...the flow of new rough sleepers onto the streets is minimised".³⁰

Despite this, no robust data exists on how many Londoners are currently vulnerable to homelessness and the Mayor does not currently monitor this. The Deputy Mayor for Housing, Land and Property confirmed to us that the Mayor's funding thus far has not been intended to support prevention but to help people who have already arrived on the streets.³¹

But there is a need to understand the issues and size of the problem better if preventive support is to be improved. Paul Anderson of Homeless Link told us about the lack of preventive work undertaken by local authorities. This was corroborated by the Deputy Mayor for Housing, Land and Property, who indicated that 31 per cent of those presenting in need of help at the NSNO hubs had been to their local Housing Options service first, and that adequate local authority advisory services would help NSNO enormously.³² Borough Housing Options services are often criticised as undertaking a gatekeeping, rather than an advisory, role, constructing barriers which effectively prevent clients from making a homelessness application. But in the face of shrinking budgets and with no prospect of new sub-regional funding, the London boroughs, in common with local authorities up and down the country, have shown

²⁹ See for example *Homelessness Prevention: Can we afford not to?*, Depaul UK, 2011; *Evaluating Homelessness Prevention*, Department for Communities and Local Government, December 2007

³⁰ *Homes for London: The London Housing Strategy*, GLA, April 2014 (p42)

³¹ Transcript of London Assembly Housing Committee meeting, 15 May 2013

³² *ibid*

no enthusiasm for achieving the 'gold standard' service status the Government launched in April 2013. Indeed, by November 2013 just one English council had started the initial peer review process, despite 93 per cent of English local authorities having signed up to the scheme.³³

Part of the problem, noted earlier, and confirmed by Jeremy Swain of Thames Reach, is the difficulty of drawing in non-housing related services to resolve issues which continue to be viewed as a housing problem.³⁴ Our investigation heard how important word of mouth is among the homeless community: given that effective help is not on offer, many vulnerable people do not even bother approaching the council, making the size of the 'hidden homelessness' problem even more difficult to gauge.

Despite all these challenges, some homelessness service providers and their borough partners are trialling new ways of delivering better preventive support. St Mungo's Broadway, for example, is piloting a partnership with two London boroughs in which their staff with direct experience of homelessness support the local Housing Options services to resolve the homelessness issues of their vulnerable clients. As noted earlier, the availability of DCLG revenue funding beyond 2015 currently remains uncertain. This is just the kind of project which such funding could deliver, helping to demonstrate across the capital the wider benefits of preventive measures.

Recommendation 10

The Mayor should work with the boroughs and London Councils to establish what needs to happen to make the achievement of the homelessness 'gold standard' a reality.

³³ *Councils Snub Gold Standard Scheme*, Inside Housing, 29 November 2013

³⁴ Transcript of London Assembly Housing Committee meeting, 15 May 2013

6 Conclusion

The Committee supports the Mayor's ambitious aim to end rough sleeping in London. Our investigation found, however, that the priority need criteria essentially exclude single homeless people from any offer of accommodation. Review of this system, combined with a focus on preventive measures, would go a long way towards realising the Mayor's laudable aim.

A more proactive and strategic approach to homelessness is also needed. The boroughs need to work together more effectively and the Mayor needs to take a more determined lead. He should press Government not only to support the bricks and mortar projects London needs, but also to continue vital revenue funding. Then he should use this to develop a clearer overview of need and provision across the capital which would help to identify the gaps which need filling, either through sub-regional or cross-borough activity, or through his own involvement. This would help make best use of London's homelessness resources overall.

Appendix 1 Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Government should amend the priority need conditions to entitle single homeless people in England to settled accommodation. This should not affect boroughs' ability to manage their housing allocations, though they may wish to review them as appropriate, taking into account local circumstances.

Recommendation 2

The Mayor should monitor and report on boroughs' contributions to GLA-funded homelessness programmes such as No Second Night Out to encourage active participation in this pan-London challenge.

Recommendation 3

The Mayor should begin discussions with the Government and London Councils to establish pan-London and sub-regional commissioning arrangements for services supporting single homeless people and rough sleepers. The Mayor should be responsible for these arrangements. This will ensure that rough sleepers have access to a properly coordinated suite of services to help them stabilise their lives.

Recommendation 4

The London Health Commission should assess how health services can be made to join up with and complement other services which support rough sleepers and single homeless people, including whether the Mayor needs a statutory responsibility and power to achieve this.

Recommendation 5

The Mayor should write to the Ministerial Working Group on Rough Sleeping to highlight the need for greater flexibility in the design of JobCentre Plus and NHS systems, for example, to enable homeless people to participate in and realise full benefit from them.

The Mayor should also lobby the Department for Work and Pensions to broaden the easement to the Jobseeker's Allowance (Homeless Claimants) Amendment Regulations 2014 so that it covers all homeless claimants, not just those who are newly homeless, and for the duration of their hostel stay, not just the first four weeks, so that vulnerable people without stable accommodation are best supported to acquire and sustain accommodation and employment.

And **the Mayor** should lobby Government to maintain welfare assistance payments (the former Social Fund) and to be allocated a tranche of these funds which would help support access to the PRS for single homeless people across London.

Recommendation 6

The Mayor should continue to make the case with the boroughs for a Living Wage procurement standard, emphasising the positive impacts the Living Wage would have on keyworkers as well as the longer-term cost savings effective keyworker support offers to the boroughs and other public service budgets. He should also write to the Ministerial Working Group on this issue.

Recommendation 7

The Mayor should press hard for at least a proportionate share of Department of Health hostel funding for London which has by far the largest number of rough sleepers and single homeless people in the country. He should also press DCLG to clarify urgently what revenue funding will be available to support homelessness projects in London for 2015-16 and beyond.

Recommendation 8

The Mayor should monitor and report on the availability and location of different types of hostel accommodation in London over time to enable a strategic view to be taken on what provision is needed and where. As part of this he should assess whether the Arlington model, of low-support housing and training facilities combined with social enterprise space, could usefully be replicated in each sub-region.

Recommendation 9

As indicated in our April 2013 report *Assessing the Consequences of Welfare Reform*, **the Government** should ensure Local Housing Allowance rates are regularly reviewed and properly take account of the higher rental costs in London than elsewhere in the country.

Recommendation 10

The Mayor should work with the boroughs and London Councils to establish what needs to happen to make the achievement of the homelessness 'gold standard' a reality.

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