

HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING ACTION GROUP – 26 APRIL 2018

Minute of meeting

Present:

Chair: Jon Sparkes (CEO, Crisis)

Members: Lorraine McGrath (Simon Community/Streetwork), John Mills (Fife Council & ALACHO), Maggie Brunjes (GHN), Shona Stephen (Queens Cross Housing Association), Josh Littlejohn (Social Bite), Russell Barr (Church of Scotland), Suzanne Fitzpatrick (Heriot-Watt University)

In attendance: Adam Lang (Shelter Scotland), Julie Hunter (North Lanarkshire Council), Martin Reid (Perth & Kinross Council), Lynn McMath (Crisis), Catriona MacKean (Head of Homelessness, SG Better Homes Division), Graham Thomson (SG Supported Accommodation Team Leader), Stephen O'Connor (SG Homelessness Team)

Apologies: David Duke (Street Soccer), Susanne Millar (GCHSCP), Mike Dailly (Govan Law Centre)

1. Welcome

Jon Sparkes welcomed members to the ninth meeting of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group and also welcomed Adam Lang (Shelter Scotland - deputising for Alison Watson), Julie Hunter (North Lanarkshire Council) and Martin Smith (Perth & Kinross Council), both invited to contribute to discussions around the use of temporary accommodation, and Graham Thomson (Scottish Government) who had been invited to contribute to a discussion on funding for temporary accommodation. This was followed by roundtable introductions.

Jon provided a recap on the work of the Action Group to date, highlighting that the Group had started its work by making recommendations on the first of the four questions it had been set, on *what can be done to reduce rough sleeping this winter*, which were being implemented to good effect. The Group had then moved to make further recommendations in response to question 2, on *how to end rough sleeping for good*, which the Scottish Government had accepted in principle, and work was gathering pace on how these could be implemented with oversight of the refreshed Homelessness Prevention Strategy Group. The Group was now considering recommendations in response to question 3 on *how to transform the use of temporary accommodation* before it moves to the final question (4) on *what needs to be done to end homelessness*.

2. Question 3 – discuss and agree approach of recommendations to transform the use of temporary accommodation

Jon invited members to consider the Action Group's recommendations in response to question 3 and highlighted that the key aim of the meeting today was to agree the recommendations which, after some further work by workstreams, could be honed

down for sign off at the Group's next meeting on 9th May. The workshop discussion at the last meeting of the Action Group, on 15 March, had allowed the Group to identify emerging core solution areas and workstreams had been developing these into proposals for the Action Group to consider. The Action Group also welcomed the interim research findings from I-Sphere/Heriot Watt which pointed to similar solutions, but which was also backed up by statistical evidence. Jon invited leads from each of the workstreams to update the group on progress on developing proposals around:

1. What the evidence tells us works in using temporary accommodation to tackle and prevent homelessness
2. Reducing the need for temporary accommodation through prevention of homelessness and rough sleeping
3. Support from people from first identification of risk, through temporary accommodation and into settled mainstream accommodation
4. Ensuring nature, quality, standard and regulation of temporary accommodation
5. Rapid move-on from temporary accommodation
6. Financial framework to underpin transforming the use of temporary accommodation

1. What the evidence tells us works in using temporary accommodation to tackle and prevent homelessness

Suzanne Fitzpatrick updated the Action Group on the progress of the workstream looking at providing evidence on what works in using temporary accommodation. A key question for the workstream was whether to separate out the question of accommodation from support and treat as two different things. After some detailed discussion on what the precise definition of temporary accommodation should be, the Group agreed that this workstream should hone in on temporary accommodation which is used specifically for people who require a housing need to be fulfilled permanently and to bring supported accommodation under the Action Group's consideration of question 4 on how to end homelessness. At the same time, it was acknowledged that systems were also needed to identify where additional support services were required and Suzanne would liaise with Lorraine's workstream on this aspect.

Suzanne reported that she had been looking at the evidence base on temporary accommodation and that it was very limited, particularly in the context of Scotland. There wasn't a great deal aside from Shelter work on standards and the current work being undertaken for the Group by I-Sphere/Heriot-Watt. Suzanne referenced a study of statutory homelessness in England about 10 years ago for the Department for Communities and Local Government, covering around 2,000 households, which, while not in the Scottish context, provided a large scale evidence base of people's experiences, levels of satisfaction and quality of life, covering B&B, hostels and self-contained flats. Suzanne highlighted that a key finding was a significant positive impact on people's quality of life when moved to settled accommodation. It was recognised, however, that the Group needed to consider that this wasn't the case for all groups, for example, younger people (under 25) were often attracted by shorter term options and a congregated/supported living environment. The Group agreed there needed to be a different conversation about young people and what they need.

The overarching view of the Action Group was that there was a role for temporary accommodation but that there was a need to revert to a position where temporary accommodation was genuinely temporary. It was agreed that what was needed was:

- Mainstream settled accommodation (accommodation is simply accommodation)
- Supported accommodation
- Emergency stop gap accommodation (with or without support) (which might require new models)

ACTION: Suzanne to provide a summary of what the evidence on Temporary Accommodation (as opposed to supported) says, and to look to bring the English study for the Department for Communities and Local Government into a Scottish/2018 context (as far as possible);

ACTION: Suzanne to present a view on definitions and consideration of different models of temporary accommodation, including new models of emergency accommodation e.g. community hosting

2. Reducing the need for temporary accommodation through prevention of homelessness and rough sleeping, and through more rapid move-on from temporary accommodation

Jon updated the Group on the workstream looking at how to reduce the demand for temporary accommodation in the first place and increasing the outflow to permanent solutions. He reflected that there was a lot of consistency with the Group's previous recommendations for Question 2 on ending rough sleeping, for example, those covering 'no wrong door', no evictions into homelessness, ensuring public bodies are given a prevention duty so people are supported and not discharged from prisons, military, health or care systems into homelessness, affordable housing supply, and rapid rehousing which by default would lead to a reduced need for temporary accommodation, community hosting etc. The Action Group discussed in detail and agreed that the previous proposals should be the starting point for their recommendations on prevention in the context of Q3 but that this should be built on, for example to include support for people to retain the home they already have including through maximising the Housing Options approach; ensuring any prevention duty supports partnership working to avoid eviction/support tenancy sustainment and mitigating the impact of welfare reform and rent arrears.

ACTION: Jon to develop Q3 recommendations on preventing the need for TA, building from the Action Group's previous Q2 recommendations

3. Support from people from first identification of risk, through temporary accommodation and into settled mainstream accommodation

Lorraine McGrath updated the Group on a discussion paper she had prepared in partnership with support organisations and highlighted that, where temporary accommodation is required, the priority must be to ensure the support that those people using temporary accommodation need is in place right from 'Day 1' and is in place for as long as is required – including when they are in mainstream settled accommodation if that is what they need. Lorraine also stressed the importance of consistency and a rapid person centred and personalised approaches, and recognising that while some households do not require any support, or minimal

support, a significant group require intensive support and so the offer needed to respond well to a range of needs and situations. The Action Group had a detailed discussion and agreed it was important to find a way to prevent multiple assessments to different agencies for one individual so that the number of times a person must share their experience with different public bodies or other support services is minimised. It was agreed that it needs to be the right assessment by the right people at the right time. The Group also agreed that recommendations could cover:

1. Redesigning the system to empower the front line/first point of contact to act quickly and match support to the person, alongside safe, high standard accommodation
2. Ensuring support is only offered to those who need it, at the time they need it and that it is pitched at the right level of intensity, specialism and flexibility – and that support stays with the person, recognising the importance of consistency of support
3. In the context of a system where rapid access to housing is the default position, resourcing the use of temporary accommodation to provide an immediate crisis response, alongside more intensive supported accommodation options.

ACTION: Lorraine to build on her discussion paper to develop specific Q3 recommendations, including how they could be ‘hard-wired’, liaising with Suzanne on the evidence of what works in TA

4. Ensuring nature, quality, standard and regulation of temporary accommodation

Adam Lang presented to the Action Group on a discussion paper Shelter had prepared drawing on previous work with the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), in 2011, and calling for enforceable standards which not only consider the physical standards of the accommodation but also consider support and wider requirements. The Action Group discussed in detail and agreed that, where temporary accommodation is required, it was important to ensure it is of a nature, quality, standard and timescale that fits the needs and choices of the households involved, and that these aspects of temporary accommodation are effectively regulated. The Group agreed to support the Shelter/CIH guidance, subject to some tweaks, including an extension of the time limit for unsuitable temporary accommodation to 7 days to everyone, not just pregnant women and households with children. The group also acknowledged that consultation by Scottish Government would be required as part of implementation.

ACTION: Alison/Adam to finalise the Q3 recommendations on quality/standard/regulation reflecting the Action Group’s discussion and general support of the Shelter/CIH guidance

5. Rapid move-on from temporary accommodation

Jon updated the Action Group on the workstream looking at increasing the outflow from temporary accommodation. The research from I-Sphere/Heriot-Watt had highlighted various approaches to increase outflow, including flipping (i.e. changing

the terms of the tenancy without the household moving); support; increasing range of move-on options (including promoting shared tenancies and use of private rented sector/increasing proportion of RSL lets to homeless people). The Action Group discussed in detail and agreed to develop recommendations based around these approaches and increasing the proportion of social housing lets for homeless households and those at risk.

ACTION: Jon to develop Q3 recommendations on increasing the outflow from TA

3. Question 3 – discuss what needs to happen to funding to enable the move in this direction

Jon invited Graham Thomson (SG Supported Accommodation Team Leader) to update the Action Group on the financial model which currently underpins temporary accommodation. This would assist the Group in considering its proposals for ensuring a financial framework is put in place to underpin transforming the use of temporary accommodation. The group discussed in detail and noted the complexity of the system currently and that there would be elements of funding and interactions with the social security system that would need to be discussed as part of its considerations of question 4 on ending homelessness altogether. The Group agreed that this would be an area which requires rapid further work to develop recommendations that are sensitive to the complexities while addressing some of the hard questions that sit underneath. John Mills agreed to draft recommendations as a starter for ten for the Action Group to consider for sign-off at the next meeting on 9 May. Issues to be addressed would include:

1. Recognising the link between Homelessness and Local Authority Local Outcome Improvement Plans based on reducing poverty in their local areas
2. Finding ways to address the ‘poverty trap’ for households resident in temporary accommodation, caused by high rents charged and responsibility falling on the homeless household, leading low income households to have no choice but to leave employment or avoid finding employment so that the costs can be covered by Housing Benefit
3. Seeking financial support from Scottish Government for local authorities to bridge the funding gap that will be created by moving to a more equitable funding model

ACTION: John Mills to draft recommendation on what needs to happen to funding to transform TA

4. Question 3 & 4 – update on work to consult with the front-line worker network

The Action Group agreed to cover this item at the next meeting of the Action Group on 9 May.

5. Question 3 & 4 – agree next steps

Jon reminded the Action Group that it was working to a tight timetable for delivering its recommendations on questions 3 and 4 and that it was important therefore to

arrive at a position where the Group's report on Q3 recommendations could be considered for sign-off at the next meeting on 9 May. It was agreed that workstreams would work up discrete sections of the report in advance of the next meeting, liaising with members as appropriate. The intention was that recommendations on question 3 would be presented to the Scottish Government in mid-May and that the Action Group would begin its detailed discussions on question 4 - how to end homelessness – at the meeting on 9 May.

ACTION: Workstream leads to produce a short section for inclusion in the report of the Action Group's Q3 recommendations, to be considered for formal sign off at the next meeting on 9 May.

Next meeting – 9 May 2018.