

**Frontline workers meet-up notes – Friday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2017,**  
**Rivercourt Methodist Church**

**Attendees**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Job</b>
Pippa Brown	St Mungos	Horn of Africa Health & Wellbeing
Malgosia Pakulska	EERC	Advisor
Milka Witkowskie	Upper Room	PM
Ellen Physick	St Mungos	PW
Sam Green	St Mungos	PW
Michael Angus	Barons Court Project	Director
Sarah Scully	Glass Door	CW
Jakub Turek	St Mungos	Outreach Worker
Richard Johnstone	Turning Point	Drug Worker
Frances Rolfe	Barons Court Project	PW
Hannah Gousy	Crisis	Policy & Public Affairs Manager
Margaret Magnusson	CAB	Supervisor
Francine Verchin	St Mungos	Drug & Alcohol PW
Peter Harte	St Mungos	Outreach Team Leader
Alex Hill	Barons Court Project	PW
Stan Harvey	Shelter	Shelter

**Introduction**

The purpose of this meeting was to get together staff from projects in Hammersmith and Fulham that work with people who have experienced rough sleeping to explore a little the causes and solutions homelessness. The discussion was centred around 4 questions:

- How has the issue of rough sleeping in Hammersmith & Fulham changed during your time working in the borough?
- What are the factors that cause people to rough sleep in the borough of H&F?
- Are support services in H&F meeting the needs of people who are rough sleeping? How effective are support services in supporting people to move off the streets?
- How could the borough of Hammersmith & Fulham take steps to reduce rough sleeping in the borough? What changes could be made to support services to reduce rough sleeping in H&F?

The appendix shows word for word the notes which were taken by the scribes for each question. Before that is an attempt at summarising the key points that came out of the discussion.

## **Key Points**

### **Government Policy**

Universal Credit came up several times, particularly the delays in payments which can lead to eviction and the difficulties some people have using the online system.

Cuts to services obviously came up – benefits cuts, LHA shortfall were mentioned as was legal aid cuts. A couple of comments seem to link these cuts to more of the work burden going to the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector rather than government services – people using food banks for example.

### **Support Services**

Under funded hostel support is mentioned several times.

The need for dual diagnosis services was highlighted

One specific service that was mentioned was CGL, with one comment suggesting that they are not able to offer 1 to 1 key working as the money isn't available and another saying 'Not clear about CGL service'.

The threshold for accessing services is also mentioned several times in the sense that the threshold is going up and thus there is a lack of low threshold services in the borough

One very specific thing that was mentioned is that H&F has only 1 emergency bed space which is probably not enough.

***Comment added by email:*** *the increasing threshold for entry into hostels was forcing the hostel services to increase the intensity support provided, but without an increase in staff resources this is problematic and potentially unsustainable.*

***Comment added by email:*** *I just wanted to add how good the work is being done down the Broadway centre by the St Mungos team. It's proved a great resource for the community to have this drop in service in the borough and has helped link many rough sleepers into services. We signpost many of our clients there and Francine's hard work and enthusiasm is quite often a lifesaver.*

### **Accommodation**

As expected a lack of secure, affordable accommodation came up a few times but more specifically feedback included comments about evictions from PRS and hostels and S21 notices.

## **People from outside UK**

A common theme in all the question responses relates to people from outside the UK:

- There are less EEA rough sleepers now
- People with insecure immigration status will not bed down at all, preferring to sleep in the day, for fear of the consequences.
- Generally there is a lack of support for refugees and asylum seekers.

## **Communication**

Clearly from the feedback people would value more interagency communication, particular a way to share information about different services that are available in the borough. Possibly a directory of services could be produced.

## **Training**

A few comments relate to training for staff – the specific suggestions are all given in the fuller notes below.

***Comment added by email:*** *Accommodation services could do with more specific mental health training around diagnoses that are becoming more prevalent; particularly personality disorder – without sufficient understanding of and support surrounding their challenging behaviours, these clients can be evicted without sufficiently informed help in managing things.*

## **Appendix – verbatim notes**

### **How has the issue of rough sleeping in Hammersmith & Fulham changed during your time working in the borough?**

**Factors to consider:** Numbers sleeping rough, demographics, health needs, substance misuse needs

- Not as many rough sleepers now
- Not as many Eastern Europeans
- Rough Sleepers are becoming more aware of HO immigration teams
- Lot of entrenched and complex cases have been solved, moved on or passed away
- Council has a bigger presence in the borough
- Directory of Services would make it easier for people who don't work with rough sleepers
- Housing families with children is so much harder and looking for any reason to deny services
- Difficult to find accommodation for people with no recourse
- People with insecure immigration status will stay up at night and sleep in the day

- Thresholds for getting into hostels is higher
- Across the board cuts mean it is harder to access services because of access criteria
- People shoplift because they are left 6 weeks without money through UC
- People with support needs getting more abuse from the public, anger stoked by media
- Changes in immigration system – staff need training on supporting people to apply for citizenship, applying for LTR
- Benefit cuts and changes
- Cuts to services and legal aid
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector filling gaps in government
- Increase in food bank use
- Job Centre – people without c/o address, lottery of getting a good advisor

### **What are the factors that cause people to rough sleep in the borough of H&F?**

**Factors to consider:** housing pressures, evictions, immigration, substance misuse, services in the borough acting as a magnet

- UC
- Benefit delays
- Prison release – often after 6pm so people sleep out one night and then return to local area
- Section 21 evictions from PR
- Flat Closures
- Newly arrived migrants NRPF
- Not knowing where to go for advice
- Discharge from hospital with no discharge plan
- People come to H&F for better services – the borough is seen as a good one
- Discharged from NAS
- Hard to stabilise people with substance misues who are sleeping rough
- H&F doesn't turn away as many people with no local connection as other boroughs, which can be stricter
- Evictions from hostels
- Safety in numbers for BAME communities. No funding for intergration since 2009 for those leaving NASS
- Cost of living. LHA shortfall can be £200/£300 in H&F, people have to make up the shortfall
- Bank accounts – ID, proof of address, banks not accepting hostel tenancy agreements
- DV – hard to get into refuges without police report
- LGBT services – few and far between, postcode lottery
- H&F council – refusal to house people with a history of offending, why do we shun people who are ready to move on?

- Insecure tenancies – S21 notices, benefit cap < 35 have to share. Different stages of life for different people, 18 with 3 kids

**Are support services in H&F meeting the needs of people who are rough sleeping? How effective are support services in supporting people to move off the streets?**

**Factors to consider:** the range of existing services, recent cuts to services, new services created, gaps in service provision, frustrations, barriers, success stories too!

- Broadway meeting needs but need more
- More need for dual diagnosis services
- Refugees and asylum seekers do not get mental health support because they do not meet the threshold, e.g. PTSD but not psychotic
- Some H&F Services are under resourced
- Training is needed among workers
- EERC starting to see more presentations of mental health
- Not meeting EEA needs
- Support services are struggling
- Cheaper service contracts prevent people accessing treatment, CGL not doing 1 to 1 key working but some people have barriers to attending groups
- Not clear about CGL service – why can't people engage with both turning point and CGL. DAWS doesn't really support alcohol
- Hostel support under resourced. Need for more structure, work shouldn't come back to day centres and other services
- Lack of provision for NRPF
- Lack of support for no local connection
- Lack of low threshold services for people with substance misuse
- May need a night centre
- Need for more communication across the borough, ie beneficial for police to know about support services
- Lack of knowledge about other services in the borough
- Need for recreation and well-being activities
- No youth support
- Outreach shifts limited

**How could the borough of Hammersmith & Fulham take steps to reduce rough sleeping in the borough? What changes could be made to support services to reduce rough sleeping in H&F?**

**Factors to consider:** Funding, networking forums, ideas for new services, preparing for future needs, changes that are coming, lobbying, Homelessness Reduction Act

- People not sustaining tenancies – floating support that's more intensive. Bridge gap between hostels and indept living

- Life skills
- Wider spread of Housing First
- Lack of appropriate accommodation
- No support for people receiving refugee status
- Dispersal
- Refugees and asylum seekers not bedding down because of consequences
- Lack of council accommodation
- Faith/cultural help – putting tenancies at risk because of breaking rules
- UC + benefit changes
- Training for hostel staff on challenging behaviours
- More assertive MH staff in hostels to help sustain places
- Support people in ASTs to return to work
- Promote to landlords that they should support all groups
- Lack of secure accommodation
- Regulation of PRS, ensure minimum standards are met
- Deposits – encourage landlords to accept DSS by overcoming fears and practical barriers (delays / security of payments / tenancy support)
- More support in the period after refugee status is granted – without it homelessness is inevitable as there isn't time to find accommodation
- UC – landlords too quick to evict
- Trailblazer project should help to prepare for homelessness reduction act
- Online issues – training needed for clients
- Work with DWP on above issues
- ID Issues - no funding for this
- Directory of services
- One stop shop for issues with HB and Benefits
- Emergency beds needed – only 1 in the whole borough
- Physical disabilities not catered for
- Pop up hubs to look at demographics of who is sleeping rough and from there look at services