**Homelessness Forum Minutes**

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| **Date: Friday 4th September 2020**  **Time: 10.00am – 12.00pm**  **Via video call** |

**Present:** Please see attached directory

|  | **Agenda item** | **Actions** |
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| **1.** | **Welcome and Introductions**  **Minutes of the last meeting** |  |
|  | Atara Fridler (Chair of the Homelessness Forum) led introductions and welcomed the group to the meeting.  The minutes of the 21st July meeting had been circulated prior to the meeting and were approved by the group.  During the introductions, these key points were raised by several Forum members:   * There are increasing numbers of young people severely impacted by Covid facing homelessness * There has been a steep rise in evictions and services are concerned about how to respond to demand when the ban on evictions is lifted |  |
| **2.** | **Overview of rough sleeper services in post-covid landscape** |  |
|  | Anthony Ball from St Mungo’s outreach service presented an overview of current rough sleeper services with a round up of how they have been impacted by Covid measures.  Q&A  Q. If a service is working with rough sleepers who have substance misuse issues and also sex working, where can they be referred?  A. Refer to outreach service, WDP and possibly SMART service also.  Q. If someone doesn’t have links to any particular borough how should they be supported?  A. If a person is already in contact with the outreach team they can be referred to Rapid Assessment Hub.  Q. Any more information about the reconnection service not operating?  A. Anthony to follow up with Ryan for an update. | Sumathi to circulate rough sleeper overview presentation |
| **3.** | **Update on Covid Homelessness Response and Next Steps programme** |  |
|  | Laurence Coaker (LC), Head of Housing Needs at Brent Council, gave an update.  Brent’s Covid Homelessness Response  During the Everyone In period Brent Council accommodated approximately 320 rough sleepers. Since the beginning of July the housing team has started decanting people from emergency Covid hotels, especially from the Ambassadors Hotel. The decant of the Ambassadors was completed by 7th August.  The total number of people still being accommodated is approximately 90 single people in Brent hotels. The majority will be supported into the private rented sector (PRS). The single homeless team is working on supporting people to move on now. Some people in this cohort have higher support needs, and the council and partners are trying to create capacity in the existing supported accommodation pathway for some of these.  Challenges in supporting the Everyone In cohort:   * There are just under **50 EEA nationals** with no recourse to public funds (NRPF). The council has block booked 50 rooms in a hotel in Wembley until the end of December to accommodate them whilst providing support. The support will be focused on assisting with EU Settled Status applications and regularising immigration status. The support for those who have been in the UK for less than 5 years will focus on access to employment or, if there are complex needs, referring to drug & alcohol agencies with a view to recovery in order to access employment. * A further challenge with supporting this group is whether MHCLG might allow any extension to the confirmed 12 weeks of funded support? Anecdotally LC has been informed by government that the council might be able to continue accommodating members of this group beyond 31st December if they are very close to achieving a solution e.g. a response on their settled status is imminent or they are about to start employment. * There are **11 people from outside the EEA with no recourse to public funds** – and there is no clear support and accommodation option for these. Brent is one of about 12-13 London local authorities who have a significant number of people from outside the EEA in their Everyone In cohort. The LA group is working together to find a solution for this cohort. * Once their current Everyone In accommodation ends this group doesn’t really have a further option. The Single Homeless team is working with these 11 individuals to assess their needs but soon will have to start exploring support and accommodation options through, for example, charities, free legal advice etc. * The Forum’s migrant homelessness project is currently developing funding bids for a free legal advice service for this cohort.   Update on Brent Council’s bids for MHCLG Next Steps funding   * The **£161m capital fund** (via GLA) – the council has put in bids under this grant programme to increase the provision of supported accommodation in Brent. This provision includes: an 11 bed unit in Wembley for people with high support needs, two blocks of self-contained studios to provide move-on accommodation, extended Housing First provision and a joint West London application for female-only accommodation for women with complex needs for all West London boroughs but primarily for clients from Brent, Ealing and Hammersmith & Fulham boroughs * The **£105m capital fund** (via MHCLG) – Brent Council has submitted a bid to: continue supporting the 90 eligible people in hotels / B&Bs accommodation, move-on costs and support; cover the cost of accommodation, security food and support for the 50 EEA nationals with no recourse to public funds until 31 December 2020, and for winter shelter provision (essentially to provide an emergency shelter service for the same cohort that would normally have accessed Shelter of Sanctuary).   The council expects to receive the bid outcome by the end of September.  Further questions / comments / discussion from the group:   * Sufra is still providing hot meals and can continue to provide these in new emergency accommodation * Q. Jean Demars from the Public Interest Law Centre asked whether an immigration assessment has yet been carried out with any of the migrant rough sleepers with NRPF   A. The Housing Needs team has been assessing the 50 EEA nationals - identifying people who can apply for settled status or have been in the UK for less than 5 years. LC noted that a lot of issues around securing ID have been reported   * The council has not included any accommodation or support provision for migrant rough sleepers from outside the EEA with no recourse in the bid to the £105m fund. MHCLG have expressly said that the council cannot bid for support to this cohort although this exception is not included in the grant guidance. * Q. Does anyone have information about charities that support with providing accommodation for people with NRPF? Please share details with Coco Khan * Jean Demars noted that the GLA has established a system of immigration advice and that there is capacity in this service to advise more clients. An initial assessment for this cohort would be very useful. LC and CK confirmed that people in Brent’s Everyone In cohort can access free advice from the North Kensington Law Centre and 5 rough sleepers have already been referred (a mixture of those from EEA and outside EEA). * Note as well that some migrant rough sleepers from both inside and outside the EEA might have status already. * When Brent welcomed 50 refugee families there was a lot of community activity to support them; is it worth looking into community support options for rough sleepers with no recourse? The organisation Refugees at Home is an example. * Q. Are any of these people young people / unaccompanied minors?   A. No   * Jacqueline Carr (JC) from Citizens Advice Brent asked for an estimate of the number of rough sleepers with NRPF and from outside EEA across London? Is it possible to link with other London boroughs to join up support?   LC reminded about the group of the 12 or 13 London boroughs that are meeting regularly on this issue. A very rough estimate of this cohort size across London might be around 200   * A group member shared information that Praxis is joining the STAR partnership offering advice to people with NRPF and this is possibly a useful resource. * Forum members expressed real concern that there is no new provision for rough sleepers coming to the street. How are we going to look after this group?   Reminder that Brent has included provision for a winter shelter in its bid to MHCLG | Jean (PILC) to share GLA immigration advice scheme details for circulation  Crisis Brent to follow up community support for those with no recourse |
| **4.** | **New Homelessness Forum theme: evictions** |  |
|  | Atara Fridler (Chair / AF) introduced a proposal for a new Homelessness Forum theme focused on evictions. Crisis and Citizens Advice Brent have shared concerns that the ban on evictions will soon be coming to an end (20th September) and local services are seeing increasing numbers of people involved in evictions proceedings.  AF & JC propose that the Homelessness Forum could focus more on this issue by setting up a short-term task & finish group to develop joint responses to the ending of the eviction ban, and also to share intelligence on what is happening on the ground i.e. in Brent Courts and with illegal evictions.  JC noted that we know about the national picture but we don’t know what is happening with local courts and what the local authority will do. Training and capacity-building will also be an important aspect of this new theme.  Call out to the forum for people to sign up as members of the evictions task and finish group – please contact Sumathi if you would like to join.  Discussion:   * Jacky Peacock from Advice 4 Renters reminded forum members that A4R has a specialist legal team that helps tenants to defend possession proceedings - please suggest to people facing this situation to get in contact. * Note that although the ban on evictions ends on 20th September, the notice period for new possession action has been extended to 6 months. However landlords aren’t waiting that long and might start unlawful evictions. * The group agreed on the importance of promoting awareness of their rights to tenants. * A question about whether the police ever attend forum meetings? As the police will play important role if illegal evictions are likely to rise. Is it worth reaching out to them and offer training to prepare for this issue? Safer Renting has just produced report that recommends increased training for police. Can Brent Council support communication with police? * The group briefly discussed running a training session for forum members on the legal framework around evictions and also the impact of covid measures on evictions procedures. This will be picked up in the evictions task & finish group * Please send feedback on training needs to Sumathi. | If interested in joining the evictions task & finish group, contact Sumathi |
| **5.** | **Migrant Homelessness Update** |  |
|  | * SP provided an update on migrant homelessness project development * The group agreed that it will be important to have a strong community grounding for the project and adopt a holistic approach so that people feel confident and supported to engage with the immigration advice service. Sumathi to link with the network of local Mutual Aid groups and Brent Multi-Faith Forum |  |
| **6.** | **SWEP / winter shelter provision planning** |  |
|  | * Council funding bid includes 30 bed spaces in B&B which will run from Jan – early April * May be possibility of creating a bubble of 8 vulnerable rough sleepers to be accommodated in Pound Lane but still awaiting guidance from MHCLG on what will be possible. * The group will next meet on 25th September and /or very soon after the council receives the outcome of its Next Steps grant bid | Ryan Fuke / Sumathi to circulate next SWEP sub-group meeting details |
| **7.** | **Any other business** |  |
|  | * **Homeless health research in Brent** – Crisis Brent will be undertaking research into homeless health focusing this year (year 1) on carrying out scoping research now to understand what we do and don’t know about homeless health in the borough. Recommendations from this year’s report will help us decide on the focus for research in years 2 and 3 of the project. If interested in learning more or getting involved please contact Sumathi. * Penny Karioki from NIA asked to send out **referral forms for NIA’s service** (for women exiting prostitution) * Jacky Peacock noted that Advice 4 Renters has noted **tenancy sustainment issues**. People are being placed in supported accommodation but are not receiving much support to sustain their tenancy, especially where there is challenging behaviour and landlords start possession proceedings. * Chrystalla Karvella from **Homeless Link** provided an update on upcoming community of practice events (Sumathi to circulate) * Chrystalla also provided an update on the training offer to Brent Homeless Forum via the Homeless Link **PLUS Project**. Homeless Link will carry out a training needs analysis over the next 6-8 weeks with a view to course delivery starting in November 2020. * **Covid testing:** a question from CNWL about whether, during the course of decanting hotels, there has been any regular covid testing of individuals being moved around different accommodation sites?   LC responded that covid testing happened once but not since as the decant process is a daily / weekly trickle of move-on rather than in blocks. It is logistically difficult to run covid testing every week however LC to raise this in the group looking at health needs of the  Everyone In cohort. | AF & JP to discuss tenancy sustainment support issues outside the meeting |