

Brent Homelessness Forum

Friday 28 Apr 2023, 10:00 – 12:30

Minutes

| Agenda item | Action |
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| <p>1. Welcome and introductions</p> <p>Apologies: Max Griffiths, WDP; Gerard Kelly, NHS ICB; Versha Varsani, NHS; Subu Oluwole, Depaul; Sandra Ademola, DWP; Penny Karioki, NIA; Chris Dutton, Homeless Link; Nicola Hayler, Shelter; Kristine Wellington, Brent CVS; Cllr Tariq Dar.</p> <p>In attendance: Atara Fridler (Chair), Crisis; Lucien Lawrence, Housing Justice; Laurence Coaker, Brent; Tessa Munro, CVS Brent; Ross Watkins, Emmaus SLC; Helena O’Connell, WDP; Andy Brown, Brent Public Health; James Blackmore, Rumi’s Kitchen; Ammaarah Felix, Sufra; Glaiza Padulla, Rumi’s Cave; Piotr M, Crisis Member; Jessica Costar, Young Roots; Jatin Patel, Each Counselling and Support; Michelle Johnson, NHS NWL ICB; Anne Airebamen, NHS NWL ICB; Josefa Baylon, NHS NWL ICB and Brent; Sharon Graham, Centrepoint; Adam Rees, St Mungos; Steve Davies, St Mungos; Jacqui Crane, Groundswell; Archana Syamkumar, Homeless Pathway Team; Carolyn Connage, SMART; Noah Okunromade, Brent Community Protection Team; Cassie Mouricette-Bailey, Brent; Coco Khan, Brent; Holly Cooper, Crisis.</p> <p>Actions from previous forum were followed up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- NHS and SMART teams linked together.- DWP linked Council with gang violence mapping service. | |
| <p>2. Rough Sleeping in Brent: Update</p> <p>Ryan presented slides.</p> <p>TFL outreach is being taken over by Rapid Response which should improve outcomes. Some changes in CHAIN verification process may come about following the women’s census – may verify people sleeping in places such as restaurants to uncover hidden homelessness.</p> <p>Intermittent rough sleepers are mainly people leaving institutions such as hospitals/prison and supported housing placements – work done by Pathway and Groundswell has been really beneficial around this.</p> <p>SWEP may be taken into 7 London boroughs – 3 hubs within 7 boroughs although this is still being discussed. West London Women’s Service is up for tender. New complex male service due to open at Craven Park with support run by Rough Sleeper team. Laurence advised the Council have put in a SHAP funding bid – Cassie is working with Local housing association Innisfree to acquire a 6 bed unit for rough sleeping couples and under 35s with complex needs.</p> | |

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| <p>Andy asked if we share a sense that rough sleepers are moving around London - Ryan advised there are specific meetings about rough sleepers who move between boroughs and Brent also do joint outreach with Barnet once per month to identify these transient rough sleepers. Andy also requested input around new criminalisation of begging as some support from St Mungos would help against this (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/anti-social-behaviour-action-plan/anti-social-behaviour-action-plan). Andy also updated group that the extension for funding drug and alcohol support for rough sleepers has gone through.</p> | |
| <p>3. Brent Night Shelter exit and the Night Shelter Lettings Network</p> <p><u>Glaiza and James gave reflections on this year’s shelter:</u></p> <p>It is their 3rd time being involved with the night shelter. They were told that the model wasn’t safe during COVID pandemic but were able to re-open this year. Used the circuit model – each faith venue had a weekly night slot and they used the same faith venues as previous years. Beds would be transported between venues at 7:30am as each venue had active services to run. Crisis and Mungos helped with route-planning for guests to each venue. All venues provided dinner and breakfasts with lights out around 11pm. There were not too many incidents where volunteers or police would need to get involved. Shelter was open for 12 weeks. James and Glaiza gave appreciation for Crisis and St Mungos for completing good vetting process - the volunteers were just congregation members, therefore guest criteria was low support needs.</p> <p><u>Piotr (Crisis Member) provided his lived experience perspective:</u></p> <p>Piotr was sleeping under a bush where he met a friend who he pooled money for a tent with; but temperatures went down to freezing and this led to him having suicidal thoughts. He called shelters that couldn’t help and asked his mother to get him a ticket back to Poland but she refused. Due to his mental health, he went to Park Royal hospital who called police on him when he requested assistance. He was then taken to Northwick Park Hospital who linked him in with Crisis and St Mungos. Initially he stayed in accommodation provided by Mungos for 2 weeks but it closed and he was moved to alternative accommodation. He had nothing but the clothes on his back and his ID so Mungos helped him with his papers. He then spent 2 weeks staying with a friend who would drink a lot and threw him out. Piotr then went to Crisis Brent where he was referred into the shelter. He advised he made a good choice accepting a space and he met good people there. He has been staying in a hotel since the shelter closed and secured full-time work for ABM whilst staying at the shelter.</p> <p><u>Lucien presented slides:</u></p> <p>Housing Justice are helping night shelter residents transition from communal to single rooms. New project NSLN (Night Shelter Lettings Network) is essentially making a ‘Rightmove for the homeless sector’ combining all the DSS listings from</p> | |

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| <p>different providers into one website. This will give more agency to people experiencing homelessness as they can go through the website themselves – there is funding to apply through the portal for rent in advance/deposit. 2 people accommodated via NSLN from Brent Night Shelter this year.</p> <p>Rents collapsed completely during pandemic and have since risen quite a lot. Article 4 legislation will make it harder for landlords to run HMOs.</p> <p>Laurence suggested we should look at opening the night shelter earlier this year and advised he should be able to secure the funding to do so. Aim to start planning in September/October to open in December 23 rather than January 24.</p> | |
| <p>4. Re-shaping of Brent’s Single Person’s Service</p> <p><u>Update on service relocation:</u></p> <p>Currently receiving 142 homeless applications per week in Brent – 80 are single people. Online application and telephone assessments are being abandoned in favour of face-to-face service in Harlesden. Aim to open in June but will depend on building works. Soft launch to begin with – Council and SHPS service to start with, latter half of the year will invite services to co-work from the new site eg substance misuse, mental health and employment services. Laurence asked the group to help manage expectations around the service – social housing is not a remedy to homelessness, even PRS is extremely difficult in the current market. Emphasis is on suitable accommodation, not perfect. Laurence also asked for us to help with comms – tell people about the relocation to prevent people turning up to the civic centre at crisis point. Will still have some assistance available in civic centre for people who can’t get to new site due to accessibility needs.</p> <p>Holly and Atara raised that there should be other options for people who cannot present in person and would favour remote contact whether that be due to risk issues/domestic abuse/neurodivergence. Laurence advised there will be some discretion and the service must be accessible for all.</p> <p><u>Streamlined asylum process due to backlog of applications:</u></p> <p>Those who applied from 1 of 5 countries (Afghanistan, Eritrea, Libya, Syria and Yemen) before June 2022 will be fast-tracked – no interview with Home Office, just a questionnaire. This is because 98% of applications are successful from those 5 countries. Asylum Seekers are the responsibility of the Home Office, it’s only when they get status that they are eligible for housing. Brent has the highest number of asylum seekers: 366 single people and 15 families. About 50% are in hotels and other half are making their own arrangements. 98% will get their status and be evicted from NASS accommodation giving them 56 days to find a job and somewhere to live in London – expecting big surge in homelessness due to this.</p> <p>Working group meeting happening next week to discuss what support can be offered – solution to housing is currently needed. Laurence asked the group to make it clear to the 50% in their own temporary arrangements that there is lack of housing and if they can, stay in their arrangements whilst they get support to get employment, then they have a better chance to find accommodation. He advised that if they contact the Council it is unlikely they will be owed housing duties.</p> | <p>Laurence to circulate comms flyers once completed with launch date</p> |

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| <p>Influx due to come in May-July although already seeing a few. Likely to see a spike in rough sleeping with the 50% whose hotel bookings will end.</p> <p>Jess advised Young Roots work in the hotels – run social centre on Mondays – work with under 25s. They are seeing varied lengths of time for when people are getting eviction letters following their status being granted. Jess advised they are being given 28 days notice, not 56.</p> <p>Some questions in the room about who should be involved in the working group – Andy clarified this meeting is initially for Council officers and they will be discussing what other services should be involved.</p> <p>Lucien asked whether the shared LHA exemption would apply to those under 35 in NASS accommodation – Cassie advised those staying in council accommodation were exempted during COVID but unlikely that applies now.</p> | |
| <p>5. CMARAC Service</p> <p>Noah presented slides.</p> <p>CMARAC usually receive referrals for single people – they do work with families but not single under 18s (this would be social services). Overarching aim is to safeguard individuals. Majority of those they work with have dual diagnosis of mental health and substance misuse issues. Praise given for SMART service as many services cannot/do not work with complex needs. Current challenge is that many people with complex needs are living in independent accommodation that doesn't suit their needs. Referrals can be made for people with 1 or 2+ needs – even if referral is not accepted, the team can signpost.</p> <p>Atara asked if referrals can be made for hoarding – Noah advised they can and that hoarders will often have other support needs. Noted that referrals should also be made to social services for hoarding cases as there may be underlying mental health needs. Ryan mentioned that Hoarding UK have a checklist that is helpful.</p> <p>Atara advised Crisis had internal training on sharing information on grounds other than consent such as public interest and vital interest – suggested that we should do something like this across the sector as consent is often a barrier to progress.</p> | <p>Atara to ask Daniel Morris for follow-up on information sharing around safeguarding.</p> |
| <p>6. AOB</p> <p>Ryan praised Glaiza and James for running the shelter and dealing so well with any incidents that happened. Group agreed that both Glaiza and James did not give their hard work enough credit.</p> <p>Josefa mentioned that the nominations for Brent's Health and Social Care awards are open.</p> | <p>Josefa to share details about health and social care awards.</p> |