

MINISTERIAL WORKING GROUP ON PREVENTING AND TACKLING HOMELESSNESS
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**5-6pm Wednesday 24th April
Room W1, House of Commons**

Attendees

Mark Prisk MP, Minister for Housing, DCLG (Chairman)
Lord David Freud, Minister for Welfare Reform (DWP)
Jeremy Wright MP, Minister for Prisons and Rehabilitation (MoJ)
Mark Harper MP, Minister for Immigration (HO)
Edward Timpson MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families (DfE)
Richard Blakeway, Deputy Mayor for Housing, Land and Property (GLA) - Guest

Officials

Caroline Pusey, MoD	Stephen Hall, DWP
Richard Ward, BIS	Kevin Woods, DfE
Alison Powell, DH	Martin Gibbs, DH
Dora Addei, MoJ	Roger Wilshaw, DCLG
Katie Hewett, DCLG	Alice Bradley, DCLG
Steve Guyon, DCLG	

Apologies

Mark Francois MP, Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans (MoD)
Anna Soubry MP, Minister for Public Health (DH)
Matthew Hancock MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Skills (BIS)

Agenda item one: Policy update

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed members and Richard Blakeway to the meeting.
- 1.2 DCLG have made good progress on the rough sleeping agenda, recent positive developments include:
 - The continued national roll out of *No Second Night Out* (building on the Mayor of London's pilot) – with all English local authorities committed to launching local versions of the scheme by the end of 2013; and,
 - Launching of StreetLink – a national phone line, website and mobile phone app (run by Homeless Link and Broadway) which enables members of the public to connect rough sleepers with local services. There has been over 15,000 contacts from members of the public resulting in 4,629 referrals.

Agenda item two: Migrant Rough Sleeping

- 1.3 The Chairman noted that over half of London's rough sleepers are from outside the UK. He explained that a consistent approach to enforcement and joined up working are critical to reducing rough sleeping.
- 1.4 Mark Harper said that the Home Office was committed to working closely with DCLG, local authorities and other partners to deliver effective enforcement action. He updated colleagues on the recent restructuring of the UKBA and

the establishment of the Immigration Enforcement command within the Home Office.

- 1.5 The Home Office are already working closely with the Romanian and Bulgarian Governments and the Police to prepare for the lifting of labour restrictions in the New Year. Mark Harper would soon be meeting the Romanian and Bulgarian Ambassadors and would possibly visit these countries later in the year. He was keen to have a wide ranging conversation with them, representing cross government interests including rough sleeping.
- 1.6 Richard Blakeway said that many London rough sleepers were from outside the EEA. He thanked the Home Office's Immigration, Compliance and Engagement (ICE) teams for their continued partnership working with Boroughs and emphasised the Police's key role in enforcement action. He said that Boroughs frequently reported that the Habitual Residence Test was not consistently applied to migrant Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants.
- 1.7 Lord Freud noted that the evidence currently available on the application of the Habitual Residence Test by Job Centre Plus was inconclusive and the problem needed further investigation. DWP would work on a small pilot with the Police and ICE teams to further explore this issue and to consider mechanisms for reporting migrant rough sleeping cases to DWP.
- 1.8 The Group agreed that the Before You Go campaign was an effective mechanism to reach prospective migrants before they travelled to the UK. The message on the importance of being properly prepared was best delivered through unofficial channels (like the Catholic Church and the voluntary sector).

Action: DCLG officials to continue consistent engagement with ICE teams and the GLA.

Action: Home Office to continue to work with local authorities in migrant rough sleeping hotspots, drawing in the support of wider partners as necessary.

Action: Mark Prisk to write to Mark Harper and Working Group members to set out DCLG's plans to work with The Passage to expand Before You Go to Romania and Bulgaria, using unofficial channels.

Action: Departments to feed into Mark Harper's discussions with the Bulgarian and Romanian Embassies.

Action: DCLG to work with Departmental colleagues to provide DWP with a list of migrant rough sleeping hotspots for the pilot work on the application of the Habitual Residency Test.

Agenda item three: No Second Night Out data

- 1.9 The Chairman explained that at the last meeting, Lord Freud had asked how we can better track the progress of the No Second Night Out programme. DCLG set out proposals to use London's CHAIN database to publish data on how many times and the number of quarters people were seen sleeping on the streets per year. As CHAIN is unique to London, a different approach

would be needed outside of the capital. DCLG proposed to ask Homeless Link (voluntary sector umbrella body) to gather information on local No Second Night Out schemes.

- 1.10 On balance the Group felt that it was beneficial to publish data but that further work was needed to ensure that it was robust and that the juxtaposition of CHAIN, Homeless Link and rough sleeping count data was not confusing or misleading.

Action: DCLG to consider further how to present NSNO statistics in a clear and robust manner.

Action: DCLG to work with Homeless Link to consider how best to capture NSNO's progress with local authority data from primary urban areas and/or areas with a clear rough sleeping problem.

Action: Mark Prisk to write to Working Group colleagues setting out DCLG's approach.

Agenda item four: Roundtable discussion on progress in delivery commitments from *Vision to End Rough Sleeping*

- 1.11 The Chairman thanked Departments for providing delivery updates on their commitments from the first Working Group report, *Vision to End Rough Sleeping* (published in 2011). He explained that he intended to focus on these today and look at the commitments from the more recent report, *Making Every Contact Count* (published in 2012) at the next meeting. He was encouraged that such good progress was being made.

- 1.12 Edward Timpson said that the Department for Education were working on a number of policies to improve access to stable accommodation for care leavers. In October he had issued:

- A care leaver's data pack to help local authorities understand outcomes for this group;
- A letters to Children's Services Directors to remind them to prioritise services for care leavers with a particular focus on suitable and safe accommodation and increasing the Setting Up Home Allowance to at least £2,000; and
- Held discussions to strengthen Ofsted inspections on services for care leavers – again with a focus on accommodation.

- 1.13 Martin Gibbs said that the Department for Health would shortly be making an announcement on plans to improve the hospital discharge process for homeless people.

- 1.14 Caroline Pusey explained that the Ministry of Defence were working on a home purchase scheme for service personnel.

- 1.15 Stephen Hall said that DWP had conducted a review of employment services for homeless people improving the skills of Jobcentre Plus staff and promoting the exchange of knowledge with the homelessness voluntary sector.

Action: All Departments to maintain the momentum in delivering commitments from both Working Group reports.

Action: DWP to provide an update at the next meeting detailing the outcomes of their review or employment services for homeless people.

**Secretariat
April 2013**