

MINISTERIAL WORKING GROUP ON PREVENTING AND TACKLING HOMELESSNESS
--

TUESDAY 12 OCTOBER 2010 3PM – 4PM
Large Ministerial Room, House of Commons

Attendees

Grant Shapps MP	CLG (Chair)	Kate Oakes	DH
Paul Burstow MP	DH	Tracey Vennai	MOD
Lord David Freud	DWP	Usha Choli	HO
Crispin Blunt MP	MOJ	Hannah Gregory	UKBA
Tim Loughton MP	DfE	Hugh Allen	DWP
Jenny Edwards	Homeless Link (part)	Savas Hadjipavlou	MOJ
Leslie Morphy	Crisis (part)	Shirley Trundle	DfE
Richard Blakeway	GLA (part)	Deborah Persaud	BIS
Neil McDonald	CLG	Ruth Stanier	CLG
Vida Paittoo	CLG	Katie Radcliffe	DOH

Apologies

John Hayes MP	BIS	Andrew Robathan MP	MOD
James Brokenshire MP	HO		

Agenda item 1 – Welcome and Introductions

1.1 The chair welcomed members to the second meeting of the group. The purpose of the meeting was to hear directly from the homelessness sector about barriers that are blocking progress, and to consider the evidence and policy review completed by officials and recommended next steps.

Agenda item 2 – Homelessness Sector Views on Key Priorities

2.1 Jenny Edwards, Leslie Morphy and Richard Blakeway presented their key priorities, highlighting what members could do to resolve issues which require concerted effort across government, including:

- tackling the influx of migrants who accounted for more than half of London's rough sleepers in the first quarter of 2010-11;
- ensuring Housing Benefit changes do not impact on safety net homelessness services for the most vulnerable;
- capturing and flagging people at high risk of homelessness and with multiple needs in official monitoring and administrative systems;
- better access for homeless people to health provision, including those below the threshold for referral to specialist services, and better access to training to help homeless people progress towards work;
- more support for single homeless men and women (who do not generally fall within the 'priority need' groups under the homelessness legislation) - Crisis are working with CLG on improved support for single people to access private rented housing;

- ensuring local authorities take responsibility for people reconnected to their home area from London and prevent a return to the streets;
- the importance of measures to prevent people coming on to the streets, including stopping the discharge of people from hospitals and prisons with nowhere to go.

2.3 Ministers asked a number of follow-up questions, including identifying the need for a fine-grain analysis of the different routes on to the streets, and exploring the impact of a care background and young runaways. The chair thanked the experts for their contribution and the papers they had prepared for circulation (attached) setting out their key priorities and recommendations.

Action: Officials to present to the next meeting a fine-grain analysis of the different routes on to the streets, to inform which prevention strategies need to be prioritised

Action: Departments to consider how the priorities and recommendations highlighted by the external experts can be addressed

Agenda item 3 – Report from Officials’ Group: Evidence, Policy Review and Proposed Next Steps

3.1 Ruth Stanier introduced the report. While there is good progress in bringing people in from the streets, flows on to London’s streets have reached around 3,500 a year. A quarter are destitute East Europeans and a third are ex-offenders. For others, family breakdown is the most common trigger, particularly where people already have underlying mental health and/or substance misuse issues. For former rough sleepers, there are a range of effective projects providing joined-up support, but major challenges remain in bringing services together in the most cost-effective way. The proposed next step is to develop a shared priorities document jointly with external partners to set out a clear plan of action, including engaging with local authority Leaders.

3.2 The chair sought agreement from the group to eliminate bureaucratic blockages to tackling homelessness, and for draft shared priorities to be developed for discussion at the next meeting. A report on the group’s work should be sent to the Social Justice Committee. This approach was agreed. It was proposed also that the work should report to the Public Health Committee, and we should consider the social care ‘co-production’ model led by the LGA and ADSS. We should also look at the framework contracts being put in place by DWP to enable rapid targeting of available funding.

Action: Officials to work with external partners on draft shared priorities for the next meeting; and report progress to the Social Justice and Public Health Sub - Committee.

4.1 The next meeting would be scheduled for January 2011.

MWG Secretariat October 2010