

2016-17 Partnership Review

Shaftesbury PLC & The Connection at St. Martin-in-the-Fields

Accommodation

- **2,369** people accessed our practical and advice services receiving support with their homelessness and housing.
- **2,535** rough sleepers were contacted by The Connection's street outreach team and encouraged to access relevant support services.
- **776** people stayed in our Emergency Night Centre, spending an average of 9 nights (median) before moving into longer term accommodation or accepting reconnection to support services in their home area.

Employment

- **706** people accessed The Connection's in-house training, education & employment service to improve their employability and job prospects.
- **81** people were supported into work and **241** voluntary placements undertaken.

Meaningful Occupation and Social Inclusion

- **500** people took part in a range of activities and groups designed to build life skills and self-esteem including mindfulness, art, stop gambling, and anger management support.
- **26** homeless people took part in the Step Up volunteering programme completing placements across services at The Connection including the Day & Night Centre, Kitchen, IT groups, and Fundraising.

Overview: Rough Sleeping in Central London

Across the borough of Westminster, numbers of rough sleepers have dropped – in March 2016's street count, **304** individuals were seen bedded down; in March 2017's count, this had reduced to **266**.

Helping people away from the streets quickly prevents people becoming entrenched in a street lifestyle. Working with partner agencies, The Connection has ensured that in 16/17, 68% of new rough sleepers spent no more than one night on the streets of London. In the last quarter of 16/17, 97% of new rough sleepers which our outreach teams made contact with did not return to the streets for a third night. People either returned of their own volition or were offered a timely and effective service which resolved their homelessness.



Spotlight on Soho

However, we do recognise that there has been an increase in the number of people rough sleeping in Soho. This has been in tandem with an increase in chaotic drug use in this area with Spice a major problem within the rough sleeping community. There is a cohort of chaotic rough sleepers, with multiple complex needs, who are entrenched in a street lifestyle and “living on the streets”. This group of people need intensive and prolonged levels of support.

Our workers have received extra training on substance misuse and anti-social behaviour, and we continue to support the Metropolitan Police in Operation Kaskara, which commenced in January 2017. This operation aims to reduce Spice-related Anti-Social Behaviour. This issue is linked predominantly, but not exclusively, to the rough sleeping community; drug dealers come in to the area to target vulnerable individuals within the rough sleeping community. The Connection works in partnership with the police and with Westminster City Council to ensure that vulnerable individuals are not falling victim to exploitation and are receiving the support that they need, whilst at the same time assisting with moving individuals on in the area who are not engaging with support services.

Preventing rough sleeping

The Connection’s Rapid Response Team (RR) is responsible for preventing long-term rough sleeping. This team reacts to referrals made by homelessness professionals and by the public via Streetlink, speedily supporting newly homeless people away from the streets before any additional issues may arise.

RR runs shifts every night and in 16/17 successfully referred 36% of people who they were able to make contact with into accommodation. This number may seem low, but is in fact an encouraging response – many people with whom this team make contact do not want to engage with services. This may be because they have had a poor past experience with homelessness services; they may be too proud to accept help; issues with their mental health may have made them mistrustful of services; or, all accommodation options which we are able to refer into may be full.



*Beki Winter, Westminster CAS Manager &
Neil Partridge, Westminster CAS Caseworker*

For a few weeks now the RR team have been piloting day-time shifts between 4pm and 6pm on days when they do not have other commitments. The primary purpose of these shifts is to engage with people begging in order to contribute to the overall aim of the CAS, to reduce rough sleeping. In addition, the team will be talking to local businesses to help inform them about our services and address any concerns about rough sleeping. The intention behind this is to ensure our neighbours

are aware of services available to rough sleepers as well as partnership responses to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour in their locales. A number of these shifts will be targeted in the Soho area.



Ewa Kapica, Westminster CAS Coordinator

Rough Sleeper Support

The Connection's outreach service, the Westminster CAS (Contact & Assessment Service), run 20 shifts every week, and in 16/17 made 9,201 contacts with rough sleepers whilst out on shift. This team (which partners on shift with mental health professionals, substance misuse advisors, and ex-homeless people) will make contact with vulnerable rough sleepers out on the streets, to check on their wellbeing, support them into accommodation, and facilitate access to other specialist services.

Our team is expanding in 2017. Recent appointments include an Outreach Duty Worker; an extra caseworker for the south of

the borough; and a Strategy & Systems Coordinator. These appointments will ensure that rough sleepers receive higher levels of one on one support and will improve our ability to strategically react to local issues. This is important in the face of ever lessening housing provision, deeper benefits cuts, and the overall economic uncertainty which we are expecting in the coming months.

Trafficking & Foreign Nationals

The number of foreign nationals rough sleeping in Westminster has dropped significantly over 16/17; but those that we are still working with encounter many boundaries to accommodation and employment, and often require high levels of advocacy in order to advance their cases.

Over the last year, our Migrant Policy and Services Coordinator has met the Labour and Social Affairs Attaché of the Romanian consulate to discuss and exchange information and resources on labour exploitation of Romanian migrants in the UK. We continue to do work on preventing and addressing trafficking amongst the homeless population. We have established a monthly Trafficking Awareness Day during which outreach teams will distribute relevant fliers in different languages to rough sleepers. We have also given access to these fliers to soup runs through the Soup Run Forum, which is hosted at The Connection once a month.

She has also met with the Home Office Community Engagement Team and a representative from Westminster Council to discuss ways of better supporting vulnerable rough sleepers to voluntarily return to their home countries in a speedy way. Furthermore, she has facilitated several information sessions regarding hosting schemes for destitute migrants in the Westminster community.

The difference Shaftesbury has made in 2016-17 – Client Case Studies***Client Case Study: Mario*****Background**

Mario is a 24 year old male from the EU. He entered the UK in 2013 and has been in continuous employment since then. He had moved to London from another UK city in October 2016 and he found a job and accommodation right away. Unfortunately, after about a month of staying in his flat, his landlord unlawfully evicted him, threw away his belongings and took his rent and deposit. As he was working in Central London, he did not know anyone he could stay with in the locale, and had used up his savings to put down a deposit and first month's rent on the flat he had just been evicted from. He found himself having to rough sleep in Westminster while waiting for his next pay day to rent a new room.

We first contacted Mario in November 2016 in Westminster. He told us that a few nights after becoming street homeless, he was encountered by immigration enforcement officers on the street. He said that although he explained his situation (unlawful eviction, working full time and just waiting for pay day to rent a new room), he was given removal papers, his ID was taken and he was asked to start reporting to the Home Office weekly. He was very confused and distressed about this. We invited him to our Night Centre and our Day Centre to continue his assessment.

Casework

Mario was assessed by one of our outreach caseworkers and his case was supervised by our Migrant Policy and Services team. Mario showed us confirmation of his employment and of his recent payslip. He already had the money to pay for his accommodation but he was not able to find accommodation due to his lack of ID. He wanted help to get his ID back and to stop having to report to the Home Office. We placed Mario in the NC while we supported him get the necessary advice.

After going through a full assessment, it became clear that Mario had no physical or mental health support needs. His main barrier to exiting homelessness was the fact that he did not have ID as this was being held by the Home Office. Therefore, we referred him to an immigration adviser who accepted to represent him. We also gave the client a support letter confirming that we had placed him in our Night Centre and that he had appealed the removal decision. We advised Mario to show the letter to the Home Office. Although Mario showed this letter to the Home Office together with his payslips and explained his situation, he was still told that he first needed a letter from a landlord before they could give him his ID back. He tried to explain that without ID he would not be able to rent legally, but they still refused to give him his ID.

We advised him to continue showing the CSTM letter to the Home Office, which he did. Finally, the Home Office paid attention to our letter and gave us a call to confirm that Mario was using our Night Centre. We confirmed this and immediately Mario was given his ID back. Within a week, Mario had moved into a new flat.

Outcomes

Mario is still working and in accommodation. He no longer uses our services as he does not need any further support. The issues that we initially experienced trying to get his ID back from the Home Office have highlighted a need for improving communication with the Home Office and this is something we are currently working on along with the council and our partners.

Outreach Worker Insight: Neil

No clients' situation is ever the same. As an outreach worker I am constantly reminded of the fact that every individual I encounter on the streets is different. Different background. Different needs. Different personality. Everyone's situation is unique. There is basically no standard approach. There is also the crucial matter of timing. Some are ready to be helped, others are not. With some clients I will talk about housing options straight away. Others don't even want to talk to me. It then becomes a gradual process, with friendly chit chat every week until you build up trust and can begin to make light suggestions on how they can improve their situation. It can be incredibly frustrating, but you have to be patient and flexible.

For example, during the last year, I have been working with a client who has learning disabilities. As time went on, I realised that I needed extra support and advice on how to communicate more effectively with him. This led to a discussion around learning disabilities in a team meeting, which in turn led to an external training course. It was a real eye-opener and gave me some very useful communication techniques.

It taught me to be much more structured and clear in my communications, not just with him but with other clients too. Clear about what I say, and what I can and cannot promise. The client in question is now in supported accommodation and I have made sure that staff there also know how to communicate with him. He doesn't understand insinuations or sarcasm. He doesn't understand certain phrases and sayings. So you can't say 'well how long is a piece of string?' - it will just cause unnecessary confusion. Another example is someone saying 'I'll call you tomorrow' and then they don't. For most people it's not a big deal, but for him it's different. So when I was off sick recently, I made sure he knew why I couldn't see him, ensuring our relationship remained solid.

At any one time I can be working with over 20 individuals. During the last year I have also been working on two very different cases - a client who is homeless but not destitute; and two close friends, both chaotic drug users.

This is the first time I have worked with a client who isn't destitute, and has money in a bank account in Ireland. In fact, part of my job has been to try and help him gain access to that money. My client is mentally unwell and stopped taking his medication 6 months ago. So even if we are successful and he gets his money, I am simultaneously thinking about what we can put in place to support him, so that he can better manage that money, and minimise the risk of exploitation.

I am also working with two rough sleepers who are close friends and share a special bond as dog owners. They have a long and chaotic background of drug abuse and have been evicted from flats before. One of them is quite physically ill so my focus has been to get them to engage with a GP whilst getting their benefits started again. This alone has taken 6 months and although they have brought up housing in conversations, I have chosen not to pursue the topic further. The housing options we have are very limited. At this point I don't even know where they could possibly go as chaotic drug users, with dogs. And because I don't want to dampen their motivation to get on top of their health problems and benefits, it's a bridge I've chosen not to cross right now.

With Shaftesbury's support in 16/17, The Connection's Outreach Team were able to support these clients, and many others, to successfully either move away from street homelessness entirely, or to make solid steps towards living a happy, healthy life again.

Thank you.