Three years of transition

The Homelessness Transition Fund
2011 to 2014

Evaluation summary & case studies
Over three years from 2011, Homelessness Transition Fund administered four rounds of grants plus the Future Ready Fund, awarding £20 million to 175 projects.

**Main grants**

£18.7m in grants

- £18.73m in main grants to 115 projects.
- In turn, those projects helped 63,826 people, exceeding targets by 4%.

**Future Ready Fund grants**

£1.3m in grants

- The Fund awarded £1.3m in Future Ready Fund grants to 60 projects. 52 of those projects raised an additional £3.8m as a result of this support. 88% reported increased sustainability as a result of the grant.
The Homelessness Transition Fund was administered by Homeless Link and ran for three years between 2011 and 2014.

Established as part of the national rough sleeping strategy, Vision to end rough sleeping: No Second Night Out nationwide, it provided £20 million from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to local homelessness projects across England.

The fund was designed to:

- Help deliver an end to rough sleeping by rolling out the No Second Night Out principles and other innovations.
- Support a smooth transition for existing services to sustainable funding arrangements.
- Support strategically critical single homelessness services, in particular those working with people who sleep rough and in areas where there is evidence of rising rough sleeping.

There were two elements to the fund, the main programme and the Future Ready Fund.

The main programme funded projects to roll out No Second Night Out (NSNO) principles and develop other innovations to end rough sleeping.

The Future Ready Fund programme aimed to protect and enhance essential and strategically critical single homelessness services and support them in the transition to becoming sustainable, through supporting business development activities.
The five No Second Night Out principles,¹ that the fund aimed to help roll out, were:

• People new to the streets should be identified and helped off the streets immediately so that they do not fall into a dangerous rough sleeping lifestyle

• Members of the public should be able to play an active role by reporting and referring people sleeping rough

• People should be helped to access a place of safety where their needs can be quickly assessed and they can receive advice on their options

• They should be able to access emergency accommodation and other services, such as healthcare, if needed

• If people have come from another area or country and find themselves sleeping rough, the aim should be to reconnect them back to their local community unless there is a good reason why they cannot return. There, they will be able to access housing and recovery services, and have support from family and friends.

The four outcomes of funded projects reflect those principles:
1. No Second Night Out: supporting people new to the streets
2. No one should live on the streets
3. No one should return to the streets once helped
4. No one should arrive on the streets.

1. Homeless Link 2014 No second night out across England
Health and mental health can deteriorate rapidly when someone starts to sleep rough.

It is essential that support can be offered immediately, before the problems that led to them sleeping on the streets in the first place are compounded with issues caused by rough sleeping itself.

Many of the projects we funded introduced new approaches to ensure interventions could be made as quickly as possible. These included:

- Offering immediate access to emergency accommodation via an assessment hub, including sit-up provision where necessary
- Enabling outreach teams to play a role in assertively identifying and supporting people new to sleeping rough
- Developing effective referral pathways between different organisations and services
- Engaging with and enabling the public to identify and refer people sleeping rough, for example through referral phone lines
- Offering specialist support for young people newly-arriving on the streets, in particular volunteer host based Nightstop projects
- Creating specialist services to deal with complex issues faced by migrants who have ended up sleeping rough.
No one should live on the streets

While solutions can often be found quickly for someone new to the streets, working with people who have slept rough for many months or years is a specialist task with no quick fix.

We funded many projects designed to address the multiple complex issues faced by people who have slept rough for more than six months. We supported services across England to develop targeted responses for this group, with a range of innovative approaches, including:

- The development of strong and proactive local partnerships, bringing together the skills of multiple agencies necessary to support people who have slept rough long term
- Providing a secure ‘point of origin to destination’ service in cases where reconnection is appropriate
- Enabling assertive outreach activity, to build trust and confidence with clients over time
- Building partnerships to contribute time and resources to collect and share data and intelligence about local rough sleeping
- Offering different housing models depending on individuals’ needs, from Housing First to those that prioritised stabilising health and behaviour before access to housing
- Offering personalised budgets to enable clients to receive the service they needed while building dignity, self-esteem, and control
- Recruiting people with personal experience of homelessness as mentors to people currently sleeping rough – an approach that was found to improve the willingness to engage among those living long term on the streets
- Supporting migrants with no recourse to public funds through outreach work in partnership with immigration agencies. Individuals were offered immigration advice and a full needs and referral assessment, including health needs and immigration status, and access to emergency accommodation while resolving their immigration status.
A major issue in supporting anyone who has slept rough is to ensure that they get the ongoing support necessary to stay off the streets for good.

Without that support, many people are often drawn back to the street lifestyle, while others slip through the same gaps in provision should have prevented them sleeping rough in the first place.

We supported services to develop support for people that went far beyond securing accommodation, addressing multiple concerns from health and housing to skills and education. They included:

- The creation of continuous, open-ended support services
- Supporting people through a tailored, intensive and personalised approach, that addresses individual needs
- Integrating of health and medical support with other forms of housing and social support
- Creating opportunities for people to volunteer, helping them to build confidence and experience, and enabling them to ‘give something back’
- Offering life skills, education, training and employment opportunities
- Engaging with private rented sector landlords, and offering ongoing support to those rehoused in the private rented sector
- Designing effective, secure reconnections procedures, both within the UK and abroad.
No one should **arrive on the streets**

**Key to ending rough sleeping are initiatives to prevent it before it happens.**

Key to ending rough sleeping are initiatives to prevent it before it happens. We need to identify the points at which people could be supported by services before they ended up on the streets, or get the information they need so that when crises occur they are dealt with differently.

We supported projects that proactively engaged with people at crucial points to reduce the risk of sleeping rough. This included:

- Working in schools and colleges to de-romanticise homelessness, and prepare young people for the realities of finding accommodation. This was particularly effective when delivered by young people who had themselves experienced homelessness.
- Providing rapid and easy access to advice, assistance and information through day centres and other daytime advice hubs.
- Targeting services at young people, including Nightstops and programmes around money and tenancy management.
- Working in and with prisons and hospitals, to ensure that when people leave those institutions they have suitable accommodation to move into, and are supported to retain it.
- Developing outreach approaches to those in insecure accommodation, such as outhouses, supporting them to access more settled accommodation before they become street homeless.
Main programme achievements

The HTF main programme successfully funded a range of projects working across its four outcome areas.

Assessments from funded projects demonstrate that in a number of project areas rough sleeping has significantly reduced, sometimes to zero. Other projects reported stabilising the overall numbers of people sleeping rough, or slowed the rate of increase to below the national rate. This was seen to be a positive outcome within a context of rising rough sleeping in England (levels of rough sleeping have risen by 26% between 2011 and 2014).²

"We have achieved an 88% reduction in rough sleeping. 31 clients were supported during the two year post by the Outreach Personalisation Post. At the end of the post only four (12%) are rough sleeping."

South West project

Across the programme as a whole:

13,904 people were supported after spending only one night on the streets.

15,088 people who had been sleeping rough for between two nights and six months were engaged in work to help them move off the streets.

5,774 people who had been sleeping rough long-term (more than 6 months on the street) engaged with work to help them move off the streets.

29,060 people who were at risk of homelessness received interventions to help prevent them sleeping rough.

4,983 people were recorded as having returned to the streets during the funding period.

Challenges faced by main programme funded projects

Funded projects identified a range of challenges they faced and areas that need to be addressed locally for projects and partnerships to be successful long term.

The funded projects described a range of challenges, including:

- A lack of emergency and move-on accommodation
- A lack of specialist support services and accommodation for people with multiple and complex needs
- Challenges engaging partners, including a lack of buy-in or support from some other agencies or local authorities
- Increasing numbers of people sleeping rough placing high demand on services
- Supporting migrants and people with no recourse to public funds
- Securing funding to continue needed work after the end of the Homelessness Transition Fund programme.

A number of projects expressed concern at the impact that further expected cuts to local authority budgets, and ongoing changes to social security, would have on people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

2. DCLG 2015 Rough sleeping in England
The Future Ready Fund programme

The Future Ready Fund programme aimed to protect and enhance essential and strategically critical single homelessness services and support them in the transition to becoming sustainable, through supporting business development activities.

We successfully supported single homelessness services to become more sustainable and adaptable, and to increase their influence and impact. Of the services responding to the evaluation survey:

88% reported increased sustainability as a result of their HTF funding.

67% reported increased influence and impact.

63% reported increased adaptability.

75% reported improved financial resilience, although 25% reported that funding had not helped them to secure additional funding.

We funded a broad range of activities, tailored to the needs of each particular organisation. The main activities the grant was used for were:

- Business planning and organisational review: including strategic development, development of a commercial arm, and improvements in Board capability.
- Data gathering, IT enhancements and data analysis: development of data collection-systems was described as leading to reduced paperwork making it possible to spend more time with clients, stronger partnerships and a stronger evidence-base for funders.
- Leadership and staff training: including the appointment of new staff and training for existing staff, enabling service development.
- Fund raising: including development of fundraising models and new relationships with funders.

"Within a 12 month period the HTF grant has enabled us to diversify our income sources so that we are less reliant on the public sector. We now source 25% of our income from new private and charitable sector sources.”

West Midlands project
Where next?

The Homelessness Transition Fund programme successfully funded a range of projects working across its four outcome areas, with over 60,000 people being supported by the programme.

The Future Ready Fund helped the most of the homelessness projects it supported to become more sustainable and adaptable, and to have more influence and impact.

However, rough sleeping is increasing. Between 2011, when the Homelessness Transition Fund programme commenced, and 2014, the number of people sleeping rough in England increased by 26%. In London, between 2013 and 2014, the number of people sleeping rough increased by 37%.

Meanwhile, rental and house prices have become increasingly unaffordable for many; many people are struggling with insecure and low-paid employment; ongoing changes to social security are expected by many to adversely affect people experiencing or at risk of homelessness; and economic austerity continues, with substantial further cuts to local authority and service budgets planned.

Within this context of increasing need and decreasing resources, it is vital that homelessness services continue to receive funding following the end of the Homelessness Transition Fund programme.
Recommendations

1. Build and promote partnerships

Partnerships have been central to the delivery of the funded projects, with all projects working closely with at least one other agency.

However, some projects and local authorities reported that forming and developing partnerships could be difficult.

- Homelessness agencies should work in partnership with agencies across all relevant sectors, including physical and mental health, social care and criminal justice services, sharing data and multi-agency assessment and referral processes developed where appropriate.
- Homeless link should continue to promote partnership working at appropriate levels working with national representative bodies cross sector and local government.
- Systemic barriers to partnership working should be tackled through national policy and guidance.

2. Improve information collection and sharing

Both main and Future Ready Fund programme projects reported the benefits of improved information collection, analysis and sharing.

- Practitioners should use robust data collection and monitoring systems and develop skills in data interpretation and presentation to demonstrate need and impact.
- Homelessness agencies should be supported and resourced by funders, commissioners and Homeless Link to demonstrate the scale, nature and impact of their work.
- Commissioners should work across related sectors to share information and align commissioning cycles and reporting requirements.

3. Provide specialist support to people with multiple and complex needs

Many funded projects provided support to people with multiple and complex needs, and they reported that intensive resources were often needed to achieve and sustain successful outcomes.

Over half of projects surveyed saw the absence of specialist services for those with multiple and complex needs as an issue.

- Policy and commissioning across relevant areas should be integrated to ensure that people with multiple and complex needs receive appropriate support.
- Specialist support and accommodation services for people with multiple and complex needs should be provided where appropriate.
- Adequate resources should be made available both nationally and locally so that intensive support and integrated services can be delivered effectively to those who need them.
4. Provide **support to migrants** who become homeless

Over half of projects worked specifically with migrants who sleep rough.

Some projects developed innovative methods of work, which can usefully be incorporated into homelessness practice generally.

- That homelessness agencies record and evidence the prevalence of homelessness within migrant communities and develop access to the resources required to effectively support homeless migrants.
- Commissioners should assess local need for advice and support for homeless migrants, and develop a local response to this.
- That Homeless Link continues to develop the Strategic Alliance on Migrant Destitution and provides support for members working with migrants who sleep rough.

5. Protect and enhance resources for homelessness services

Three quarters of projects funded by the main programme either achieved continuation funding or were mainstreamed within other services.

However, some of these had only achieved funding for parts of their project or for relatively short durations, and 11% of projects reported that they were closing.

- The homelessness sector should work together to evidence the value of its work, research innovative approaches to securing funding, and share learning to strengthen the sector.
- That Homeless Link continues to advocate for resources that focus on preventing and ending rough sleeping and homelessness.
- The Government should ensure that resources devoted to rough sleeping, single homelessness and the prevention of homelessness are focussed on ending rough sleeping and homelessness.
Overview

Future Ready funding helped Caring in Bristol build its capacity and develop and pilot a Nightstop service.

A Homelessness Transition Fund grant enabled it to continue the service, offering emergency accommodation, through local host families and support to stay off the streets, to 136 young people in its first year.

Caring in Bristol’s Nightstop has now secured Big Lottery funding for the next four years, and is a crucial element of the local youth homelessness strategy.

“We’d have never done it without the Future Ready grant. It’s all about development and learning: the organisation has been transformed, from branding, IT and finance to the management group and governance processes. It gave us the confidence to apply for more funding.”

Charity Development Lead, Caring in Bristol
Identifying need and building capacity

A previous Bristol based Nightstop project had closed in 2010, leaving what project partners Kids Company called ‘a huge gap’ in support for young people.

Caring in Bristol wanted to fill this gap. It was a small unincorporated charity, then called ‘Caring at Christmas’, which received all of its income from donations. It initially applied for a £25,000 Future Ready Fund grant (matched by the organisation’s reserves), which helped it to build capacity, develop and pilot a Nightstop project, attain accreditation from Depaul Nightstop UK, and gather evidence of local need.

The charity rebranded as Caring in Bristol, and became a charity limited by guarantee. The Charity Development Lead, who led the process for Caring in Bristol, says that this funding was crucial: ‘the Future Ready grant was a catalyst that sent the charity on a journey.’

After running the project for an initial six months, the organisation successfully applied for £115,000 for one year from the main Homelessness Transition Fund to deliver a full Nightstop project, with three full time members of staff.

At the end of its year of HTF funding, the project went on to secure a £500,000 grant from the Big Lottery, which has secured the project for four years, from 2015 to 2019.

The Nightstop project

The project arranges emergency and temporary accommodation for young homeless people aged 16 to 25. It gives young people a safe place to stay in the homes of trained and vetted individuals through a volunteer ‘Host Network’. Bristol Nightstop Hosts offer a warm room to stay in their own home, an evening meal, breakfast, support and compassion. They are recruited, trained, supported and supervised by project workers.

The young people are supported by key workers who also advocate on their behalf, helping them to move quickly on to more permanent accommodation, such as local authority or private rented sector accommodation, to return home or to find another place to stay.

The project is open access, with young people referred from partners across Bristol.

Outcomes

During its first year (July 2013-July 2014) the project supported 136 young people, recruited 32 hosts, and provided 456 host nights. Nightstop arranged suitable supported or private rented sector accommodation for almost half (61) of these young people.

Outcomes for others included returning to their families, being referred to the local authority, being supported to find accommodation by other agencies, or finding their own solutions. Only one young person reported sleeping rough after being supported by Nightstop.

Preventing homelessness

The project gave young people who had nowhere to sleep that night a safe place to stay, immediately preventing rough sleeping on that night. It then supported them to stay off the streets by finding suitable, more permanent accommodation for them.

“ I was working and it stopped suddenly. After one month I had no money for the rent. If Nightstop had not helped, I would have stayed outside (on the street) and it would have been difficult for me.”

Tahir, Nightstop client

Project staff and partners felt that it can become much harder to support someone even after a relatively short period on the streets, and they can be vulnerable to exploitation by others on the street. By providing an immediate response wherever possible, the project helped young people to avoid becoming part of the street community.

Providing time to find a suitable housing solution

Being able to stay with a host family for several days or weeks buys time for the Nightstop workers to gather the evidence needed for a local authority housing application, help the young person find suitable accommodation and support them with other issues they might be facing. It gives the young person time to reflect and make plans:

“ Having a place to stay, I could think about what to do next. I could discuss what I was planning to do, and (the staff) could help me. I got a job as a delivery driver and I found a room.”

Tahir, Nightstop client

Psychologically-informed support at a time of crisis

The young people referred to Bristol Nightstop are in crisis, and the provision of psychologically-informed support is crucial to the service. Workers take a flexible, ‘fluid and needs-driven’ approach, according to the project lead, with support tailored to each individual. This is highly valued by project partners Kids Company:
We know (the young people we refer) will be well looked after, their thoughts and feelings will be heard and their emotional state cared for. The team are very mindful that they are experiencing a trauma, and there’s a practice acknowledgement of this.”

Director of Post-16 Services, Kids Company Bristol

Staying with a family rather than (for example) in supported housing or a bed and breakfast, is also important, as the Nightstop project lead explains:

“There’s an undeniable positive experience the young people have with hosts. They’re doing such an open, giving thing, and I think that affects the young people. There’s a huge amount of trust in letting someone stay in your home … It’s not institutionalised, it’s a normal house. When you’ve just been kicked out of home, for kindness to come from a host is a very special thing.”

Charity Development Lead, Caring in Bristol

Partnership working

The project works closely with a range of partners, and takes regular referrals from 1625 Independent People, Bristol City Council and Kids Company.

The Director of Post-16 Services at Kids Company Bristol says that it is helpful that Kids Company and Caring in Bristol share a building. Often the young people have to leave their host accommodation during the day, and they can come to Kids Company’s drop-in service then, where they can receive practical and emotional support. Once they have moved on from their host accommodation, Kids Company can provide long term counselling or therapy, working with the Nightstop keyworker to determine their respective roles in providing continuing support.

Caring in Bristol also shares a building with YMCA, which runs a café on the ground floor that Nightstop is able to use to have conversations and conduct key working sessions with the young people. Food and drinks can be purchased for the young people on a tab, and the Nightstop manager says that the informality and ‘normality’ of this environment are an important part of their ‘young person-friendly’ approach.

Influencing local strategy

Because of his role running Nightstop, Caring in Bristol’s Charity Development Lead now sits on the city-wide strategic young people’s housing development group. Through this he has been able to influence the Youth Housing Action Plan in Bristol.

Learning from Caring in Bristol

• A grant process that supports learning – The two-stage grants process (with Future Ready funding preceding main grant funding) provided the opportunity to learn and develop, and was crucial in building organisational confidence and skills to apply for longer term funding.
• Partnership working – the project works with a range of referring agencies and support services, ensuring that a wrap-around service tailored to each individual’s needs is provided.
• Immediate access to accommodation – the provision of accommodation on the same day that young people are referred prevents them becoming part of the street community and helps them begin to live normally after a time of crisis.
• A psychologically-informed approach – the project takes a caring approach that recognises the trauma that the young people have experienced and attends to their emotional needs. Important principles are flexibility, informality, the provision of emotional support, and accommodation within a family rather than an institution.
• Advocacy – Support for young people to overcome ‘street level bureaucracy’, understand their rights, and access the housing and support they are entitled to, are of central importance in securing longer-term housing.
Tahir
Helping a homeless young man to avoid sleeping rough and find a job and a home

Tahir (not his real name), aged 24, was living in rented accommodation when he lost his job suddenly. He spent his savings paying the rent, but he was unable to find more work so was evicted. The council referred him to a hostel which was full, and they referred him to Nightstop, which found him host accommodation and helped him find work and his own place to stay.

"(Nightstop) were very welcoming. I stayed in three different places – I’m still in touch with (the host families), I texted them when I got a job.

“(The workers) were very helpful. They did a CV update with me, and I did training. I got a job as a delivery driver, and I found a room advertised in a shop. I said I wanted to get my taxi badge and (my Nightstop keyworker) told me how to do it – I’ve got it now, I’ve registered with a taxi company and I’ve found a car you can buy on instalments.

“Life is getting better. I’m proud I got a job as soon as I could. Going quickly meant I left space for someone else who’s struggling. If I have a place with two rooms one day, I’d like to (become a host and) have people from Nightstop.”
Overview

The Future Ready Fund is to ‘protect and enhance essential and strategically critical services for single homeless people and support them in the transition to becoming sustainable’. This involves funding work to help organisations fundraise more effectively, grow and reach more people, prepare for change and develop skills, for example in leadership.

Future Ready funding from the Homelessness Transition Fund has enabled Elmbridge Rentstart to transform into a rapidly growing, influential local service, helping more people out of homelessness in a more sustainable way.

“"This grant was instrumental in our growth. Without this initial funding we could not have paid for fundraising help. The funds we have raised have literally transformed our work - we can reach more people, have formed new relationships, hired additional (and excellent) staff. We now deliver a joined up, quality service which goes far beyond our original brief. In addition, by securing some significant three year grants, we now face the next financial years from a position of some security.”

Project Manager, Elmbridge Rentstart
Identifying need

Elmbridge Rentstart started as a small rent deposit scheme in 2001. It was developed because its founders saw unmet need for single people experiencing homelessness in the area. The project grew slowly and organically for the next eight years with stable small-scale local authority funding and unrestricted income from local events, such as cake sales. However, the Project Manager felt that there was more they could do:

“In 2009 we wondered: if we ‘grew up’ as an organisation could we do better? Could we do more? We were putting people in places but with no support we saw a revolving door of homelessness for some.”
Project Manager, Elmbridge Rentstart

The funding

Future Ready funding was identified by a volunteer providing initial development advice to the Project Manager. There was, however, some resistance to applying for restricted funds from board members who were more comfortable with the existing flexible funding. This was a pivotal point for the organisation. The opportunity to find out more about the Future Ready fund was vital to giving the Project Manager the confidence to make an application:

“The Future Ready webinar by Homeless Link made us realise that we might fit into their world – we had thought we were so small, we thought we would be asking for half our income - as one grant, they won’t give us that!”
Project Manager, Elmbridge Rentstart

In 2012 Elmbridge Rentstart was awarded £25k from the Future Ready fund. The organisation’s income for 2011/12 was £60,000. By 2013/14 this had increased to £200,000.

The funding was spent on a range of capacity building activities to make Elmbridge Rentstart ‘Future Ready’. The investment included:

- Increasing staff hours to develop partnerships and new projects
- Support with fundraising from an external consultant
- Providing more staff training.

Achievements

More funding, diverse funding

Support with fundraising has resulted in more funding from more diverse sources, including CRISIS and the Tudor Trust.

An additional statutory funding award from Surrey Homelessness Allowance, via Elmbridge Borough Council, gave Elmbridge Rentstart £25,000 over two years, from 2014 to 2016, for 20 extra private rented sector placements per year.

The assistance from an external fundraising and development consultant has been central to this work.

“I was writing for the same Local Authority audience all the time. I needed to message differently, present ourselves differently, stop thinking ‘We are too small’. (The consultant) would say to us – imagine money is no object, what do you need to do.”
Project Manager, Elmbridge Rentstart

One of the most significant funding partnerships, which has grown with the development of Elmbridge Rentstart, is with Walton Charity. As a local funder Walton Charity was a natural source of support, but the Future Ready grant meant that Elmbridge Rentstart was positioned to maximize this relationship and develop an ongoing partnership:

“If we were like we were in 2001, yes they (Walton Charity) may have given us grants, but the sophisticated projects we are doing now would not have had traction without the projects the HTF had enabled me to establish.”
Project Manager, Elmbridge Rentstart

Elmbridge Rentstart was in a position to influence the priorities of Walton Charity in a way that developed the partnership going forward.

“Rentstart were a huge part of bringing homelessness to the table for us. Street counts never came up with people sleeping rough but through Rentstart we knew there were homeless people who were hidden.”
Chief Executive, Walton Charity

Walton Charity provided Elmbridge Rentstart with wide ranging support, including funding for a Deposit Guarantee Scheme, use of three guest rooms in blocks for emergency situations, and use of three properties with support and training for people who are not yet ready to secure their own tenancy. The charity has a flexible approach, helping Elmbridge Rentstart fill in gaps left by more prescriptive funding:

“You can get the state entitlements but there are missing bits - we can try and fill the last bit of the jigsaw, for example provide (small extra amounts of money to) people who have a place to stay but no bedding, or someone who really needs a train ticket for a job interview.”
Chief Executive, Walton Charity
Leading and influencing

The additional management time and development of funding partnerships has given Elmbridge Rentstart the ‘strength to enable change in areas outside our direct work’ (Project Manager) thereby becoming a strong advocate for single people who become homeless. This is particularly important in an area where homelessness is not very visible and there is reluctance from some in the community and in services to recognise the problem.

The external support funded by the HTF was also helpful in giving the project manager the confidence to become the leader of a larger organisation with more influence, requiring new skills and the confidence to take ideas forward.

“It’s been good and challenging, I have grown as a manager, taking on things I would not have done before.”

Project Manager, Elmbridge Rentstart

Over three years, Elmbridge Rentstart worked in partnership with Walton Charity to secure commitment to and delivery of a winter night shelter in the area, serving local people experiencing homelessness. 18 months of engagement activity led to the Year one pilot in 2014. The pilot was funded by Walton Charity, Elmbridge Borough Council, Paragon Housing and the local community, with service delivery led by Transform Housing & Support.

Having demonstrated the need for the shelter, three local authorities (Elmbridge, Spelthorne and Runnymede) were involved in the second year of provision for 2015. Walton Charity, Whiteley Village and the local community were also involved. This work started with evidence gathering to show that people from the area were seeking support from homelessness services in other boroughs. This evidence was used to raise the profile of the issue.

The project provided essential shelter in the coldest months of the year. Rentstart could refer people to the service when they needed an emergency option for someone, and also identify others in need of housing by attending the shelter.

A better deal for single people experiencing homelessness across North Surrey

After its rapid growth and development, Elmbridge Rentstart is able to offer a more complete and flexible package to their customers.

“We always provided a deposit – now we do much more: pre-tenancy training, support, employment coaching. We want to offer something to people wherever they are on their homelessness journey.”

Project Manager, Elmbridge Rentstart

An essential component of this is Rentstart Rescue which was funded by the Homelessness Transition Fund in 2012. Rentstart Rescue has been developed into a flexible service with the capacity to reach people early in their homelessness across the three boroughs of Elmbridge, Spelthorne and Runnymede, and facilitate access to the private rented sector, often avoiding the need for hostel accommodation.

While the organisation has been transformed, many of its founding principles remain the same. The organisation is available to all its tenants in an ongoing way and believes that the private rented sector can provide a good route out of homelessness for people in a wide range of circumstances. It also seeks to provide a service and an offer that landlords will often choose over commercial lettings agents.

“We spend time working with people and have a holistic approach. If people have been told they are ‘not a priority’ that’s a negative message. Here we are a service provider working with a customer, it’s all about (the customer), a nicer relationship, we ask for more of a story … We expect you to do well; it’s a positive, reinforcing thing. We have 52 people currently saving for their own deposit for the future.”

Project Manager, Elmbridge Rentstart

“They are approachable and focused on the individual. If they say they will sort things out, you know something will happen.”

Chief Executive, Walton Charity
Learning from Elmbridge Rentstart

The Elmbridge Rentstart project provides useful learning about how a small organisation can grow rapidly and become larger and more sustainable.

Capacity building
The support and training funded by the Future Ready Fund laid essential foundations for moving the organisation forward. This included support for the Project Manager in fundraising and developing new projects as well as investment in more staff time to develop and deliver services.

Partnerships and relationships
‘Identifying friends’ (Project Manager) and developing trusting relationships created an environment for growth. A ‘can do, will do’ approach helped to consolidate support and trust from funders.

Communication
The project has very diverse stakeholders from private landlords to borough councils. The Project Manager recommends that small organisations seeking to grow and develop should ‘Really set our your store, explain what you do and why, thinking about your audience’.

Develop a track record
Doing small projects well builds up trust and reputation. The Chief Executive of Walton Charity explained the appeal of one of the first projects they funded Elmbridge Rentstart to deliver.

“The Rent Guarantee Scheme was a low cost and easy to administer project, which built up a track record. We also saw the numbers of people helped and supported.”

Chief Executive, Walton Charity
Case study

Framework Outreach Service team have worked extraordinarily hard. They have provided the outreach service across Lincolnshire and Rutland reaching people who otherwise would continue to sleep rough and potentially become entrenched. The district councils could not address this in isolation and so Framework were commissioned to undertake this work across the counties and responded to the challenge very positively, professionally and working with partners to achieve successful outcomes, which is key to it all. The legacy is that Lincolnshire County Council see the need to continue the street outreach service by funding through Public Health.”

Principle Housing Officer, Boston Borough Council
Identifying need

Lincolnshire had ongoing issues with rough sleeping, often focused in the areas of Boston, East Lindsay, Lincoln City and South Holland. In addition there were lower numbers of rough sleepers dispersed across the very large county area. Rough sleeping groups include European migrants and people who were entrenched in a street homeless lifestyle. An official 2011 rough sleeper estimate figure of 42 (on a specific night) as well as on-going concern about antisocial behaviour, demonstrated a clear gap in provision.

“"In Lincolnshire there was no outreach at all and a lack of understanding of the rough sleeping issue ... There were 42 rough sleepers (estimated) and some hotspots like Boston and East Lindsay.”

Street Outreach Service Manager, Framework

A highly effective Housing Strategy Group in Lincolnshire, provided a strong basis for creating an efficient and effective countywide outreach service.

The funding

In early 2011 the sub-region of Lincolnshire and Rutland was awarded a grant of £70,000 from the Department for Communities and Local Government to tackle rough sleeping in the hotspots of Boston and South Holland and to begin to develop a countywide approach. This initial funding formed the basis of a successful application to the Homelessness Transition Fund for £247,000 to provide a countywide outreach service for three years. The HTF funding was match funded by contributions from the eight local authority areas involved.

“The Homelessness Transition Fund enabled us to develop the service for the whole of Lincolnshire as part of one project. Without it we may have been able to pilot it but it would have then stopped due to funding considerations.”

Principle Housing Officer, Boston Borough Council

In December 2011 Framework was commissioned to deliver the Lincolnshire and Rutland Outreach Service, working to the principles of No Second Night Out. The service consisted initially of six and more recently of four outreach workers, including a team leader. It aimed to:

- Encourage members of the public to play an active role by reporting and referring people sleeping rough.
- Help people sleeping rough to access a place of safety where their needs could be quickly assessed and they could receive advice on their options.
- Assist people sleeping rough to access emergency accommodation and other services, such as healthcare, if needed.
- Reconnect people sleeping rough back to their local communities, unless there was a good reason why they cannot return.

Outcomes

A joined up approach to helping rough sleepers

Framework's Street Outreach Service created a joined up approach to helping people sleeping rough in Lincolnshire, reaching over 1,200 people already or at immediate risk of sleeping rough.

The Lincolnshire and Rutland Housing Strategy Group and subgroups provided a wide network of statutory and voluntary agencies which formed the basis of extensive work to build partnerships across the county. The street outreach team attended meetings and visited services forming excellent relationships, easing referral routes and influencing local approaches to better fit with the No Second Night Out approach. For example, local district councils provided some additional funding to enable reconnections to other EU countries, and short-term accommodation was sometimes provided in Lincoln City subject to the relevant local authority committing to move the person back to their home area within six months.

The previous lack of a coherent response to rough sleeping across the county had resulted in Lincoln acting as a hub, which attracted people sleeping rough due to the basic services available, such as the night shelter. However, moving to the city area without planning accommodation increased the risk of individuals becoming more entrenched in a street lifestyle. The countywide approach helped to ensure that people stayed where they were most likely to access services rather than migrating to Lincoln in search of services.

“"Services did used to direct people to Lincoln without a local connection thinking they could access more help there. We took examples to the Housing Strategy Group to show people what had happened to people who do come to Lincoln with no local connection. We only offer a space in temporary accommodation in Lincoln if the persons own local authority area will get them resettled in the next six months – in the future this will be within three months.”

Street Outreach Manager, Framework

Engaging the public

In a large geographical area, it is essential to ensure that the public and as many services and businesses as possible identify people sleeping rough.

Framework launched a freephone number and fundraised for an on-call rota system, with a member of staff responsible for answering the phone 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The number received nearly 1,000 calls outside office hours in 2014/15. It has proved an effective communication tool, both for those identifying people sleeping rough, and people who need help themselves. The number is advertised on cards, posters and on local radio.
Reducing rough sleeping

The Outreach Team worked to the principles of No Second Night Out to reduce rough sleeping in Lincolnshire. The rough sleeping estimate for a single night was halved in the first year the service operated, from 42 to 21. This figure has remained stable despite increases nationally.

With any service user, the team undertakes an assessment, and works towards making an offer to individuals about their best route off the streets. The assessment is central to the team’s approach and is carried out thoroughly but informally, in a location flexible to the person being assessed in order to speed the process up. These locations have included fast food outlets and a tent.

“We work towards making a realistic offer through our assessment. We use a persistent and consistent approach – ensuring that we are clear and avoid mixed messages. There might be paperwork and phone calls behind the scenes but externally (to the service user) it’s a clear message.”

Street Outreach Manager, Framework

For people new to sleeping rough, a rapid response is essential to avoid the risks of longer term rough sleeping and, in some cases, to achieve a rapid outcome. An example of this is where someone has accommodation or is in priority need and can access temporary accommodation via a Housing Options team. The team has a target to try and find people sleeping rough within 72 hours of a referral being made.

For people who have been sleeping rough long term, the team operates a persistent approach, not removing anyone from the caseload unless they are in accommodation or known to have moved out of the area. Given the small size of the team it is important that cases can be handed over to accommodation providers at an appropriate point. In some cases the team retain some contact with people who are in accommodation but who are at risk of returning to sleeping rough.

To ensure that moves off the street are sustainable the team ensure that offers are linked with support if appropriate. Those with on-going support needs will be linked in to Supported Housing or into the Private Rented Sector with Floating Support.

Because there had previously been minimal ‘on street’ support for those sleeping rough, a number of long term entrenched rough sleepers already needed outreach support. The team have a flexible approach with people who have slept rough long term, drawing on personalised models of support.

“There were three cases in particular. Between them they had been rough sleeping for 60 years. We were told they were almost un-housable. One of these people had severe mental health problems and we supported him to get a tenancy. I always say the best £50 we ever spent was the TV. A £50 telly that kept him in that property in the early days ... We linked in with a Framework floating support service. The first time we took him to a GP they said in front of him: ‘I am not clogging up the system with needless referrals.’ We went to another GP and they referred on straight away; advocacy was needed in that case.”

Street Outreach Team Leader, Framework

In the case of reconnections measures are always taken by the Outreach Service to ensure someone is well prepared for reconnection and has a plan for accommodation on arrival in their destination whether this is in the UK or overseas. The team seek to organise very short-term accommodation in Lincolnshire to ensure people are prepared and ready to travel.

In total in 2014/15 the team supported 123 people into accommodation, including moves into supported housing (82), the private rented sector (18) and local authority housing (12 into long term accommodation and 11 temporary accommodation outcomes). 47 people were reconnected within the UK and 42 to other countries during the same period.

A legacy of an ongoing outreach service in Lincolnshire

The legacy of the Framework Outreach Service is that a dedicated outreach service will continue across the county for at least three years, with likely extension to five years, under a new commissioning model which sees public health being prepared to take a share of responsibility for homelessness services.

Rutland will work with Leicestershire to address rough sleeping in the future so the area is not part of the remodeled service which will come into effect in summer 2015.

Initially dedicated outreach was not included in the tender for countywide floating support but the local authorities that
benefitted from the Framework Outreach service lobbied for its inclusion. The service will be delivered by P3 under the new contract as a distinct element of a wider contract including countywide floating support.

**Learning from Lincolnshire and Rutland Outreach Service**

The Lincolnshire Outreach Service is a prime example of how outreach can be established across multiple local authorities in a large and diverse area. It highlights useful principles in delivering the best routes off the streets to a wide-ranging client group.

**A strategic community and partnership working**

The origins of the Framework Outreach Service are in the Lincolnshire Housing Strategy Group. The ongoing partnerships between the seven districts as well as their effective working with Lincoln City provided a basis for developing a strong and credible bid for HTF funding, including a commitment of match funding with contributions from each area. The existing networks also ensured that relevant services quickly knew about the new team and eased the process of establishing data sharing agreements.

The Outreach Service built on this foundation meeting with Heads of Housing Options at each local authority area, attending forums and discussions with local services. A clear message was given that the team would always seek to find an appropriate and lasting solution to benefit the individual.

“We ‘got out there’: we did lots of partnership work and meetings and made ourselves very accessible right from the start which is very important. We respond and get back to people and build up relationships. We make sure we are fresh in peoples’ minds and relevant to them. We deliver – supporting people and getting results.”

*Street Outreach Manager, Framework*

Creating a targeted and accessible service across a large area, the Outreach Service takes an intelligence-led approach to outreach, attending known sleep sites and quickly following up referrals from the freephone number and any StreetLink referrals passed on to the local authorities. The principle of reaching people as quickly as possible is central to the approach. Handing cases over to other services as soon as possible ensures a focus on those currently rough sleeping.

Working in an area with many migrant workers, having Polish and Russian speaking team members from the outset was important to ensure the service accessible.

The freephone number has been invaluable in making the team accessible to service users who are spread out across a large area. This service means people can stay in touch without needing their own phone or credit on their phone. The availability of the team communicates to individuals that their welfare is important and that there is someone there to help them and check they are safe.

“It’s very rare to get our voicemail. It’s extremely important to us as if you get up at four in the morning you can get in touch, we tell people ‘stay in touch at any time; it doesn’t necessarily mean we will be able to house you immediately but we will work with you to identify the best route out of street homelessness.’

*Street Outreach Manager, Framework*

**Rapid, effective assessment and persistent follow up**

The team make rapid assessments and provide clear messages about what is on offer to individuals to ensure a swift move off the streets wherever possible. For more complex cases persistent follow up helps to ensure sustainable outcomes.

“Often we can help people immediately – sometimes they actually have a tenancy or they are in priority need. We work with someone until they are housed. At team meetings we are pushing for what is happening, tight recording of information, keeping track.”

*Street Outreach Manager, Framework*

Where people are reconnected, the Outreach Service ensures that this is a planned process with accommodation at the destination, and where appropriate links have been made with services.

“Reconnection is about ending, not just moving someone’s homelessness. We ensure that someone has got support and accommodation and there are good services for them to go to.”

*Street Outreach Manager, Framework*
Katie and Marcus
Helping an entrenched street homeless couple towards a stable, family home

Katie and Marcus had been homeless, usually sleeping rough, for around seven years before meeting the Outreach Service in 2012. The couple had recently been excluded from a hostel and were ‘back to rough sleeping, using every day, injecting amphetamines and walking around begging, maybe going to the church for lunch.’

As long-term rough sleepers Katie and Marcus were targeted for regular contact with the Street Outreach team during outreach shifts:

“(The worker) started to build a relationship with us, treat us like a person, not like a scumbag.”

The Outreach Service was able to provide a timely intervention when things reached a low-point, which increased the couple’s motivation to accept help and reduce drug use. Katie was pregnant and they wanted to move away from a street lifestyle and live as a family with the baby, having had previous children taken into care and adopted. However they felt that there was unlikely to be an acceptable accommodation option for them having been excluded from Supported Housing and having arrears with the council.

“With Katie being pregnant, we knew this was the last chance; this or be on the streets. At this time we wanted to change and turn life around, we saw others on the street who had run out of options.”

Due to Marcus’ criminal record the couple had previously had a referral to an accommodation service for families rejected. However, knowing the very limited options open to the couple, a member of the outreach team took the couple to a meeting at the service. This advocacy helped the couple secure a place to stay together where they could reduce their drug use.

The Outreach Service handed the case over to the accommodation provider but given the couples long rough sleeping history and vulnerability they stayed in regular touch with them, attending meetings and supporting them through the drawn out process to determine custody of their baby.

“We knew (the Outreach Service Worker) did want us to succeed but he wanted to be honest. If he was not quite ‘on our side’ he was closer to us than others were. It was comforting, someone to talk to.

“We know that (the Outreach Service Worker) told Social Services about the pregnancy but we respect that he told us - honesty was much lacking, people say one thing but do another, we know he did it for the right reasons.”

The couple attended all arranged contact sessions with their baby after it was taken into care following the birth, attended assessments and parenting classes, took drug tests and went to court twice where they were finally granted full custody. After a period living in a ‘step down’ flat they have secured a council house on agreement that they pay back their outstanding arrears. As well as looking after their youngest child they have renewed contact with family members including another of their children.
**Overview**

A Homelessness Transition Fund grant enabled the Purfleet Trust to develop a range of services to help people sleeping rough move away from homelessness. Additional capacity meant that more focused key-working was embedded in the service to end and prevent individual’s rough sleeping.

New projects and partnerships were developed. Innovations include a new model of accommodation for single people in training flats, and establishing a trusting relationship with the police, for instance by addressing stigma between the police the homeless population.

“Over 18 months we have achieved a great amount. We have had a direct impact on rough sleeping levels and worked on preventing repeat homelessness. We have raised awareness of issues and people have become more supportive of our clients. We were here as a homelessness service already but we couldn’t meet people’s needs within our existing resources; the HTF enabled us to provide more structure but in a flexible way.”

Chief Executive, Purfleet Trust
Identifying need

The Purfleet Trust has been operating in Kings Lynn since 1993. In 2012, they knew they wanted to develop the homelessness services they provided to single people. Kings Lynn had an ongoing issue with rough sleeping and anti-social behaviour related to street drinking. There were gaps in the services available, including provision for people who had been excluded from hostels or who had struggled to maintain tenancies in the private rented sector or social housing. The local Housing Options team were being regularly approached for help with homelessness by single people, but with few sustained positive outcomes.

The Purfleet Trust wanted to work in partnership with the local authority and others to create more effective routes off the streets for their clients.

“The local authority was getting single homeless people presenting at Housing Options, taking up time but with few positive outcomes for this group. The police were reporting to the council that people were homeless and this was causing problems. We were saying ‘we need additional resources so we can help with this!’. We could see areas where we could work more effectively and build capacity.”
Chief Executive, Purfleet Trust

The funding

The Homeless Link Strategy and Partnerships Manager for the East of England suggested that a Homelessness Transition Fund bid would be a good way to expand and develop the service. The Chief Executive of the Purfleet Trust developed a bid which was supported by the local authority. This was successful and they were awarded just over £105,000 over 18 months.

The funding was used for additional posts including two support worker roles in the Pathways Centre and a housing services manager role.

“The HTF was the answer to our prayers. We were recognised as local experts in single homelessness but did not have the resources to develop the service further.”
Chief Executive, Purfleet Trust

Achievements

Creating a pathway off the streets

The additional staffing within the Purfleet Trust’s Pathways Centre meant that a more structured service was provided to homeless clients. All clients had an Outcomes Star assessment and more time was put into casework, including organising accommodation and getting people engaged with services. This included preventing repeat homelessness amongst clients in accommodation as well as helping people new to sleeping rough.

“Our partners see less of a ‘revolving door’ effect. A reduction in homelessness presentations from this group means we are reducing the burden on the local authority.”
Chief Executive, Purfleet Trust

To further assist the work being undertaken to tackle rough sleeping the local authority were able to negotiate with the local hostel provider, four emergency direct access beds. This created a short term option while the best routes off of the streets were assessed. The Purfleet Trust, the local authority and hostel provider (Genesis Housing) then worked together to find the best housing solution for an individual and therefore reduce the risk of people returning to the streets.

“One of the main differences is that as the statutory authority, we deal with all homeless people, statutory and non-statutory. We don’t have the ability to spend much time with people. The Purfleet Trust is able to spend more time with people and assist them into alternative accommodation. They can help with work, training and courses and give that time.”
Housing Options Manager, Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council

The local authority believes that the work undertaken by the Purfleet Trust has made a significant contribution to overall efforts to reduce rough sleeping in Kings Lynn.

“In the last two years we reported three people rough sleeping on a single night, about four years ago we had about 20. We have benefited from joint working with Purfleet Trust and others, including immigration services.”
Housing Options Manager, Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council

A new model of accommodation

An innovation arising from the HTF funding at the Purfleet Trust is a new model of training flats. Freebridge Community Housing provided the Purfleet Trust with three shared houses for single people to stay. Residents benefit from key working, training and building up a track record in maintaining a tenancy. Central to the ethos of the flats is the provision of training and support to increase tenancy sustainment in the future.

“We don’t usually deliver housing, we usually link with other housing providers but we saw that once someone is excluded from one hostel, they are often excluded from them all. If they
are not in a position to hold down a tenancy without support they are a bit stuck. We created a model where people can access the training flats and engage with training, including life skills, tenancy training and employability and volunteering training.”

Chief Executive, Purfleet Trust

The project has been successful and is due to be extended to include a property specifically for women. The local authority values the scheme and can sometimes assist in providing independent accommodation for tenants who have demonstrated they can manage a tenancy in the training flats – which would not usually be available for single people moving on from homelessness.

“"The Purfleet Trust are working with the Local Authority and filling some of the gaps that we have in services. The training houses are a very good opportunity for people ... There have been ‘revolving door’ cases of people who have been through homelessness services and have been refused access to hostels for previous behaviour. The training flats have assisted in getting some of those people off the streets and turning things around.”

Housing Options Manager, Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council

Developing partnerships

The additional capacity generated by the HTF has enabled the Purfleet Trust to develop partnerships and maximise the potential of joint working across agencies.

The period of HTF funding saw developments in the relationship with the local authority. As part of creating a comprehensive pathway, the local authority assess all single homelessness people who present at housing options, and then refer those who are not in priority need or who are intentionally homeless to the Purfleet Trust.

“"As a result of the HTF we have accessed funding from Norfolk County Council via the borough council. The local authority liked the work we had been doing through the HTF and asked if we would be able to put in a bid with them for a Pathways to Inclusion Project. This means we can work with people who have multiple needs in a way we couldn’t before, attending appointments and taking a Making Every Adult Matter approach, working with support services to get them to be more flexible.”

Chief Executive, Purfleet Trust

Another key partnership for the Purfleet Trust is with the local police. With no street outreach the police are a key partner in making contact with people sleeping rough and understanding what is happening among the street population. By promoting their service to the police and offering clients more structured support the Purfleet Trust has been able to provide an alternative to enforcement where appropriate. The police are able to bring people they find begging, for example, directly to the Pathways Centre.

A key element of working with the police has been to bridge the gap between the police and the homeless population to build up more trust and understanding and to challenge stigma. As part of the HTF project a new initiative for the Pathways Centre to host trainee police officers for a one-week placement was developed. This provides useful insight for the new police officers on the issues faced by people who become homeless, and also makes those attending the centre less wary of the police, having had positive interactions with trainees.

“"Those who were assigned here are the people who will go on to be local police personnel in the area. They love it! It’s an insight into the person, the story of people before the police pick them up on the streets and arrest them. It breaks down stigma on both sides. It means people will go to police officers – if they don’t know them they don’t go to them as they don’t think they will help.”

Chief Executive, Purfleet Trust
Learning from the Purfleet Trust

The Purfleet Trust demonstrates how an opportunity to build capacity can be maximised through innovation and partnership.

Innovation
The Purfleet Trust have developed innovative solutions to gaps in services for their client group. Examples are the training flats, a completely new approach for the area and the trainee police placements. These new approaches involve a level of risk but have ultimately paid off as projects have succeeded.

“Initially people were unsure and not that happy about the training flats: is this a hostel, is it a House of Multiple Occupation? Once they saw the results, they wanted to work together.”
Chief Executive, Purfleet Trust

Creating a track record to attract more funding
By successfully providing solutions like the training flats, the Purfleet Trust is in a good position to highlight gaps in services and propose solutions, thus becoming more sustainable. The HTF work led to development of the Pathways to Inclusion Project, and the training flat model has attracted interest from another organisation willing to provide properties. The Trust is well placed to be a key partner in any new strategies to address rough sleeping in the area.

A broad and flexible range of services for clients
The Purfleet Trust has diversified its range of services. At the core is a key working system, with an emphasis on ending or preventing rough sleeping for each person. Training in life skills, employability and providing access to volunteering opportunities ensure that the work seeks to address clients’ long term needs and prevent repeat homelessness.

Partnerships and relationships
The Purfleet Trust is more integrated into the work of the police and the local authority as a result of the HTF. They have also formed a partnership with a major local housing provider. These relationships have been crucial to the overall success of the Purfleet Trust and to ensuring a legacy to the HTF funding.

“The overall approach of the Purfleet Trust on the project was very positive with a big focus on joint working. With scarce resources, the only way we can work is in partnership with organisations like the Purfleet Trust.”
Housing Options Manager, Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council
Joe

Helping Joe to find a place to call home

Joe is in his 40s. He has been known to the Purfleet Trust over many years. When the Pathways to Independence Project was established, Joe was targeted for the scheme due to his long term street homelessness and prolific offending, which was related to alcohol use. The presence of the housing services manager and Pathways to Inclusion worker gave the Purfleet Trust an opportunity to work with Joe in a new and more intensive way than had previously been possible.

“I was sleeping up by the river... I had an ASBO order, I had boredom and depression. I would get moved on, end up in the police station. It was a vicious cycle. I had nowhere to go, I didn’t care.”

Joe agreed to take part in the Pathways to Inclusion Project while he was in prison. He describes taking part in a basic substance reduction course in prison as being a turning point for him, making him realise he wanted to make changes in his life.

After he was released, the housing services manager and Pathways to Inclusion worker at the Purfleet Trust spent time ‘building trust’, supporting him almost every day. An initial tenancy at one of the training flats lasted six months, during which time Joe didn’t drink. However, the tenancy ended due to an argument with another resident. He was supported into the private rented sector with intensive support on hand.

Joe is proud of the flat and reflects on being able to sit in the warm looking out at people on the streets while he is indoors, when he was previously outside all the time. Being accommodated and managing his alcohol use better has also helped his relationship with his parents.

“I didn’t care. I had nothing to aim for. Now I have house keys. Security and safety. My house is my HQ. My parents didn’t want to know me, now they are in touch with me... I’ve still got the card pinned up that says ‘welcome to your new home’. My mum and dad are pleased.”

Joe was also supported to take part in courses and volunteer in the local food bank.

There are ongoing challenges. Joe has to decide how to spend his time:

“If I come and see people (friends) every day I drink more but I feel bad if I stay at home all day.”

He is also finding it hard to budget to repay arrears and court fines from the past as well as meet his basic day-to-day needs. The staff at the Purfleet Trust continue to provide regular support to help him maintain the progress made.
Overview

A Homelessness Transition Fund grant enabled Thames Reach to embed the skills of a specialist mental health outreach worker into their street outreach operations, including the London Street Rescue service.

The team at Thames Reach developed a psychologically informed approach to working with rough sleepers who have serious mental health problems. By working with mental health experts at Enabling Assessment Service London (EASL) they were able to advocate for clients and achieve statutory mental health assessments – often a vital component of routes off the street for this group.

The project saw many long-term rough sleepers who were previously resistant to help, accessing services and ultimately accommodation. The project has demonstrated the ongoing need for mental health expertise in street outreach.

“A total of 37 people with serious mental health problems have been accommodated as a result of the Psychologically Informed Outreach project, which is a huge achievement reflecting a lot of skill, persistence, creativity and partnership working. Through regular engagement we have helped to facilitate change in clients’ lives.”

Pan London Outreach Manager, Thames Reach
Identifying need

Concern about rough sleepers with serious mental health problems has been growing in recent years. The death of a rough sleeper with schizophrenia in 2010 prompted a Serious Case Review in Lambeth which was published in 2012. This bolstered efforts to address the needs of a small but significant group of people whose rough sleeping was sometimes regarded ‘a lifestyle choice’. In fact, underlying mental health problems were the primary cause of their homelessness and isolation from services and society.

“There are sometimes people who are street homeless where mental health problems are pivotal in keeping them homeless – even though they might be quite ‘quietly’ unwell.”

Director, EASL

London Street Rescue is a Greater London Authority (GLA) funded Pan-London outreach service operating across London, but largely in outer boroughs that have little or no street outreach of their own. With the team covering a very wide geographical area they faced particular challenges in engaging with people sleeping rough, who are often quite hidden and have serious mental health problems.

EASL is a mental health team supporting people experiencing homelessness across London and the agencies that work with them. They provide multi-disciplinary assessments of people sleeping rough, and training and support to those working in the homelessness sector. The organisation was set up in recognition of the need for mental health input in homelessness outreach.

The funding

In 2012 EASL undertook a short pilot project, providing support to London Street Rescue. The success of this initial work enabled Thames Reach to put together a successful bid to the HTF. Thames Reach was awarded just under £100k to deliver psychologically informed outreach for 18 months.

The funding was used to employ a psychologically informed outreach worker and for EASL to provide support from a mental health social worker (an approved mental health professional) and a clinical psychologist. This included help with particularly complex assessments and regular clinical support for the outreach team. The project tested a model of working in a multi-disciplinary way, improving clinical support and mental health expertise for the whole London Street Rescue team, alongside targeted interventions for rough sleepers who had mental health problems which were hard to address within normal outreach work.

“The primary thing was being able to see whether this type of input would achieve positive change for people leading very excluded lives – facing serious risks and a poor quality of life.”

Director, EASL

Achievements

Reaching people on the streets with serious mental health problems

In total the project reached 74 people with mental health problems who were sleeping rough. 60 specialist mental health assessments were undertaken. 37 people were housed, including people who had been living isolated lives in secluded locations for many years and were regarded as being virtually impossible to accommodate.

The resource of the psychologically informed outreach worker within London Street Rescue meant that targeted additional work could be undertaken to engage with those who had serious mental health problems. This often meant providing a level of contact which would not be possible as part of standard outreach shifts. For example the psychologically informed outreach worker undertook regular visits to individuals’ sleep sites and spent more time with them, for example buying lunch for a client each week while a relationship developed. This work was targeted at those who had previously fallen through gaps in the support on offer.

“Local Authorities had let the situations drift ... Previously with some people we were doing welfare checks on these clients – some of them engaged with us some didn’t. It was frustrating to see people who we knew were not well, who were in crisis but whom we couldn’t get an assessment for.”

Lead Manager, London Street Rescue, Thames Reach

Once targeted by the psychologically informed outreach project, the outreach team worked intensively and persistently on a case, drawing in additional support from EASL where necessary. Use of the ‘Mental Health Act 1983 Screening Tool’ and the ‘Mental Capacity Act Screening Tool for Street Outreach Teams’ was followed up by more detailed reports to demonstrate to statutory mental health services that a mental health need had been correctly identified. Where appropriate, EASL was asked to undertake a joint assessment and write a report, and as necessary the team escalated cases to achieve outcomes.

“EASL would write a report to help us get mental health services engaged ... They knew the language to use and how to quote the relevant legislation ... If we hit a brick wall we would report a safeguarding case.”

Lead Manager, London Street Rescue, Thames Reach

An effective multidisciplinary outreach service

The psychologically informed outreach worker was embedded in street outreach services at Thames Reach, usually working with London Street Rescue but also available for referrals from other outreach teams. Outreach workers referred cases to the psychologically informed outreach worker who then targeted the clients most in need of additional psychological input.
Having the psychologically informed outreach worker to refer to gave the teams encouragement to complete assessment tools to screen for mental health problems. The project affected outcomes for clients with mental health problems across Thames Reach’s outreach services, not just those targeted by the psychologically informed worker for additional input.

“We have supported referring outreach workers to develop their understanding of mental health including treatment options, referral routes, assessing risks and developing support plans ... with a better understanding of statutory mental health services... they are more able to persuade those services to respond to our clients’ needs.”

Pan London Outreach Manager, Thames Reach

With particularly complex cases or where mental health teams were reluctant to assess a client, mental health professionals from EASL – including a mental health social worker, a clinical psychologist and a psychiatrist – would provide an external assessment.

Sometimes there is a real value in having people who are highly qualified to write up an authoritative assessment to generate action.

“The outreach workers are very experienced ... in writing assessments we applied their knowledge and concern in a way which would be heard.”

Director, EASL

Each client assessed by the psychologically informed outreach worker had a personal intervention plan. Casework management meetings facilitated a multidisciplinary approach. Around 15 cases were discussed in these fortnightly sessions and personal intervention plans were developed and reviewed. This ensured a sustained and creative, approach to engagement and finding routes off the street.

In some cases it was necessary for clients to spend some time in hospital. This was often as voluntary patients but, when the evidence of mental disorder and risks made it appropriate, there were some instances where this initially involved use of the Mental Health Act (1983). Hospital admissions were a critical point for continued input from the psychologically informed outreach worker and other members of the team to ensure an appropriate discharge plan to avoid a return to the streets:

“We were working with the hospital staff on discharge plans (as soon as possible), already thinking about what happens after the person leaves hospital ... an accommodation offer is key to getting people linked in with Home Treatment Teams and Floating Support.”

Lead Manager, London Street Rescue, Thames Reach

The team worked with people until they were housed and engaging well with other services. At this point the team withdrew from cases to ensure they were able to focus on those currently rough sleeping.

Demonstrating the need for mental health expertise in outreach

The psychologically informed outreach project aimed to explore and demonstrate the value of having mental health expertise within outreach services. The unique contribution of this expertise was demonstrated through work with clients and the support provided to the team.

There was a client in (outer London borough) pushing a trolley around for years. (The psychologically informed outreach worker) met him each week for coffee, he revealed that he was hearing voices, eventually he was sectioned and got supported accommodation. Somewhere in central London they are more used to this kind of case; in the outer London borough they lacked the resources and experience so the extra input from us was needed to achieve an outcome.”

Lead Manager, London Street Rescue, Thames Reach
The additional structured input from highly qualified and experienced mental health professionals was helpful in dealing with the more complex cases, and in offering support and one to one supervision to the psychologically informed worker, and to the rest of the team as a group.

London Street Rescue, including the psychologically informed outreach worker, had regular clinical supervision in group and one-to-one settings, to assist them in working with clients who had serious mental health problems. This was felt to be highly beneficial to the team and helped them identify the most effective ways to work with clients and to ensure their own wellbeing.

“The work which outreach teams do is really complicated and challenging. They are having contact with people with difficult histories and there is a real benefit for the workers to have support in thinking about the impact of the work on them – how they are relating to the work and what different approaches they might try. It’s more than appropriate for outreach workers to have good support and ultimately this means they are better able to help their clients.”

Director, EASL

Learning from the psychologically informed outreach project

The psychologically informed outreach project demonstrated a range of ways of integrating mental health expertise into street outreach, and improving the service offered to all clients with mental health problems and providing targeted input to those with complex mental health needs.

Building relationships, retaining boundaries

Part of the success of the project in achieving outcomes with people reluctant to engage was the flexibility in the psychologically informed outreach worker’s role. The worker was able to:

‘undertake regular visits to people, taking time to build trust and rapport and establish a therapeutic alliance’ (Pan London Outreach Manager). This work was undertaken with clear boundaries. The focus was always on routes off the street and staff were clear with clients about this objective. While the psychologically informed outreach service retained contact with clients in the early stages of their accommodation journeys, the service had to withdraw and refocus on those still on the streets when this was appropriate.

Challenging the view of rough sleeping as a choice

Some of the people housed as a result of the psychologically informed outreach project had been sleeping rough long term. Their resistance to help had been perceived as a choice. The project challenged that perception with people who had been long-term ‘non-engagers’, sustaining accommodation following input from mental health services.

“I have been surprised, you think someone has just been (sleeping rough) so long, we have tried to input before, and then suddenly you hear the person has been housed and you think – wow! I met the first client of the service myself and did not know if there would be an outcome but there was – it was about the approach, the gentleness and getting trust and knowing when to intervene.”

Pan London Outreach Manager, Thames Reach

The model of ongoing specialist mental health input

The project has demonstrated the value of having a specialist mental health role within street outreach services to target people in most need of psychological input. Furthermore, spot purchasing of case-related support from EASL brought senior professional input to the most challenging cases.

This work was case led but also resulted in improvements in the relationships between outreach teams and mental health teams generally. The Pan London Outreach Manager at Thames Reach believes that there is an ongoing need for this model of working.

“There is far more to be done, this was a client-led short project which has got some great outcomes, but the job of making links between outreach and mental health teams is not a solvable problem ... all outreach teams should have ongoing specialist mental health input. This project has highlighted that. It’s reinforced our understanding of the gap that is there and we will look for further funding.”

Pan London Outreach Manager, Thames Reach

The team effect

Casework management meetings, clinical supervision and support from the psychologically informed outreach worker ensured that the whole London Street Rescue team and wider outreach services at Thames Reach benefited from the knowledge of the additional specialist post. The outcomes achieved and consistent use of screening tools improved the confidence of the team in working with mental health teams and advocating for clients.

“In a number of areas there is also a snowball effect; having had one successful piece of work improves the relationship between outreach and mental health services and they have developed an understanding of one another’s roles.”

Director, EASL
Sam
Ending eight years of rough sleeping by addressing unmet mental health needs

Sam is in his 60s. He was referred to the psychologically informed outreach worker by London Street Rescue in early 2013. He had been known to outreach services for a long time but was very evasive and declined to engage with staff. Sam had been evicted from his flat in 2006 following the death of his father and subsequent rent arrears.

The psychologically informed outreach worker made multiple visits to Sam’s sleeping site and he agreed that he would have lunch with the worker each week. As a more trusting relationship developed he started to converse more freely, eventually revealing that he was hearing voices ‘broadcast by the authorities’. Far from a lifestyle choice he disclosed that he did not want to sleep rough but felt unable to accept help with housing. Although he did not think he was unwell he agreed to be seen by a psychiatrist. Sam had an assessment by an independent psychiatrist from EASL. This was shared with his local Housing Options team who agreed to house him.

Upon viewing the accommodation on offer, Sam felt that it would be unsafe for him to stay there and, despite the team’s best efforts, decided not to take up the offer. Sam’s underlying mental health problem prevented him from accepting the property; one of his concerns was that he would ‘bring trouble’ to other residents – believing that they would end up with his symptoms.

Following this, Sam declined an appointment with a Community Mental Health Team. The psychologically informed outreach worker and EASL provided specialist written assessments to the Community Mental Health Team who concluded that Sam needed to be assessed under the Mental Health Act. Sam was assessed in the community and met the criteria to be admitted to hospital under Section 2 of the Mental Health Act.

Upon receiving treatment, Sam’s mental health started to improve, and he started to work with London Street Rescue and the psychologically informed outreach worker on benefits and housing plans. Staff from London Street Rescue attended a number of ward rounds and liaised with housing and community mental health services to ensure a suitable discharge plan was put in place.

After sleeping rough for nearly eight years, Sam moved into supported accommodation on leaving hospital. The team continued to support him for an additional two months while he settled into his new home.