

**LONDON BOROUGH OF RICHMOND UPON THAMES
HOMELESSNESS FORUM**

**Minutes of the meeting held in the Salon, York House, Twickenham, on Monday
11 October 2010 at 2 p.m.**

Present:

Layo Afuape	LB Richmond, Emergency Duty Team
Elisabeth Bamber	Twickenham Citizens Advice Bureau
Nell Blane	LB Richmond, Young People's Drug & Alcohol Service
Debi Blaxill	MID Mediation & Counselling
Louise Brice	LB Richmond, Resettlement Team
Amy Cheswick	Richmond upon Thames Churches Housing Trust
Richard Clift	Twickenham Citizens Advice Bureau
Ken Emerson	LB Richmond, Housing Operations
Charles Eshun	Centrepoint
Sarah Filby	LB Richmond, Housing & Wellbeing Team
Louise Gainford	Refuge
Patsi Goop	Centrepoint
Joanna Gregory	Richmond Furniture Scheme
Maria Heath	Richmond Housing Partnership
Catherine Howard	Kingston & Richmond Law Centre
Bridget Jones	Richmond College
Peter Kirkham	Richmond upon Thames LGBT Forum
Laura Nicholls	Life Housing
Lisa Reed	Homeless Link
Elizabeth Schertler	Homeless Link
Brian Short	Richmond Borough Mind
Anette Thomas	Stonham
James Tompsett	Stonham
Ed Tytherleigh (Chair)	SPEAR
Cllr. Nicola Urquhart	LB Richmond
Cass Williams	St Christopher's Fellowship

Apologies:

Val Farmer	Richmond Borough Mind
Sue Fox	LB Richmond, Mental Health
Angela Gray	Twickenham Connexions Centre
Matt Hatton	Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness
Alison Heaslewood	Thames Valley Housing Association
Anna Henderson	Richmond upon Thames Churches Housing Trust
Christina Isis	NHS Richmond
Lynn Pickerell	Victim Support
Gavin Rodgers	L&Q
Barbara Thorn	CfBT Kingston & Richmond (Connexions)
Linda Toulmin	Richmond Housing Partnership
Catherine van Wissen	Centrepoint
Samina Yaqub	Victim Support

1. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2010 were agreed as an accurate record.

2. Feedback from the Steering Group

Ed Tytherleigh (ET) stated that the Steering Group was available to consider any key issues that would fit in with the work of either SPEAR or the Council. It was noted that no issues had been put forward by forum members and that the offer was still open.

ACTION BY: ALL

3. Richmond MOPP (Move-on Plans Protocol) and Clean Break

ET noted that in 2009 NHS Richmond, in partnership with LBRuT, commissioned Homeless Link to complete two data collection and consultation activities (MOPP and Clean Break) to identify unmet need, service gaps and provide a strategic overview of the move-on requirements of local single homeless and rough sleeping clients with a substance misuse issue and/or dual diagnosis. Homeless Link is now working with NHS Richmond and partners to develop a local action plan to address the issues highlighted by their work.

Elizabeth Schertler (ES) and Lisa Reed (LR) from Homeless Link introduced themselves to the forum.

ES noted that although her work mapped provision generally the consultation focussed specifically on the housing and support needs of those with a substance support need. Homeless Link asked stakeholders to consider the availability of appropriate housing and the impact of any barriers to accessing accommodation for this client group.

The MOPP audit highlighted that the majority of clients in services are ready for move on, but the accommodation needed is either not available or does not exist. The most common barrier was the lack of long-term care/support projects with suitable entry criteria or programmes of specialist support.

ES highlighted other barriers identified by the MOPP audit, including the unrealistic expectations of clients (e.g. *"If I wait long enough I will get a social housing tenancy"*) and lack of appropriate floating support.

ET, following a question from the forum, explained that 'floating support' is a service that provides housing related support that enables a client to maintain independence in their own home. Floating support services have the flexibility to support a person wherever they live – as distinct from accommodation based services, where support is tied to the property.

ES noted that the Clean Break consultation identified where substance

misuse and/or dual diagnosis clients can live, highlighting that the SPEAR hostel was the only source of accommodation that came up time and again as being a realistic option for this client group.

ET also noted that SPEAR's Tenancy Support Team run a tenancy support drop in service (no appointment necessary) every Thursday between 9.30am and 1.30pm at their head office (89 Heath Road, Twickenham, TW1 4AW).

Representatives from Stonham highlighted that their service also takes on some very high need clients.

ES stated that the Clean Break consultation found that mental health accommodation is not usually available to those with substance misuse issues.

ES explained that Homeless Link used various quantitative data sources (including CHAIN – London's most comprehensive and widely used database on rough sleeping and the street population) and the assumptions drawn from the qualitative evidence provided by stakeholders to estimate that a minimum of 114 bed spaces were needed for substance misuse clients at any one time. Following a question from the forum ES confirmed that this figure includes those in private rented sector (PRS) accommodation (anyone who goes into treatment).

LR noted that discussions with stakeholders working with people at different stages highlighted that where clients are drug free there is potential for increased use of the PRS accommodation, but for this to be sustainable it needs to be accompanied by an appropriate package of support and away from current users. LR also highlighted the necessity of continuity in support to non-illicit substance users and the need for specific provision for chaotic, high need users and an assessment centre for this group.

The client consultation conducted by Homeless Link also highlighted:

- A lack of suitable housing, especially for substance misuse clients;
- A lack of information and clarity re. entitlement and the allocations process; and,
- The impact of being without a settled home on recovery and employment.

LR outlined the 5 priority areas for action highlighted by Homeless Link's work:

- Effective joint working;
- Access and housing options;
- Prevention;
- Information; and,
- Client involvement.

The implementation group will meet in November to design an action plan building on both exercises.

Peter Kirkham (PK) (Richmond upon Thames LGBT Forum) noted that if we can prevent young, gay men, leaving home becoming homeless and/or provide them with support to find sustainable accommodation we will also prevent drug/alcohol problems further down the line. ET noted that he had worked with Richard Eason the LGBT forum's last chair to promote SPEAR's services to the LGBT community. PK highlighted that those coming out for the first time and leaving home will often have no local connection where they present as homeless, but it is often inappropriate for them to return to their borough of residence.

Bridget Jones (BJ) stated that similar issues were faced by young people leaving Richmond College at 18, particularly young men, and highlighted the negative perceptions faced by benefit recipients.

ET thanked ES and LR for their work, noting that both audits had provided an excellent opportunity to focus attention on services and homelessness in the borough and hoped that this focus would be translated into action.

4. Sub-regional Rough Sleeper Strategy and Action Plan

Ken Emerson (KE) explained that Homeless Link are working with the Sub-region (London Boroughs of Croydon, Lambeth, Merton, Richmond, Sutton, Wandsworth and the Royal Borough of Kingston) to develop a Sub-regional Rough Sleeper Strategy and action plan.

KE noted that the strategy will explain the provision we have across the sub-region and individual borough approaches to work with rough sleepers. This strategy will inform an action plan for sub-regional work, which will add value to the work going on in each borough.

KE highlighted what boroughs can do together. The proposed actions include:

- Work on prison discharge and hospital discharge across the sub-region;
- Robust implementation of the Reconnections Protocol;
- Working with the UK Border Agency and Police to tackle the issues of those with no recourse to public funds / A8 migrants (migrants from the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia); and,
- Summary of needs in specific circumstances e.g. ex-forces

KE stated that the Mayor had written to all London boroughs asking them to take part in a rough sleeper count or estimate at the end of November. The next meeting with the sub-region is also due to take place mid November.

Following discussion KE agreed to provide an update at the forum's next meeting.

ACTION BY: KE

5. Progress Update and Homelessness Figures from the LBRuT

KE noted that homelessness figures have gone up with 138 households accepted as homeless over 2009/10; 43% of these households were pregnant or had dependent children and 46% of homeless acceptances were young people. KE also stated that there are over 220 households in temporary accommodation.

Following a query from the forum re. the Southwark judgement KE confirmed that joint assessments by Housing Operations and Children's Social Services were up and running for 16/17 year olds presenting as homeless and highlighted their increased focus on mediation for these young people and their families.

6. Progress Update and Homelessness Figures from SPEAR

ET provided the forum with an update on SPEAR's work since the last meeting highlighting that the SPEAR helpline had received approx. 450 enquiries from homeless households or those at risk of homelessness in 2010/11 (to date), verified 76 rough sleepers (down from 115) and taken 74 off the street. ET also noted the launch of SPEAR's new private rented sector service, which SPEAR hope will ease the issue of lack of move on accommodation from the hostel.

7. Any Other Business

Brian Short (BS) (Richmond Borough Mind) queried what the Council was planning re. emergency accommodation for rough sleepers with the onset of winter. ET highlighted the great partnership working between the Council and SPEAR during the cold snap at the beginning of the year, but noted that the accommodation provided came at significant cost. ET noted that following refurbishment of the SPEAR hostel they would be providing floor space during severe cold weather. BS noted the good will from many churches in the borough, such as St Stephen's, and suggested that they might also be willing to provide accommodation.

Following questions from the forum KE explained the Council's approach to empty properties and highlighted the work of the Empty Property Officer locally.

The forum agreed that following the creation of www.homelesslondon.org (London's website of services for homeless people), which allows you to search online for hostels, advice and support from over 1,600 service providers, it was no longer necessary to update and/or produce hard copies of the borough's Homelessness Directory. The forum asked for appropriate signposting to be added to the borough's public website and removal of the 2004 Homelessness Directory.

ACTION BY: SF

ET agreed to speak to Refuge re. the donation of large items such as furniture.

ACTION BY: ET

The forum requested a further discussion re. the Housing Benefit changes announced in the June 2010 emergency budget.

ACTION BY: ET AND SF

8. Future Meetings

Monday 21st March 2011 at 2.00 pm – The Salon, York House, Twickenham (to be confirmed)

The meeting ended at 3.30 p.m.