

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

**Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber, York House, Twickenham,
on Monday 21st March 2011 at 2.00 pm**

Present:

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| Paul Anders | Homeless Link |
| Catherine Ashforth | Eaves Housing |
| Elisabeth Bamber | Richmond CAB |
| Louise Brice | LB Richmond, Housing Operations |
| Dan Butler | LB Richmond, Housing & Wellbeing |
| Amy Cheswick | Richmond upon Thames Churches Housing Trust |
| Richard Clift | Twickenham CAB |
| Richard Eason | LB Richmond LGBT Forum |
| Val Farmer | RB Mind |
| Sarah Filby | LB Richmond, Housing & Wellbeing |
| Louise Gainford | Refuge |
| Karen Hopkins | LB Richmond, Housing & Wellbeing |
| Surinder Kaur | EMAG |
| Martha Kelly | Centrepont |
| John Leavy | LB Richmond, Commissioning Care Services |
| Jonathan Monckton | Richmond Parish Lands Charity |
| Robin Oliver | LB Richmond, Housing & Wellbeing |
| Gavin Rodgers | L&Q |
| Ed Tytherleigh (Chair) | SPEAR |
| Cllr Nicki Urquhart | LB Richmond |
| Cass Williams | St Christopher's Fellowship |

Apologies:

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| Pardip Barmi | Refuge |
| Alison Barrington | Richmond CAB |
| Claire Blackburn | RB Mind |
| Annette Blake | SPEAR |
| Jude Bowler | LB Richmond, Children's Services Joint Commissioning Manager |
| Helen Cuthbert | Victim Support |
| Ken Emerson | LB Richmond, Housing Operations |
| Angela Gray | Connexions |
| Matt Hatton | Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness |
| Alison Heaslewood | Thames Valley Housing Association |
| Anna Henderson | Richmond upon Thames Churches Housing Trust |
| Emma King | RB Mind |
| Lynn Lock | LB Richmond, Integrated Youth Support |
| Kelly Murphy | Broadway |
| Laura Nicholls | Life Housing |
| Brian Short | RB Mind |
| Harriet Smith | Richmond Housing Partnership |
| Sheri Tanner | LB Richmond, Benefits Policy Officer |
| Anette Thomas | Stonham |
| Jame Tompsett | Stonham |
| Beverly Walsh | Age Concern Richmond upon Thames |
| Samina Yaqub | Victim Support |

1. Welcome and Introductions

Ed Tytherleigh, Chair, welcomed Forum Members to the meeting. Members introduced themselves and apologies for absence were noted.

2. Matters Arising

Minutes of meeting held on 11th October 2010

Item 2 – Feedback from the Steering Group

The steering group consists of Ed Tytherleigh (ET), Ken Emerson – LB Richmond, Amy Cheswick – RUTCHT and Linda Toulmin – RHP. All members were asked to contact ET if they wanted to raise any issues at forthcoming meetings.

ACTION BY: ALL

Item 4 – Sub-regional Rough Sleeper Strategy and Action Plan

The Sub-regional Rough Sleeper Strategy and Action Plan are still under development.

ET highlighted Boris Johnson's 'no second night out' initiative. A pilot is underway in Islington; the multi-disciplinary team aims to offer a more personalised and responsive service, providing rapid help and access to services, so that no rough sleeper spends a 'second night out'. Rough sleepers will also be directed back to their borough or origin.

Richard Eason raised the possibility of people not wanting to declare their sexuality and/or gender identity if they have been subject to issues in the past, therefore more information is required regarding LGBT issues in relation to the 'no second night out' initiative.

ACTION: ET

ET noted that the PrOMPT toolkit is really useful and will aid the sub-regional audit of rough sleeping.

Item 7 – Any Other Business

The Homelessness Forum page on the LB Richmond website has now been updated to include a link to Homelessness Prevention. From here you will be able to access Homeless UK; a searchable directory provided by Homeless Link. You will also be able to access InfoRich – the LB Richmond Community Information database:

http://www.richmond.gov.uk/homelessness_forum

or

http://www.richmond.gov.uk/home/housing/advice_for_people_in_need_of_housing/housing_advice_homelessness_prevention.htm

The minutes of the meetings held on 11th October 2010 and 9th February 2011 were agreed as a true and accurate copy.

3. Customer Insight and Tenancy Sustainment: avoiding homelessness

Amy Cheswick (AC), Housing Services Manager, Richmond upon Thames Churches Housing Trust, explained that in order to ensure that the needs and aspirations of current and future clients are met it is important to know clients better to ensure that the right level of support is in place. Therefore the information from questionnaires currently being collected by RUTCHT will be used to meet clients' needs.

Questionnaires have been sent out to all existing tenants, using incentives for return, requesting information such as household details, ages, and other diversity strands, but in particular financial information. When a new tenant is signed up as much information as possible is gathered at that point.

Over 80% of RUTCHT tenants have provided information and this will help to identify the services which tenants might need. The data collated will be used in an appropriate and thorough way.

The proposed changes to social housing rents will have a big impact on current and future tenants. Higher rents could lead to more and higher arrears, evictions for arrears and a cycle of homelessness. Strategies will be needed to manage risk and ensure support for vulnerable people. Local Authorities are under a duty to develop a Strategic Tenancy Policy.

AC noted that it is important to start a debate on avoiding homelessness and to focus on the local situation in Richmond. It will be a challenge but will provide an opportunity for new ideas or solutions.

For further information regarding the statistics quoted in Amy's presentation please contact her by emailing: acheswick@rutcht.org.uk

4. Closure of the Vineyard Project

4.1 Val Farmer (VF), CEO Richmond Borough Mind, explained that the closure of The Vineyard at the end of March 2011 is a purely financial decision as RB Mind are unable to provide further funding for the drop-in centre. An announcement has been made in the local press and representatives from the local press were invited to speak to service users. VF made the following points during her presentation:

- Three meetings with service users have been held regarding the potential closure and stakeholders were invited to a meeting regarding the closure on 16th February 2011.
- Risk assessment needs for service users are currently being reviewed and stakeholders are identifying what services can be offered in the future. The Vineyard team have been working hard to identify and gather information for the 212 named service users who have been

identified. Many of the services users have moved on but an initial RAG status has been given to 79 service users.

- Those service users identified as having a 'red' status will require a statutory assessment and will be invited to attend assessment appointments before 31st March. Vineyard staff are encouraging users to attend these appointments.
- There are two open surgeries planned for 23rd and 30th March to gather and share as much information as possible with users. If a user isn't able to attend a statutory assessment appointment then the agencies will try to engage with them at the open surgery on 30th March.
- The Vineyard will be producing an information pack on what alternative services are available and will include information on where to access day centres, benefits advice, medical and dental, housing and homelessness and employment. All information will be verified with the different agencies and SPEAR as much as possible before being sent out to users. Information will also be placed on the Vineyard notice board.
- Future plans are still to be agreed but a Church steering group has been formed and will address services such as laundry, food, legal advice etc. The shop will remain open and funds will go towards new services.
- The Vineyard team have been informed that they are to be made redundant and two members of staff will remain for the month of April.
- It was noted that the South Richmond Police Liaison Group meeting to be held on 30th March may require an update on the closure of the Vineyard. There is a worry that there will be an increase in street homelessness with a visible impact on Richmond.

5. Introduction to Eaves

Catherine Ashforth explained that Eaves is a London based charity that provides housing and support to vulnerable women.

The Scarlet Centre, based in Lambeth, provides advice and drop-in support to women on a number of issues, including homelessness. A number of workshops have been developed to provide women with confidence building skills, debt management etc. It is also another way of providing support to women and giving them a forum to meet with other women in similar situations.

Eaves haven't delivered any workshops in Richmond as yet, but if any members of the forum would like further details about these free workshops, please contact Catherine –

Catherine.Ashforth@eaveshousing.co.uk

A 'move-on' tool for independent living for women has been developed – 'Move-on at Resettlement Manual'. Copies can be obtained from Catherine.

Further information about Eaves can also be found on their website:
<http://www.eaves4women.co.uk/index.php>

6. Ideas for Future Agenda Items

- Update on MOPP (Move-on Plans Protocol)
- Equalities Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty 2011
- Hidden homelessness
- Impact of the Localism Bill
- Update from Homeless Link re HB changes, Work Capability Assessments and Work Programmes
- End of transitional arrangements (30/4/2011) for A8 nationals from central / Eastern European states (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia)

7. Any Other Business

Ed Tytherleigh reported that SPEAR has been involved in a documentary regarding homelessness which will be aired on ITV in May. Also, SPEAR has been nominated for the IOD Charity of the Year Award.

8. Future Meetings

Monday 19th September 2011 at 2.00 pm – The Council Chamber, York House, Twickenham

The meeting ended at 3.35 p.m.