

Event report

THE CHALLENGE OF DESTITUTE AND HOMELESS MIGRANTS IN LONDON

28.05.2014

VENUE

London Funders
314 – 320 Grays Inn Road
London
WC1X 8DP

Samantha welcomed the group, and gave an introduction to the challenge of destitute and homeless migrants in London providing a summary of key statistics and recent meetings. London Funders facilitated a meeting in October 2013, where funders present had recognised that this was a complex area of need, which cuts across many different services and policy areas, and identified that there was an appetite for collaboration amongst funders. Since this meeting, London Funders has had a number of conversations with different members and other agencies to explore further the challenges facing destitute and homeless migrants in London. There have also been further independent funder discussions about the challenges and need for funder collaboration via the ACF Issue Based Networks on Homelessness and Migration, and a roundtable event hosted by JRF.

Destitution falls within one of London Funders' new strategy priorities. Although the issue of meeting the needs of homeless and destitute migrants is a national issue, there are particular challenges for London, owing to the scale of the problem within London and to the complexity of London's local government arrangements. Whilst there is clearly willingness for funders to collaborate, the combined complexity of needs for the different groups who fall under the broad label of destitute and homeless migrants, and the diversity of service responses required, make facilitating joint action and collaboration even more challenging than usual. Migrant destitution is a hidden problem and the routes out of destitution are very complex. Samantha noted how London Funders is key to allowing different funders to come together and allowing engagement and communication of different bodies.

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Some key updates and priorities

- The London Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) figures for 2012-13 show 53% of rough sleepers in London were non UK national, and 13% are not from the European Union, many of which have no recourse to public funds. Other evidence and data on the scale and nature of the issue is limited.
- There is very limited support for those people with no recourse to public funds. Last year, a Homeless Link survey showed 53% of accommodation services had to turn people with no recourse to public funds away (up for 35% the previous year). With benefit changes to EU migrants, services reliant on Housing Benefit will increasingly struggle.
- Migrant destitution is essentially a hidden homelessness problem – most people rely on friends, family and the informal community sector for support. This often exacerbates existing health, legal or other issues, and reduces the likelihood of their situations being resolved.
- Many projects are only time limited, for example, all Homelessness Transition Funded projects come to an end by early 2015, and there is concern what will happen when these are finished. However, some in the group noted that organisations have shown an increased focus on prevention and collaborative solutions, such as joint case management.
- Commonweal Housing are currently working on attempting to source free housing for destitute migrants. They are focusing on those from outside the EU, within the asylum system. Generally, housing is often

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gained through individual benevolence and so Commonweal Housing are attempting to find a more sustainable model. If their attempts fail then they will share the learning and if it works then they will encourage replication.

- Where immigration status is unclear, it is very difficult for organisations to find solutions. Good immigration advice is a crucial first step.
- There has been some success and a lot of support given by many faith and community based services, as well as day centres, but there is a need to work more together, drawing in expertise from different sectors. The GLA are currently commissioning Housing Justice to map accommodation for those with no recourse to public funds. The Homeless ness Transition Fund is supporting a national Praxis-led project to map best practice in accommodation and support.

Significant complexities

- Different funders and service providers have different perspectives and priorities. The group discussed whether this could be positive in order to provide a spotlight on different areas.
- Sometimes people may actually have access to public funds and legal resources, but it is sometimes assumed that they do not. Legal advice and more, and clearer, signposting is needed.
- Legal status can have a bearing on the accommodation and other support needs. For example, some people need accommodation for the 2-3 nights, others need up to 8 months and others may take 18 months to 2 years.
- This is election year and so now is a time to start sharing information and influencing people. However it will always be difficult for local authorities to make any statement about providing accommodation to people with no recourse to public funds.
- The group discussed the challenges of working within the current political climate and whether a shift towards Labour next year might lead to change. It was not seen as an immediate likelihood.
- Several noted that support is often motivated by humanitarian imperatives and down to individuals within agencies. Individual case studies are therefore critical in securing support for the issues.

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Partnerships

- ACF are also doing some work and the group agreed that it's important that learning from different groups is not lost. Where there are already some partnership work and discussions happening in London, e.g. where some London boroughs come together with the GLA to discuss destitution issues, or welfare benefits, then this should be fed to other groups.
- There needs to be a way to identify the issues so that organisations can have a united voice on some key points, e.g. discrimination, whilst still having their own priorities.

- Some argued that the numbers are low (possibly 1,000 destitute migrants sleeping rough in London according to CHAIN), although the point made that this is essentially a hidden problem.
- Some participants commented that local authorities seem to be working in an isolated way to other funders. No borough feels able to lead on providing services for people with NRPF despite the concerns of individual staff or council members. It may be that independent funders need use their voice and collaborate to support local authorities keen to tackle the issues. London Funders could take a position to navigate through this, put a spotlight on some of the contradictions and put its head above the parapet, as this is an issue that will affect all members.
- A key factor in a solution would be collaboration to allow for better cross sector working, and unblocking issues, including nationally with the Home Office and DWP.
- There was some discussion on a Corston style coalition, in coming together on a common issue. However, in this case, the issues are more sensitive and there is no national road map as there was with Baroness Corston's report. While the issue appeals to humanitarian instincts, there are also cost benefit arguments to be made in highlighting the issue. For example, the value added by migrant workers to the London economy, and costs saved to e.g. the NHS (through A&E) and criminal justice purses.
- There are drawbacks to raising the issue above the radar. As well as 'drawing fire' in the current anti-migrant climate, some agencies are only able to provide and cross-subsidise services indirectly. However, some participants suggested that 'below the radar' services had a greater need than many mainstream services for shared good practice and informed funders. Again, this may be something that London Funders is best placed to facilitate.
- It may not be the time for a Corston style coalition, but it may still be possible for some sort of collaboration, possibly to create an appetite for a 'no recourse to public funds' pot of money in London.
- Independent funders can do this in a way that is not possible for others, however it is important to incentivise the take up for other agencies and also demonstrate what is possible by local authorities – e.g. the latter have a responsibility for rough sleeping – and that cannot be solved without tackling NRPF destitution.

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Lead agencies

- Attendees discussed engagement with housing associations, focusing on possible involvement with the G15.
 - The local authorities do have meetings with these local housing associations and so there is a way into engaging with them, that others can use and try to engage with.
 - The property market in London makes housing provision very challenging.
 - There are some positive stories though, e.g. Real Lettings is the lettings agency for St Mungo's Broadway, which has a contract from the City of London to enable them to buy property and to increase the services they offer.

- The group discussed that the housing associations are anxious and concerned, and that they are aware that there is an increasing problem that will affect them more and more.
- It would be very positive to get a general statement from G15, but it could be that JRF would be a better placed organisation to do that.
- There are big implications for health services and so this issue needs to be on the public health agenda.
 - Some present are involved in conversations on the public health agenda and are discussing the short term and long term strategy. The group discussed that it would be positive for information, communication and actions from this to be in the public domain.
 - Future actions could be justified through a quality impact assessment and cost benefit analysis. There has already been some work in this area, for example a study on the health data set in Cambridge to look at impact, and Homeless Link also carried out a health needs audit.

Moving forward

- Moving forwards, there is as much a need for coordinating knowledge and activities as there is for specific initiatives. London Funders can try to capture information, so organisations should feedback what they are doing and what has and hasn't worked for them. It is important to both gather evidence of impact and also add our weight to the voice of others. London Funders is in a position to stay on top of what is happening in the group. Also, the situation for destitute NRPF migrants is likely to be replicated with EU-migrants and British people as the effects of benefit changes and sanction start to bite. While there is no great appetite for a Corston style collaboration, there are common areas where people want a better understanding and can join together. Collaborations may not be high profile, but there is scope to look to get better understanding and work out where interventions can be made.
- Even where funders don't take a lead, talking to lead agencies would be very positive to allow for better communication and cross sector working. A next step should be bringing together those agencies with representatives from London Funders.
- Moral reasons may be the best rationale for support, but it is still important to pull evidence together to make the argument robust. Work needs to be done on collecting real evidence and case studies – the data needs to be robust enough and the messages clear so that national government cannot dismiss it. The time is now to act on this.
- London Funders will speak to JRF about their actions and if London Funders can do some work or support them in doing some work such as collecting resources or encouraging good practice.
- Some mapping needs to be done to inform people, services and funders of what services are available, and what good practice looks like.

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Samantha thanked the participants for a very rich and helpful conversation. It is important to follow up from this meeting and look at what actions can be done. If attendees have any resources or information, London Funders is happy to store and share it. The work in this area needs to be owned by stakeholders, London Funders can only act as a facilitator, but at this stage it's very important to engage more in the conversation.

This meeting was Samantha's final one as a member of the Executive Committee for London Funders and David thanked Samantha for all her hard work and support. London Funders looks forward to working with Samantha more on this topic.

Participants

Sacha	Rose-Smith	Big Lottery Fund
Ashley	Horsey	Commonweal Housing
Kristina	Glenn	Cripplegate Foundation
Deborah	Halling	Greater London Authority
Samantha	Rennie	Homeless Link (Chair)
Miranda	Griffith	London Borough of Camden
Claire	Ritchie	London Borough of Lambeth
Angela	Chu	London Borough of Merton
Anya	Stern	London Community Foundation
Ieuan	Ap Rees	Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea
Tim	Wilson	The City Bridge Trust
Laura	Bowman	The Tudor Trust
Bharat	Mehta	Trust for London

In attendance

Becky	Green	London Funders
David	Warner	London Funders

Apologies for absence

Natasha Malpani, Big Society Capital; Calum Murdoch, London Borough of Ealing; India Thomson, London Borough of Ealing; Evereth Willis, London Borough of Merton; Maxine Quintyne-Kolaru, London Councils; Andy Gregg, Metropolitan Migration Foundation; Gulten Fedayi, Royal Borough of Greenwich; Sophie Safrazyan, Social Investment Business