

NO SECOND NIGHT OUT

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www.nosecondnightout.org.uk

1. London No Second Night Out Project - overview

No Second Night Out is a project focussed on helping those who find themselves rough sleeping on the streets of London for the first time. The project ensures there is a rapid response to new rough sleepers, and provides an offer, following a full assessment indoors that means they do not have to sleep out for a second night.

The No Second Night Out project aims to dramatically increase the proportion of new rough sleepers who are prevented from spending a second night out on London's streets. It is integral to the Mayor's aim that by the end of 2012 no one arriving new to the streets should sleep out for a second night.

This project is aimed exclusively at those people newly arriving onto the streets of London, is backed by the London Delivery Board (LDB), operates as a partnership and is funded by the GLA. It began as a pilot project on 1st April 2011 and operated across the central boroughs represented on the LDB. From 1st June 2012 it is expanding to all 33 London Boroughs.

As part of the expansion to the whole of London a second assessment hub is being set up in Hammersmith & Fulham that will be open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. This will operate in the same way as the already established hub based in Islington. Rough sleepers brought to the hub are assisted to exit rough sleeping by a team of assessment and reconnection staff. The assessment hub is not an accommodation project, it is a safe place away from the street where a comprehensive assessment of needs takes place within 72 hours. Only outreach teams can bring people into the assessment hubs.

A rough sleeping phone line (0870 383 3333) and NSNO website (www.nosecondnightout.org.uk) have been set up to encourage and enable the public to report rough sleepers when they see them. This is an important tool to engage the public as the eyes and ears on the street thereby increasing our chances of getting to new rough sleepers quickly. These reports are sent 24/7 directly onto the teams operating on the ground in that area.

When people are helped off the streets by outreach teams and into the assessment hub, a credible offer is made so that they do not need to return to rough sleeping. The options considered are wide-ranging and researched thoroughly. This often includes helping the person return to their home area; whether this is within London, the rest of the UK, or abroad.

No Second Night Out champions the importance of reconnecting people with their families or other support networks and returning to their home area where they are eligible to receive help. To this end, the teams based at the hub provide

new rough sleepers with assistance to access support and accommodation in their home areas, advocating with housing providers in those areas and providing the practical support for people to return closer to home where it is safe to do so. This is in line with existing London and national protocols and guidance for reconnection – see www.homeless.org.uk/reconnection.

No Second Night Out operates a single offer approach for the target group. Borough outreach teams and the assessment hubs work together to give the same consistent messages. The assessment and offer made to individuals will be shared with all outreach practitioners, including London Street Rescue, through the Combined Homeless and Information Network (CHAIN) - a database for people who work with rough sleepers and the street population in London. The system is used to help workers share information to ensure that they act as quickly and effectively as possible to help those they encounter.

It should be stressed that No Second Night Out is a project that continues to test out approaches and assumptions and is gathering evidence in order to improve services for rough sleepers. As such the project is being closely monitored and evaluated in order to inform continuous change and recommendations about any future model of delivery.

A Project Board chaired by the Mayor's Housing Advisor governs the project. The Project Board includes a central government and business representative, two councillors and voluntary sector representation. The Board makes any recommendations to the LDB about substantive changes to the No Second Night Out project, brings any concerns about the project's success to the LDB's attention and brings forward recommendations about a sustainable future model.

2. Background to London NSNO

The Mayor of London has committed to end rough sleeping in London. To deliver this commitment he established the LDB in 2008 – a partnership body chaired by the Mayor's Housing Advisor that brings together central London boroughs, government departments, the voluntary sector and key stakeholders. The outcome the LDB is seeking to deliver is that by the end of 2012 no one will live on the streets of London and no individual arriving on the streets will sleep out for a second night.

To achieve an end to rough sleeping the LDB has already put in place a range of approaches for those who have spent longest on the streets and those who repeatedly return to the streets. It has also delivered targeted approaches for non-UK rough sleepers.

No Second Night Out targets new rough sleepers. Many leave or are helped off the streets immediately, others risk engaging in or adapting to a rough sleeping lifestyle. To do so risks entrenchment on the streets to the detriment of both individuals and communities. Rough sleepers are intensely vulnerable to crime, drugs and alcohol, and at high risk of serious illness, and premature death. Many will be vulnerable and need support and assistance; others through behaviour such as street drinking and/or begging may intimidate or concern local communities and businesses. To this end preventing people from continuing to sleep rough is in everyone's interest.

3. Implications for Outer London boroughs

From 1st June No Second Night Out will operate across all of London's local authorities and not just the 10 central London Delivery Board authorities. NSNO will compliment, rather than substitute, for outreach and support services in these boroughs.

No Second Night Out will take referrals from all borough outreach teams from 1st June, however in order to maximise resources No Second Night Out will work with London boroughs to encourage a local response is in place (such as access to local assessment beds) to new rough sleepers that have a clear local connection to the borough they were first found sleeping rough, where this is pragmatic to do so.

Approximately a quarter of rough sleepers arriving on the streets of central London are from the outer London boroughs. As with individuals from other local authority areas, the No Second Night Out team seeks the rapid return of new rough sleepers to their area of local connection so that they can be appropriately assessed for entitlement to services or assistance. This work is in line with the existing Pan-London Reconnections Protocol and therefore includes safeguards for those for whom return may not be safe or possible, and for those who need immediate assistance. No Second Night Out will be liaising closely with all local authorities to assist the effective reconnection back to local areas and access to services for all those coming into the hub.

No boroughs are to direct anyone towards central London or to the street to receive a service. No Second Night Out is not to be seen as a fast track or golden ticket into services. No Second Night Out challenges any practice that may exist where a rough sleeper is directed to central London in the expectation that services will be provided there.

No Second Night Out has adopted a single offer approach for the target group. There is an ongoing risk that those who refuse the offer made, may disperse to day centres and services that are not familiar with No Second Night Out and/ or who do not have access to chain which could undermine the assessment and offer already made. Wider communication of the No Second Night Out standard and project to all stakeholders will be essential for the project to succeed.

4. Frequently asked questions

Q: Isn't this just about clearing the streets for the Olympics?

A: Sleeping rough is harmful and dangerous and there should be no place for it in a civilised city like London in the 21st century. Rough sleepers deserve and need far more than just soup and sympathy. The Mayor's London Delivery Board is leading on ending rough sleeping in London by the end of 2012 and its membership reflects determined commitment to end rough sleeping across central, regional and local government, the Metropolitan Police and the voluntary sector. The Mayor's work on this started in London in 2008 and is intended to bring a

sustainable end to rough sleeping not just sweep people out of view for a few weeks.

Q: Why is the Delivery Board only focusing on new rough sleepers? What about those that have been out for longer?

A: This project has been specifically designed to test approaches to reaching new rough sleepers and helping them leave the streets as quickly as possible. Other projects to tackle long term rough sleeping or to reduce the number of people who return to rough sleeping after previously leaving it behind are on-going and not affected by this project.

Q: Why is London trying to send rough sleepers back to areas they have fled because they don't feel safe there?

A: The project focuses on reconnecting people back to their own area where they have more social capital and more chance of qualifying for accommodation. It must be emphasised, however, that people aren't being forced back into a situation where they are being abused and from which they had been escaping. Stringent checks are made at the assessment hub to find out if people will be at risk if reconnected. If new rough sleepers have support needs there is help provided by the Reconnections Team and time is taken to ensure that relevant care/support is available back in their home area.

Q: Are you going to be using the Vagrancy Act to get people to go indoors?

A: It is up to local authorities to determine which of the various powers available to them could usefully assist them in tackling rough sleeping. Many will continue with an assertive approach to outreach and some enforcement measures will continue to be used. We have seen many positive examples of how such an approach has been used to successfully help people get their lives back on track and many former rough sleepers tell us that more assertive approaches helped them face up to the chronic situation they were stuck in.

Q: Will the UK Border Agency be removing European rough sleepers to help meet this new target?

A; People from the European Economic Area (EEA) who have been in the country for longer than three months have to be working, studying or self-sufficient in order to have a right to stay. If they are not, or if they are involved in persistent criminal behaviour, the UK Border Agency can deport or administratively remove them. In the last year, the UK Border Agency has been exercising these powers in a number of areas around the UK, including some parts of London, where a small number of rough sleepers from EEA countries have been causing problems for the local community. Generally the preferred approach of local authorities is to assist EEA rough sleepers to return home voluntarily and a dedicated outreach team exists for this purpose, but where this offer is refused, the UK Border Agency may take removal action as a last resort.

Q: How will you find all the new rough sleepers in London quickly enough to meet the "no second night out" target that has been set? Surely this is impossible.

A: We believe that rough sleeping is harmful and dangerous and as should not be seen as an acceptable situation for anyone. To help us contact new rough sleepers we require the public to be our eyes and ears on the street so we are asking residents, businesses and visitors to help us to reach rough sleepers

quicker than we do already. A twenty-four hour rough sleeping referral phone line and website have been set up in order for people to report rough sleepers when they are seen on the street. This allows us to receive intelligence about where people are sleeping rough around the clock and make sure that an outreach worker can follow up on that intelligence and can offer to get that person to a place of safety as quickly as possible. Currently around 30% of all new rough sleepers go on to have a second (or third or fourth) night on the streets and we are seeking to reduce that figure substantially.

Q: What if people choose to sleep rough - isn't it their right?

A: Rough sleeping is harmful and risky to individuals, often resulting in a deterioration of mental and physical health and well-being. Our challenge has been to create better choices for people, suited to their individual needs and preferences, so that people choose to take up the offers of support that are made. In most cases rough sleeping is inherently harmful to the person sleeping rough, and is likely to be an indicator of wider issues around need or a lack of entitlement.

Q: What are the referral routes into the assessment hub and how is it accessed?

A: Only agreed borough outreach teams can refer directly into the assessment hub. Anyone can ring the rough sleeping telephone line to report that someone is sleeping rough. Calling this phone line does not guarantee access into the hub, but we ensure all intelligence is passed onto teams 24/7. This phone line has added to the options that already exist to refer rough sleepers into services and to further encourage members of the public to report and make referrals about people they are concerned may be sleeping rough. Intelligence and referrals received are passed onto outreach teams immediately so that they can be investigated and a decision made as to whether the individual needs to access the assessment hub. This decision lies primarily with the outreach worker and is determined on whether the individual found is new to rough sleeping i.e. not been met before.

Q: What is the role of faith and community groups in the pilot?

A: Faith and community groups play an important role in ending rough sleeping in London. The project continuously seeks support from these groups in the delivery of the project, both in terms of providing resources and support at the Assessment Hub and communicating the No Second Night Out message to rough sleepers and the public. In order to publicise the rough sleeping referral line NSNO have printed posters which advertise the phone number and the website. These can be sent to faith and community groups as well as councils, libraries and businesses. We have also recruited over fifty volunteers based at the hub who help with number of vital roles to assist staff and help to contribute in supporting people away from the street.

Q: What is the capacity of the hub and how long to people stay there?

A: The maximum capacity for the assessment hubs is around 25 people however it depends on the complexity of the client cases at the time, and how quickly a single service offer can be made. Clients are sometimes put into emergency accommodation whilst they are awaiting a reconnection journey or a move into accommodation. The hub is not a night shelter, it is a place of safety that

someone can be bought to 24/7. On arrival people are provided with an immediate assessment and then an alternative option to rough sleeping, which in most cases is a reconnection back to support and services or accommodation in their home area where they are eligible for services. Most often people are accompanied on a one to one basis to reconnect and advocacy is a main role that our staff play. The assessment process begins an hour after a person arrives into the Hub , the verification of information within the hub can take some time and this depends on the level of engagement and complexity of the client presenting. However, the intention is that time spent at the hub is short and time limited and the aim is that all clients will be offered a credible single service offer.

Q: Isn't No Second Night Out just a 'golden ticket' route into services?

A: Clients referred to the No Second Night Out hub are in no way prioritised by local authorities or fast tracked into temporary accommodation. We have evidence however that advocacy by NSNO staff makes a significant difference to an outcome for a client who had already approached their local authority. At times people have thought that by calling the rough sleeping referral line they will be guaranteed access into accommodation. This is not the case. Each person will be treated on a case by case basis and No Second Night Out will work closely with all parties concerned to ensure the best response based on each individuals needs and circumstances.

Q: What about people with no recourse or very limited access to public funds?

A: A significant number of rough sleepers in London have limited access to public funds, with the biggest group within this number comprising of people from central and Eastern European states. The project works closely with existing reconnections services that specialise in supporting people from these countries to return home with dignity to some form of suitable accommodation. The project also works closely with the UK Border Agency.

Q: What happens to clients who refuse or abandon the hub?

A: Outreach teams give a clear and consistent message that rough sleeping is dangerous and harmful and should be avoided at all costs. They explain that new rough sleepers found in London are accompanied to the NSNO assessment hub. If the person refuses to go or if a client attends the hub then abandons or refuses their single service offer, this is recorded on their CHAIN record which can be viewed by all teams and NSNO staff. If the client is met again through other services or on the streets **the same SSO message is given** and if taken up, they are worked with by the outreach team. Clients are not re-offered the hub or re-admitted into the hub if they have refused to attend or have abandoned. Depending on the timescale and individual client cases there are exceptions to this, for example if a client changes their decision within a few hours.

Q: What happens if an accommodation solution isn't found? Will people just be put back onto the street?

A: The assessment hub is intended as an emergency facility with a very short length of stay. Staff at the hub will endeavour to reconnect people to their home area (or find them accommodation in one of the London boroughs if they have a local connection) within the shortest amount of time possible. If this is not possible and the individual is co-operating with the reconnections/accommodation process then further emergency accommodation is sought for them. If the person is not co-operating with the service offers that are made available then they are asked to leave the hub so that it does not become silted up with people who do not wish to make use of the services on offer.

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