

# NO FIRST NIGHT OUT

## No First Night Out: Final project evaluation report 2016-2019

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**Becky Rice**

with additional research by Ian Shenstone, Gabrielle McGannon  
and Naomi Pollard



## **Acknowledgements**

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# 1 Executive summary

This is the final evaluation report for the No First Night Out (NFNO) project, covering the period from April 2016 to April 2019. The evaluation was conducted by an independent research team over the whole project duration.

NFNO was a tri-borough project operating across the City of London, the London Borough (LB) of Hackney and LB Tower Hamlets. The project was funded through various grants from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). In-kind contributions from the three local authorities and other partners, including St Mungo's and Crisis, added greatly to the value of these grants.

Following a broad review of its homelessness services, LB Hackney moved away from the partnership project in April 2019 to embed learning from NFNO and other prevention work internally. LB Tower Hamlets and the City of London have secured funding through the MHCLG Private Rented Sector (PRS) Access Fund to continue the project until April 2020.

The overall aim of the project was to reduce the number of people sleeping rough for the first time who have a local connection to one of the three local authority areas.<sup>1</sup> The project was initiated with research looking at the routes into new rough sleeping in the three boroughs and service contact points for people sleeping rough for the first time.<sup>2</sup> Research and a learning approach were central to the NFNO project. After the development of the service model, informed by the initial research, the NFNO pilot project commenced service delivery in April 2016.<sup>3</sup>

The NFNO model works in 'crisis prevention' – preventing homelessness likely to occur within 56 days – and 'emergency prevention' – support for people at immediate risk of homelessness, especially rough sleeping.<sup>4</sup> A distinct team of NFNO staff, initially two, growing to five, worked flexibly across the three local authority areas. The team worked with single people who:

- had a local connection to the tri-borough area
- were eligible for public funds, and
- were at risk of rough sleeping (but who were not currently rough sleeping and had very minimal prior experience of rough sleeping).

The project became focused on people with low to medium support needs; other services are better placed to work with people with multiple and complex needs.

Initially NFNO sought referrals from a broad range of agencies across the tri-borough area. With the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) and the Duty to Refer, housing options teams became the main referral route. NFNO undertook detailed and holistic assessments of clients' needs and then provided medium-intensity casework to help them access housing and other services as appropriate. Clients who were not taken onto the caseload were often provided with basic advice and signposting.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Local connection' refers to when a person has been living in the area for six of the last 12 months or three of the last five years, or has a close family connection with someone who has been resident in the area for the last five years, or is connected to the area through ongoing employment.

<sup>2</sup> Rice, B, Reed, L (2016) No First Night Out – Help for Single Homeless People: Interim research report, St Mungo's: <http://www.mungos.org/documents/7201/7201.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Fitzpatrick, S, Mackie, P, and Wood, J (2019) Homelessness prevention in the UK policy briefing, Cardiff University and Heriot-Watt University)

The NFNO service was evidenced to be:

- **personal and flexible:** e.g. the team had Trauma Informed Care training
- **conditional:** e.g. NFNO clients were asked to undertake certain tasks to progress their housing situation
- **a rapid, but not an emergency, response:** the project offered a rapid response, but it only operated weekdays and there was a cut off time for new referrals (2pm).

In the first two years of the project, co-location and partnership with Jobcentre Plus and Citizens Advice were effective; both organisations reported benefits in terms of capacity building and having access to homelessness prevention expertise on site.

Over the whole period the team took 491 clients onto the NFNO caseload. Most referrals (67%) were from housing options teams. Three hundred clients were from Tower Hamlets, 177 were from Hackney, 14 were from the City of London and three were from other boroughs.

Overall, of those taken onto the caseload, 66% had one or more accommodation outcome including emergency accommodation and 38% had a longer-term outcome in PRS or supported accommodation (often following an emergency solution). In summary, for 491 clients there were:

- **316 emergency housing solutions**, most commonly local authority temporary accommodation but also mediation with hosts
- **145 PRS placements**, most commonly through Crisis or a contracted PRS provider working with NFNO
- **57 supported housing placements** for people with medium support needs.

People who did not have outcomes tended to be those who disengaged from the project, found their own solution, or preferred not to take up the offer of support to access PRS accommodation. Clients could have more than one of the above outcomes.

Clients interviewed were very positive about working with NFNO. They were satisfied with their accommodation outcomes and were grateful to have a private space where they could feel safe. They highlighted other outcomes including improved mental health, access to mental health services and renewed focus on employment and education. Even clients who were not happy with their current accommodation acknowledged that having their own place was highly beneficial. The problems with accommodation that were reported focused on size, location and shared facilities. Most of the clients interviewed felt that without NFNO's intervention their housing situation would have worsened and rough sleeping would have been a real possibility or even a certainty.

Evidence from the evaluation shows that NFNO has prevented people from rough sleeping for the first time in the tri-borough area over three years, although it is not possible to quantify exactly. The project has done this by:

- targeting a group who often 'fell through the net' of statutory homelessness services and were sometimes unable to access help until they were rough sleeping or homeless
- providing a rapid response, including a full and holistic assessment and emergency temporary accommodation where required, and mediation where possible
- offering a pathway into sustainable medium-term accommodation.

The key strengths of the project can be categorised into six areas:

- **innovation:** being an early adopter and influencer in the field of rough sleeping prevention
- **partnership:** working across boroughs to harness enthusiasm, leadership and expertise, as well as securing funding for innovation in prevention work
- **resources:** allocating dedicated resources to prevention for a group that often fall outside other prevention efforts
- **pathway:** developing a diverse and ethical PRS access pathway
- **evidence:** being research led and independently evaluated and adopting a learning cycle and sharing learning with others
- **culture:** implementing a person-centred approach inspiring trust and confidence in clients.

There were a number of key challenges for the project:

- The cost of temporary accommodation for people who were not in priority need created a challenge in terms of mainstreaming and also, due to benefits issues, left many clients in service charge arrears, which could act as a barrier to onward housing.
- The service operated in an extremely challenging environment in terms of the housing market and welfare benefits, and therefore the best available housing options for clients were often not ideal.
- The project was small and had to balance the influx of new clients with providing a casework service, which sometimes meant the project had to stop taking referrals for a period.
- Procurement of PRS access and support services was challenging due to the procurement legislation and process that local authorities have to work within, which can hamper fast delivery.
- As with many pilot projects, uncertainties around funding, due to short-term funding regimes, were a factor in recruiting and retaining staff and there was a fairly high level of staff turnover during the project.

The likely legacy of the project is:

- NFNO's influence on the development of prevention efforts at a national level through dissemination and events – NFNO was a unique project at a pivotal time in homelessness prevention
- development of more person-centred assessment in frontline practice in line with the HRA
- increased awareness of the risks of rough sleeping and how to discuss and act on these among partnership organisations such as Jobcentre Plus, acting as a precursor to the Duty to Refer
- ongoing and developing links with ethical PRS providers
- wider, longer-term outcomes for the individuals who have avoided rough sleeping through the project's intervention.

In conclusion, evidence from the evaluation shows that NFNO has prevented people from rough sleeping for the first time in the tri-borough area over three years, although it is not possible to quantify exactly. The project was a precursor to the HRA, both influencing and being impacted by the changing legislative environment. The model developed was positively received by clients, experts and stakeholders.

The context for NFNO was extremely challenging due to external factors including housing supply, the level of housing benefits available to clients, and the high cost

and scarcity of temporary accommodation. While the project shows that a focused NFNO approach can prevent homelessness and rough sleeping, it is not clear whether this can be scaled up, given these factors. All the local authorities involved in the project are innovating to continue to test rough sleeping prevention, including embedding learning from NFNO.

## 2 Introduction and methodology

This final evaluation report for the No First Night Out (NFNO) project covers the period from April 2016 to April 2019. This report follows:

- two interim evaluation reports and
- two separate research reports exploring routes into rough sleeping in the tri-borough area of Tower Hamlets, Hackney and the City of London.

The report is intended to provide a summative account of the project, the model of working, outputs and outcomes of the work and learning from the project.

The main elements of the evaluation methodology are:

- analysis of:
  - previous evaluation reports and datasets
  - monitoring data from the project
  - rough sleeping data from CHAIN<sup>5</sup>
  - tailored information provided by outreach teams and housing options services
- interviews with nine NFNO clients between March and May 2019 and also interviews undertaken with a further six clients during the previous evaluation period (including two people who took part in a second follow-up interview)
- interviews and focus groups with professional stakeholders from London Borough (LB) of Hackney, LB Tower Hamlets, the Greenhouse, Providence Row Dellow Centre, Citizens Advice, Crisis, Shelter, and Jobcentre Plus
- reflective sessions with the NFNO team
- a review of project documents including the 'issues log' and *Pathways to prevent homelessness* report<sup>6</sup>
- attendance at a range of meetings and events related to the project.

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<sup>5</sup> CHAIN is the GLA commissioned database which is used by homelessness agencies across London to record their work with rough sleepers, including each contact made on the streets and people's support needs. The system is managed by St Mungo's.

<sup>6</sup> MacNamara C, (2019) *Pathways to prevent homelessness* (NFNO)

### 3 The policy context

This chapter explains the context within which the NFNO project was initiated and has functioned, including the various policy and legislative changes that have occurred and the impact these have had on NFNO.

*'There has been a paradigm shift in homelessness policy-making in the developed world: we have entered an era of homelessness prevention.'*<sup>7</sup>

#### 3.1 NFNO and the Homelessness Reduction Act

The NFNO tri-borough project was part of, and impacted by, moves towards a more prevention-focused agenda in housing options in England. In 2013, before NFNO was conceived, the new Housing Act (Wales) was introduced raising the profile of the prevention agenda across the UK; the Act received assent in November 2014. While NFNO was in its infancy in 2016, Crisis established an expert panel to follow up on research findings, which revealed that many people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness were being turned away from local authorities without meaningful support when they approached them for help.<sup>8</sup> A report by the panel to the government formed the basis of the private members bill that became the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) in 2017 and came into force in April 2018.

During the period of NFNO's development, the Homelessness Prevention Trailblazers programme was implemented providing Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) funding to two 'early adopter' areas (LB Southwark and Newcastle upon Tyne) and then a further 29 areas for two years. The Trailblazers were intended to be precursors to likely legislative changes. They were relevant to the NFNO project but were larger projects with a wider focus than NFNO, which was specifically targeted people at risk of rough sleeping. The impact of the HRA on NFNO is explored further in later chapters.

NFNO was also closely linked with the government's commitment to halving rough sleeping by 2022 and ending it by 2027.<sup>9</sup>

#### 3.2 Types of prevention work and the role of NFNO

A recent policy briefing from the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence outlines five types of homelessness prevention, which are helpful in terms of contextualising the NFNO model. The five areas of prevention are:

1. Universal prevention – preventing or minimising homelessness risks across the population at large
2. Targeted prevention – upstream prevention focused on high-risk groups, such as vulnerable young people, and risky transitions, such as leaving local authority care, prison or mental health in-patient treatment
3. Crisis prevention – preventing homelessness likely to occur within 56 days, in line with legislation across Great Britain on 'threatened with homelessness'

<sup>7</sup> Ahmed, A et al (2018) Post-implementation evaluation of Part 2 of the Housing Act (Wales) 2014: Final Report, Welsh Government: Cardiff

<sup>8</sup> Crisis (2014) Turned away: the treatment of single homeless people by local authority homelessness services in England

<sup>9</sup> MHCLG (2018) Rough Sleeping Strategy

4. Emergency prevention – support for those at immediate risk of homelessness, especially sleeping rough
5. Recovery prevention – prevention of repeat homelessness and rough sleeping.

NFNO worked primarily in the areas of emergency prevention and crisis prevention. The experience of the project was that the risk of rough sleeping was imminent for most people identified through the referral routes. Drivers of rough sleeping including housing market pressures and welfare reform were outside the remit of NFNO, although the project sought to ameliorate the effects of this challenging wider context.

*'General homelessness risks have increased as a result of welfare reform and housing market pressures, undermining universal prevention.'*<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Fitzpatrick, S, Mackie, P, and Wood, J (2019) Homelessness prevention in the UK policy briefing, Cardiff University and Heriot-Watt University

## 4 The tri-borough partnership

This chapter describes the establishment and evolution of the NFNO tri-borough partnership over the course of the project.

### 4.1 Establishing the NFNO tri-borough partnership

NFNO was a tri-borough project operating across the City of London, LB Hackney and LB Tower Hamlets between April 2016 and March 2019. The overall aim of the project was to reduce the number of people contacted sleeping rough for the first time who have a local connection to one of the three local authority areas.<sup>11</sup> The service sought to achieve this by providing enhanced support to a group who were, at the time, only eligible for basic advice from housing options teams and often found it hard to get the right help until their situation had deteriorated and they ended up rough sleeping.

*'There was nothing there to say to someone: "You don't have to sleep rough; we will find you somewhere to be so you don't have to do this..." We wanted to catch people before this terrible, traumatic incident [sleeping rough for the first time] had happened.'* (Steering Group member)

Figure (b) on page 15 provides a timeline of key developments in the NFNO project. The tri-borough partnership was initiated in 2015.

### 4.2 Initial research

Following initial meetings between the boroughs and St Mungo's, St Mungo's funded research exploring routes into rough sleeping for new rough sleepers in the tri-borough area to assist the development of a new prevention approach.<sup>12</sup>

The research confirmed that there was a group of people who were unable to get practical help until they were actually sleeping rough, at which point a range of services became available, including outreach team support and No Second Night Out assessment centres. The research provided information about recent service contact points of this group. Within this group were people who had not approached anyone for housing advice, or who had attended their local authority and had been provided with some written information only, which was not a solution for them. The research, and other work by the NFNO partnership, formed the basis of a three-month pilot project starting in April 2016, which was then extended.

### 4.3 Funding

The main source of project funding from 2014/2015 to 2016/17 was from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG, now MHCLG) Rough Sleeping Fund and the Greater London Authority's (GLA) Prevention Fund. The project then secured funding for 2017/18 and 2018/19 through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Rough Sleeping Grant. In

<sup>11</sup> 'Local connection' refers to when a person has been living in the area for six of the last 12 months or three of the last five years, or has a close family connection with someone who has been resident in the area for the last five years, or is connected to the area through ongoing employment.

<sup>12</sup> Rice, B, Reed, L (2016) No First Night Out – Help for Single Homeless People: Interim research report, St Mungo's: <http://www.mungos.org/documents/7201/7201.pdf>

2018/19 this was supplemented by MHCLG Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) funding.<sup>13</sup> Following this funding, LB Tower Hamlets and the City of London have secured funding through the MHCLG Private Rented Sector (PRS) Access Fund to enable the project to continue until the end of 2019/20. LB Hackney decided to end its involvement in the project after April 2019.

Additional funding and in-kind contributions from a range of sources have been a key element of the project. This started with the in-kind support with the initial research provided by St Mungo's. As the project developed the City of London has hosted numerous events for the project including national events welcoming people from local authorities around the country to share learning about and insights into the prevention of rough sleeping. LB Tower Hamlets and the City of London have both hosted the project within their organisations for periods, providing services such as payroll and human resources for NFNO staff. Throughout the project St Mungo's continued to provide additional financial and other support to assist with the evaluation and research. All boroughs involved have provided senior staff time to attend project Steering Group meetings and to deliver presentations and events.

**Figure (a) Table of project income received for the service delivery period, 2016/17 – 2018/19**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Source of funding</b>	<b>Amount provided</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2016/17</b>	Help for Single Homeless People, MHCLG	£250,000 (towards both NFNO and Safe Connections)*	£250,000 of the overall funding for NFNO and Safe Connections allocated to NFNO, some of this was carried forward to 2017/18
	GLA No First Night Out fund	£80,000 (towards NFNO and Safe Connections)	
<b>2017/18</b>	Rough Sleeping Grant, MHCLG	£178,000	£178,000 In addition, some funding was carried over from 2016/17 budget
<b>2018/19</b>	Rough Sleeping Programme, MHCLG	£216,000	£263,000
	Rough Sleepers Initiative, MHCLG	£47,000	

*(Following the evaluation period for 2019/20)*

<b>2019/20</b>	<i>Private Rented Sector Access Fund, MHCLG</i>	<i>£198,225</i>	<i>£250,225</i>
	<i>Rough Sleepers Initiative, MHCLG</i>	<i>£52,000</i>	

\* Safe Connections was a project which ran concurrently with NFNO in its first year of direct service delivery; evaluation findings can be found at [www.nfno.org.uk](http://www.nfno.org.uk)

<sup>13</sup> For information about the Homelessness Prevention Programme see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-prevention-programme> (accessed July 2019)

#### 4.4 Project infrastructure and management

The NFNO team was initially hosted by LB Tower Hamlets but worked flexibly across locations in the tri-borough area. The City of London then took over the hosting of the project from January 2018. The host boroughs provided desk space, payroll, and other centralised services to the team. There were a number of IT and systems challenges which impacted on the team and this was an area of learning for the project in terms of developing a high functioning team working across different local authority areas. Key issues were:

- The team did not initially have access to all the monitoring/IT systems that they needed to work effectively.
- For the first service delivery year of the project the team relied on using spreadsheets to monitor work using a system developed by team members; this proved a vital stopgap but ideally a bespoke monitoring system would have been in place from the outset.
- The small size of the team made covering staff absence challenging and could leave staff members feeling overloaded at times; the team functioned better with a dedicated manager in place to oversee the work of the caseworkers.

#### 4.5 The broader partnership

NFNO engaged with a wide range of agencies with a stake in homelessness prevention in the tri-borough area including homelessness agencies, advice services and job centres. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) outlined the project's objectives and the partnership approach. It was signed by the three boroughs and lists 20 additional partner agencies who agreed to support the project. Although the MOU was helpful in creating a sense of commitment among a wider group of agencies to attend partnership meetings and to make referrals to the project as appropriate, as the project evolved to focus more on referrals from housing options teams after the HRA the MOU became less relevant to stakeholders.

NFNO undertook a programme of engagement and communications to ensure continued engagement with partners and to share learning across the wider sector. This included regular newsletters sent out to partners and the NFNO website ([www.nfno.org.uk](http://www.nfno.org.uk)), which explained the service, provided news updates on new partnerships and developments, and provided access to evaluation and research reports. Partnership meetings were held about once every six months, bringing together stakeholders from across the partnership. Feedback from stakeholders interviewed was very positive about these meetings, referring to them as 'meaningful' and 'inclusive'. Content included updates on NFNO and presentations from PRS providers and Jobcentre Plus.

*'Partnership meetings have been very good, actually inspirational. There's a real sense of wanting to learn, wanting to grow. Wanting to make sure that all the partners are on the same page and that we know what the other partners do.'* (Procurement and Development Manager, HOPE Worldwide)

#### 4.6 A learning and influencing project

Learning, testing and reflecting were at the heart of the NFNO project. The project was initiated with research to explore the local context in terms of new rough sleepers and understand current risk factors for rough sleeping. A Steering Group of

managers from the three boroughs met regularly to monitor the project and address problems. The partnership took risks and was willing to make mistakes to test and explore approaches to prevention. Evaluations at three months and 12 months were commissioned to ensure a formative approach to evaluation and learning.

*'There was constant learning; an ongoing look at the themes and issues coming up around effective prevention work and the characteristics of the [people] who are at risk... ongoing evaluation [brought] value. The partnership was very open and candid with learning.'* (Homeless Link)

*'It's always been the joy of the partnership that we have tried things and actually when something hasn't worked we have been open and honest about it.'* (Housing Team Leader, Crisis)

NFNO sought to share innovation in prevention work for single people at risk of rough sleeping. As well as local tri-borough partnership meetings, NFNO hosted the first London-based Homelessness Prevention and Trailblazer meeting and established the resulting working group. In March 2017 and May 2019 NFNO hosted well-attended national events; at the former, local authorities were invited to hear about the NFNO project and share ideas on prevention, and at the latter, Trailblazer projects and MHCLG senior officials were brought together to share learning around prevention.

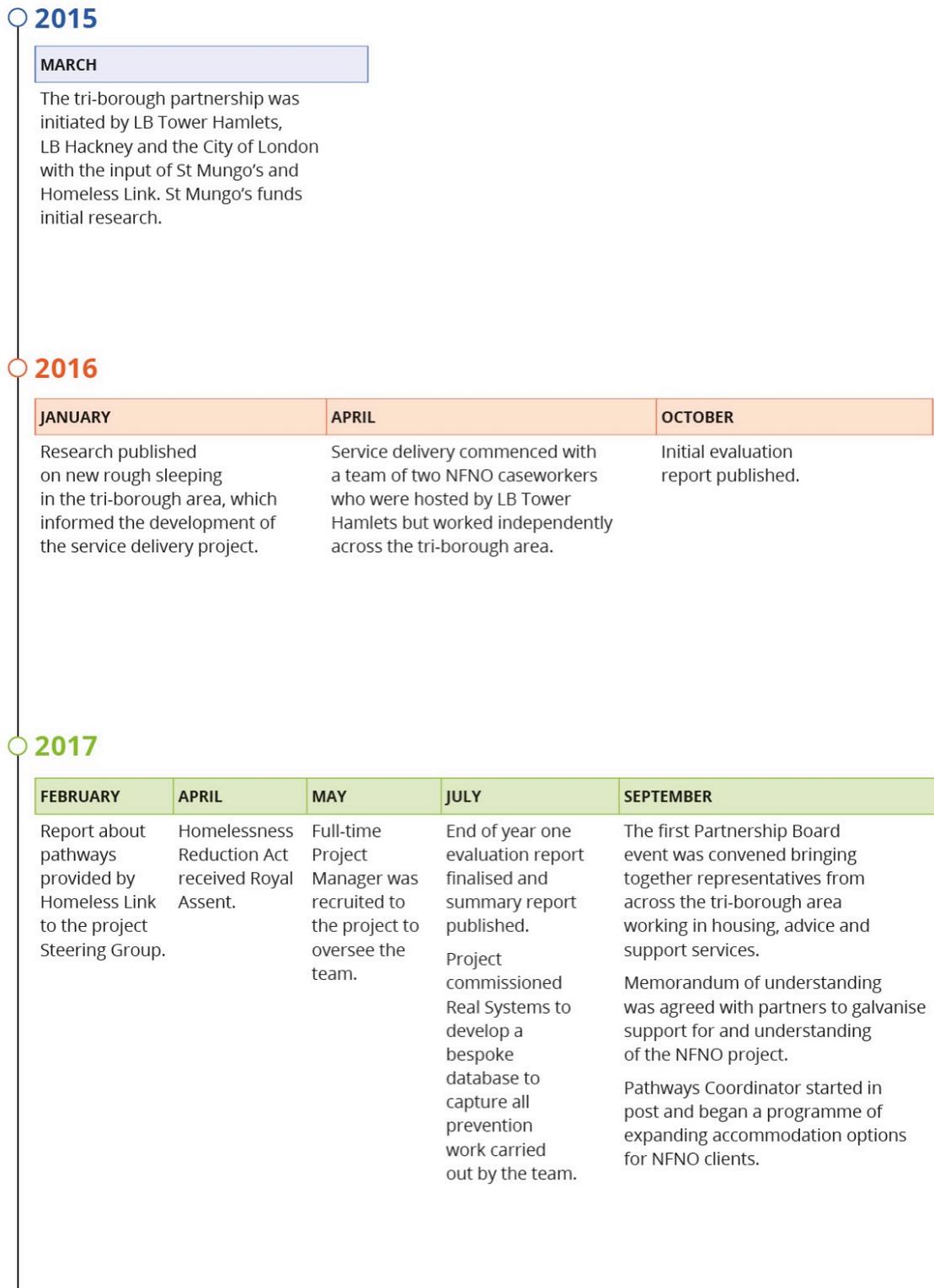
Other dissemination and influencing events included presenting at the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) conference in 2016, the Homeless Link conference in 2016, the Mayor of London's No Nights Sleeping Rough Taskforce in 2017, the Under One Roof Homeless Link conference in 2018, the National Practitioner Support Service conference in 2018, the MHCLG Rough Sleeping Grant workshops in London and Manchester, and presenting at a Preventing Rough Sleeping masterclass in Kent.

MHCLG cited the work of NFNO in its prospectus for the national Trailblazer projects. Trailblazer projects seeking to tackle rough sleeping often cite NFNO as a model they were drawing on in developing their proposals, highlighting the early influence of the project and strength of the NFNO concept created by the tri-borough partnership.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> LB Hammersmith and Fulham and Bristol City Council are two areas adopting a NFNO approach in recent projects.

**Figure (b) NFNO timeline**



2018

APRIL	JUNE	OCTOBER
<p>The Homelessness Reduction Act came into force changing the duties that local authority housing options teams have towards single homeless people.</p> <p>A third caseworker was recruited to assist with the high demand for the service, funded by MHCLG Rough Sleeping Initiative.</p>	<p>NFNO hosted the first London-based Homelessness Prevention and Trailblazer meeting and established membership for the working group.</p>	<p>The Duty to Refer came into force.</p>

2019

MARCH	MAY	JUNE	SEPTEMBER	NOVEMBER
<p>LB Hackney left the NFNO partnership; the remaining partners secured funding from the MHCLG PRS Access Fund to continue until April 2020.</p>	<p>NFNO hosted a national event bringing Trailblazer projects together to share learning around prevention.</p>	<p>The NFNO caseworker funded by MHCLG PRS Access Fund starts in post.</p>	<p>Pathways to Prevent Homelessness report published.</p>	<p>Final evaluation report published.</p>

## Case study 1: Joseph

After living in a flat in North London for over 30 years, Joseph's landlord died and the new owner of the property vastly increased the rent. He was evicted after falling three months into arrears. Joseph, in his mid-60s, decided not to appeal the decision because the court process was so exhausting that he felt he could not cope with further legal action. Instead he moved into a workshop that he rented for work. Despite having no kitchen or full bathroom, Joseph stayed living there for two and a half years with increasingly deteriorating mental health, *'kind of drift[ing] along for a while, not knowing what to do'*.

Though Joseph was *'afraid of taking the first step'*, he decided to visit a local advice centre who signposted him to housing options where he got a friendly response but was told there was not much that could be done for him.

*'I got seen quite quickly and gave them all my details, and he was really friendly and stuff. [But] he said he didn't really think they could help because I was a single man [with] no children. I wouldn't be a priority.'*

The council then referred Joseph to NFNO, and following the NFNO assessment he felt *'positive that sooner or later I would get [housing]'*. His expectations of the service were minimal and he was pleased to be given help with his pension credit and housing benefits and other things, as well as being linked to housing.

*'[My caseworker] went on the phone; we had to fill out some forms... They found out how much I'd be able to claim and stuff like that... [My caseworker] did all of that... I didn't expect that.'*

Joseph was appreciative of this hands-on approach, and that his caseworker didn't *'make a policy statement, she just gave the help'*. Because he was able to stay in his workshop he did not go into temporary accommodation. His caseworker registered him with one of the PRS providers and after about six weeks he secured a room in shared accommodation.

Joseph really enjoys the location of his new accommodation and is adjusting to retirement by exploring his new area. There are a number of issues with his accommodation including the sharing of facilities. He is considering looking for his own place so he can have his own bathroom and kitchen.

Since moving out of the workshop Joseph has realised that he had been suffering from depression while living there, and his mental health has improved a lot since leaving. In hindsight, Joseph is aware of how seriously his situation could have deteriorated without NFNO's intervention.

*'It's hard to say what would have happened if I hadn't met [my caseworker], but things were slipping quite badly when I did, money wise and health wise, so I managed to get out just in time.'*

## 5 The NFNO operating model and approach

This chapter explains the NFNO operating model and outlines the key elements of the project's approach.

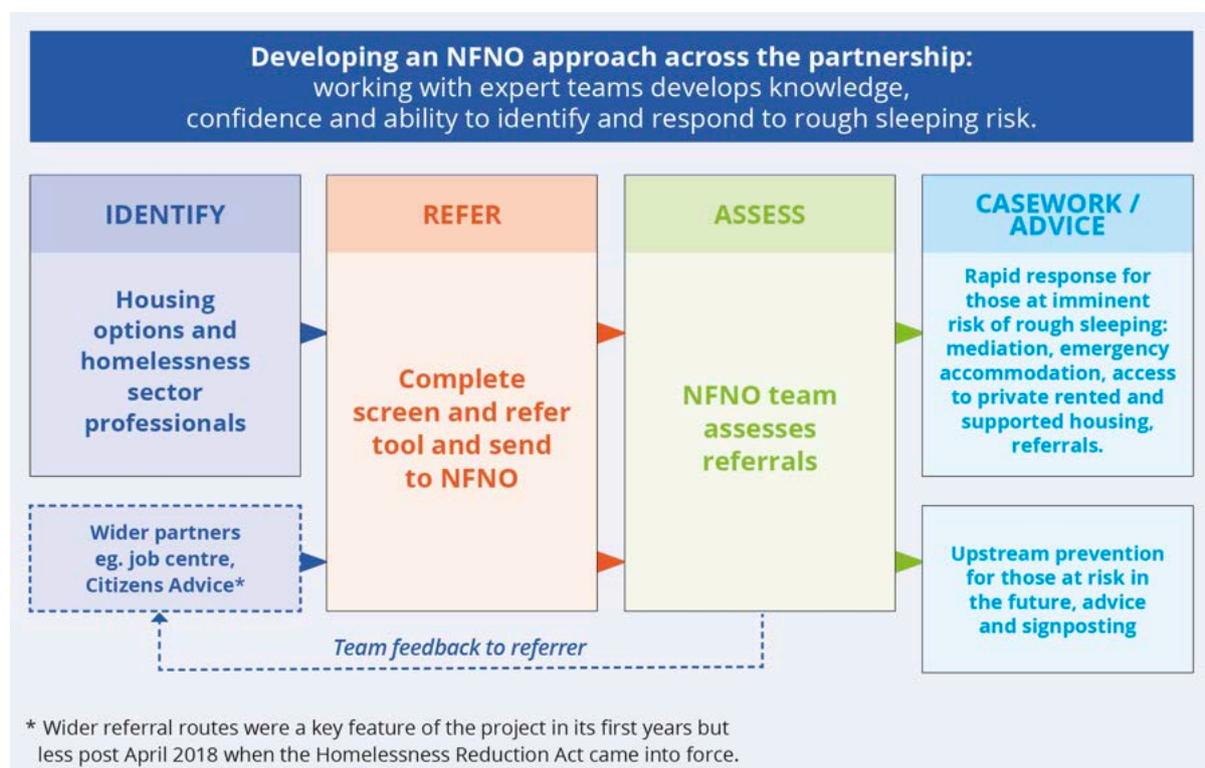
The NFNO model is summarised in figure (c). The model was designed as a prevention service specifically targeting those at risk of rough sleeping. It was intended to work with people earlier in their homelessness experience and respond to risk of rough sleeping, thereby reducing the burden on services that 'react' to rough sleeping. One Steering Group member described it as:

*'The big idea was to ID people who "will" sleep rough, and prevent rough sleeping by providing rapid intensive support; a prevention package.'*

A distinct team of NFNO staff worked flexibly across the three local authority areas. A wide range of services were able to refer people at risk of rough sleeping to a team of two NFNO caseworkers. The team worked with single people who:

- had a local connection to the tri-borough area
- were eligible for public funds
- were at risk of rough sleeping (but had not previously slept rough).

**Figure (c) NFNO model of operation**



### 5.1 Personalised and flexible

The NFNO project provided a service offer that was personalised and flexible. Caseworkers held a maximum of 25 cases at a time allowing them to provide more input than a housing options officer. All staff were trained in Trauma Informed Care and sought to ensure a person-centred and sensitive approach to assessments and casework. The team described an emphasis on being 'solution focused', 'creative'

and 'strengths based'. There was a small flexible budget to enable the team to work in a creative way. Recruiting staff from the voluntary sector into the team, as well as those with a housing options background, was reported as beneficial in developing a trauma-informed service. The work of the team was viewed by housing options staff as helpfully demonstrating more support-based (as opposed to duty-based) assessments to housing options staff in LB Tower Hamlets ahead of the HRA.

The team sought to help people into '*affordable, sustainable housing in the medium term with resettlement support for up to a few months and referrals on to other services*' (NFNO team). It was necessary for the team to be open and realistic about what was on offer to clients and ensure they understood the inflexible limitations of the housing market and welfare system.

Overall, the clients interviewed were extremely positive about their experiences with NFNO and their caseworkers. Even the clients who were less positive about their housing outcomes were largely complimentary about their NFNO caseworker, acknowledging that the caseworkers had to work within a limited system and had tried their best.

Clients reported having positive experiences with NFNO and in particular valued the non-judgmental and empathetic way in which their caseworkers had worked with them. Interviewees frequently noted how understanding and empathetic their NFNO caseworker had been about their situation. Several other clients also made favourable comparisons between NFNO and other services, describing some other services they had accessed as judgmental or blunt. Clients described their assessment as a positive experience, feeling comfortable with their caseworker and having a clear understanding of what NFNO could do for them and the next steps.

Two clients mentioned that when they called their caseworker they either responded straightaway or called them back as soon as possible. This was a highly valued aspect of the relationship and was seen as an important distinction to trying to access other services, such as local authorities. One person who said he felt more like a 'number in a book' was in a situation where he was not happy with potential move-on routes and locations.

## **5.2 Conditional on engagement from the client**

The service was conditional; clients working with NFNO were asked to ensure they undertook certain tasks to progress their case. This might have been paying service charges, seeking support with benefits and looking for their own PRS accommodation, while the team also sought options for them to ensure the quickest exit from emergency accommodation possible. During the pilot period the team found that some people were reluctant to take steps to progress their situation once they were in temporary accommodation. For this reason, a 'client agreement' was created to make it clear that the client needed to take steps, with the support of their caseworker, to secure longer-term accommodation. Most people had to accept that they would be accessing PRS accommodation and that this would be outside their local area. The work on pathways (see section 9.4.1) enabled NFNO to offer support and choice around PRS offers by working with PRS accommodation providers.

Overall, clients interviewed understood the constraints within which the project was operating, but several clients said that they felt it was unfair that they were required to accept the housing that was offered to them or risk being turned away from the

service. While NFNO generally provided only 'one appropriate offer', caseworkers and accommodation providers were able to use their discretion and make additional offers if there was a reasonable objection to the first offer.

### **5.3 A rapid response**

The project offered a rapid, but not emergency, response to identified risk of rough sleeping. It operated during the week and there was a cut off for new referrals of 2pm. The team aimed to respond to referrals within 24 hours, quicker if possible. There were periods when the caseload was closed for new clients because the team had too many clients on their caseload. Because the service usually operated in fairly urgent situations when someone was at risk of rough sleeping, referrers reported that referrals being closed was a challenge for them and ran somewhat contrary to the aims of the service. However, when caseloads became very big, effort on processing assessments was disproportionate to effort on securing a fast exit from temporary accommodation and ensuring a reasonably intensive service. Closing the caseload was a proactive decision made as an alternative to building up long waiting lists, which would have made it impossible to react quickly and prevent imminent homelessness.

### **5.4 One significant element of a prevention toolkit**

As understanding of the project developed, housing options teams all reported that they viewed NFNO as one of a range of options; relying on an NFNO referral would not always yield a very quick result and it was necessary to think through other options including mediation and use of emergency bed spaces. This conceptualisation of NFNO as part of a range of options was supported by the HRA, whereby a person's personalised housing plan (PHP) would feature a range of measures to help resolve their risk of homelessness. In some cases, a client would have received an end-to-end service from NFNO, but options securing another route out of homelessness or a housing crisis should have still been considered alongside this at the assessment stage; for example, someone might have been able to self-source accommodation or find employment that changed their situation.

*'If you refer to NFNO, it doesn't mean the worker will be running over here – he has a caseload. It's no guarantee; it's an extra resource. We [might, for example] also refer to No Second Night Out and consider other options such as the emergency bed space at [a hostel in the borough].'* (Greenhouse)

## 6 Identifying those at risk – referral agencies

This chapter provides data about the volume of referrals and the way in which NFNO worked in partnership with referring agencies.

The initial NFNO research was used to reach out to certain services and ask them to help the project identify people at risk of rough sleeping. The approach for NFNO was to seek referrals from a broad range of agencies across the tri-borough area, and to undertake outreach work to pro-actively seek referrals and to increase understanding of homelessness prevention through co-location across many sectors. However, the introduction of the HRA and the Duty to Refer impacted on the approach of the team; this is also explored in this chapter.

### 6.1 Referral tools and criteria

#### 6.1.1 Screen and refer tool

Agencies making referrals completed a screening tool which asked for basic information about the client's situation. For a period, voluntary sector referrers were not required to complete a referral form; however, this resulted in referrals which had not been fully considered, so thereafter all referrals required completion of the form. The screen and refer tool used by the team received positive feedback throughout the evaluation, largely due to its being simple and quick to complete and because the NFNO were proactive in supporting people to make referrals via phone, by attending team meetings or visiting services as a one-off, or via regular outreach. The tool is an evidence-based resource drawing on findings from the initial research.

*'The referral process is really straightforward; they get back to us really quickly and it works really, really, smoothly. The written form works well.'*  
(City of London Housing Options)

#### 6.1.2 The typology of new rough sleepers in the tri-borough area

The typology of new rough sleepers (see appendix (a)) was used alongside the screening tool as a resource to help with referrals to the project by limiting clients largely to people who fitted within three of the four typology cohorts (excluding the 'other' group). This was to ensure that the project specifically sought out groups that were known to have been at risk of rough sleeping in the recent past – targeting scarce resources using evidence from the initial research.

Throughout the initial evaluations (at three months and one year) there was mixed feedback on the typology. Overall, while it was a helpful tool to communicate the target group for the project, it had limitations when applied on a case-by-case basis. There was concern that the typology created an additional burden or barrier to referrals and that there was divergence in perceptions about how far the typology had to be adhered to and how closely a person needed to fit into a particular grouping. The use of the typology impacted on data quality; analysis of monitoring data showed that many, if not all, of the cases where a referral was rejected on the basis of not being in a typology group could have been rejected on another basis, e.g. not at risk of rough sleeping or did not have a local connection.

*'The groups seem right and they describe the people we see, but sometimes we face [the issue that] we have a client who we know will sleep rough tonight but doesn't meet the grouping... A lot of clients come in but they don't quite fit.'*  
(Voluntary sector partner agency)

Over time the typology was used less in the initial screening, but another interesting focus emerged; the project was widely seen as being for people who had low to medium support needs. Although NFNO did refer people to supported housing, it was generally felt by interviewees and the team that the service worked best with people who did not have a high level of support needs.

The typology section of the screening tool was often left blank and the NFNO team made the judgement about which group the client fitted into. As the service had emerged as targeting those with low to medium support needs, the typology profile was weighted towards group one where the primary need was for accommodation. Notably, people with higher support needs often had prior experience of rough sleeping (see below).

### **6.1.3 Prior rough sleeping and level of support needs**

In the first two months of the project the referral criteria were that people had a local connection, were eligible for public funds and were at risk of rough sleeping as defined by the typology. However, this led to referrals for people who had a previous history of rough sleeping and complex needs and who were well known to services; the NFNO service risked duplicating existing support.

After significant reflection, the Steering Group decided to tighten the restriction on prior rough sleeping, so people who had previously slept rough were not eligible; this included people who self-disclosed prior rough sleeping, as well as those who were known to outreach teams (and recorded on the CHAIN system). This approach was effective in enabling NFNO to focus on its original aim of targeting people at risk of rough sleeping, providing support before they slept rough.

As the project evolved, circumstances changed. NFNO was recognised as a service for people with low to medium support needs. Staff, particularly in housing options teams (now by far the main source of referrals to the project), had a good understanding of the pathway available to NFNO and the level of support the project could provide; referrals for people with complex needs were far less likely. Furthermore, the City of London had very few new rough sleepers with a local connection and wanted to see more practical benefit from the project. For these reasons, in August 2018, the service opened up referrals for people with some prior rough sleeping experience.

*'[The project works best with] people with low to medium support needs; those with higher support needs need more support than NFNO can give them. They will be very resource intensive... For people with medium to high mental health problems [for example] it's not the right pathway.'*  
(Greenhouse)

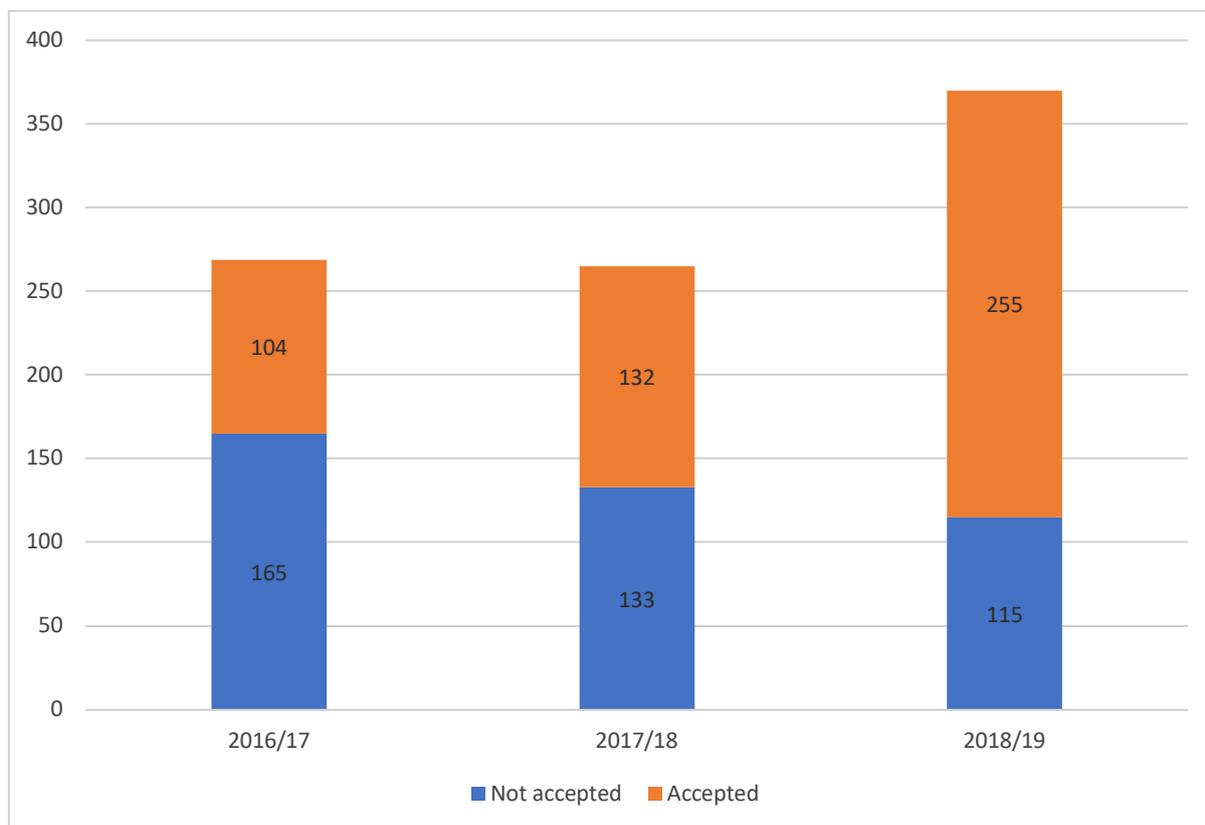
## **6.2 Volume of referrals and cases**

Over the whole evaluation period the team took 491 clients onto the NFNO caseload. Some other people who were not provided with a casework service were provided with quick 'one-off' advice, referred on to other organisations or, post-HRA, referred back to lead professional workers in LB Tower Hamlets or housing officers in the City of London.

Figure (d) shows a year-on-year increase in the number of people taken onto the caseload and an increase in the proportion of referrals that resulted in casework. In the first year of the project, 38% of referrals resulted in casework compared with 69%

in the final year. The referrals from housing options had markedly increasing levels of acceptances year on year, as the project refined its referral criteria and housing options teams developed a greater understanding of the project. By the final year all housing options teams had over 70% of referrals accepted compared with 40-54% in the first year of the project.

**Figure (d) Referrals by whether the client was accepted onto the caseload**



Base: all referrals

Figure (e) shows that well over half (60%, 300) of those accepted onto the caseload at NFNO were clients from LB Tower Hamlets. Given that Tower Hamlets has a far higher baseline number of new rough sleepers and footfall at housing options, this was to be expected. From LB Hackney 177 people were accepted onto the caseload and a small number (14) from the City of London.

**Figure (e) All referrals by acceptance/non-acceptance, 2016/17 – 2018/19**

Borough	Accepted onto caseload	Not accepted	Total	% accepted
Tower Hamlets	300	237	537	56%
Hackney	177	170	347	51%
City of London	14	6	20	70%
<b>Total</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>413</b>	<b>904</b>	<b>54%</b>

### **6.3 Source of referrals**

Figure (f) shows that LB Tower Hamlets Housing Options Singles Team referred 44% of all clients between 2016/17 and 2018/19. The second highest referrer was Greenhouse who provide the housing options service for single people at Hackney. Thirteen cases were the results of referrals from the City of London Housing Options service. Jobcentre Plus referrals resulted in 36 cases, most commonly from Poplar Jobcentre. Citizens Advice services accounted for 29 referrals, with the vast majority (26) being from the Hackney branch. Homelessness and advice services accounted for 13% (or 65) successful referrals, with Providence Row Dellow Centre being the major referrer in this group (32 cases).

The proportion of all accepted referrals coming from housing options teams increased significantly in the third year of the project – increasing from 50% in 2017/18 to 70% in 2018/19 – reflecting the introduction of the HRA, which encourages people to present and housing options for local authorities to create a single point of access for those at risk of homelessness. The introduction of the HRA and the Duty to Refer meant that there needed to be an emphasis on encouraging referral to, and presentation at, main housing options services, with housing options then referring to NFNO as appropriate. This did not preclude direct referrals but made them less significant in the overall model.

**Figure (f) Number of cases by referring organisation, 2016/17 – 2018/19**

<b>Referring organisation</b>	<b>Referred and taken onto NFNO caseload</b>	<b>% of all those accepted onto caseload</b>
Tower Hamlets Housing Options Singles Team	218	44%
Greenhouse (Hackney)	98	20%
City of London Housing Options	13	3%
<b>Housing Options subtotal</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>67%</b>
Jobcentre Plus – Dalston	8	2%
Jobcentre Plus – Hackney	6	1%
Jobcentre Plus – Poplar	22	4%
<b>Jobcentre Plus subtotal</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>7%</b>
LBTH Citizens Advice	3	1%
LBH Citizens Advice	26	5%
<b>Citizens Advice subtotal</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>6%</b>
Providence Row Dellow Centre (TH)	32	7%
Shelter Hub (Hackney)	14	3%
Crisis (TH)	16	3%
Look Ahead (Community Intervention Service, TH)	2	0%
Toynbee Hall	1	0%
<b>Homelessness and advice services subtotal</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>13%</b>
LBH Probation & CRC	2	0%
LBTH Mind	5	1%
Dalston Library	1	0%
RESET (drug and alcohol service)	2	0%
Other organisation/ not specified	22	4%
<b>Other subtotal</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 7 Working with housing options and other referring teams

This chapter summarises the experience of the project for each of the housing options services and other key referral agencies.

### 7.1 Tower Hamlets

Tower Hamlets Housing Options Singles Team was by far the most common referrer to the project and accounted for more than four in ten (44%) successful referrals over the three years (see chapter 6). The Housing Options Singles Team at Tower Hamlets manage very heavy volumes of people and staff commonly have upwards of 50 cases at any given time. The NFNO service fitted in well with the triage approach of the borough's housing options services. The borough has a comprehensive supported housing pathway and NFNO represented a unique opportunity to test a shift to a more preventative upstream approach to tackling rough sleeping.

The first two NFNO caseworkers had previously worked at LB Tower Hamlets in other roles, which made it straightforward for them to work with in-house systems such as CDP, Comino, and Northgate. Challenges in identifying the right clients to refer to NFNO were resolved through close working between the NFNO caseworkers and the Tower Hamlets Housing Options Team throughout the project. Staff referred to NFNO as an 'extension to the team'.

The Housing Options Singles Team described the HRA as bringing their practice closer to the NFNO approach and NFNO acting as a precursor to the new legislation coming into force. Whereas previously NFNO would have been the only offer aside from basic information and advice for clients who were single and not in priority need, after the HRA NFNO was one of several options for people, and working with NFNO would form part but not all of a PHP for an individual.

*'NFNO fits in with the HRA and how we can relieve homelessness for those with no priority need... Now we use it as another tool we have for us to help single homeless clients – we might refer to NFNO. The more prevention tools we have the better.'* (Housing Options Lead Professionals Team, Tower Hamlets)

The Housing Options Singles Team and NFNO integrated further following the HRA. Housing options staff at Tower Hamlets described how their assessment processes had now converged with those of NFNO to be holistic and support needs based, as well as checking the local authority's duty to a person. The team described a good working relationship between NFNO staff and housing options staff, and increasing numbers of joint assessments being undertaken, which helped to avoid repeated questions and wasted time for people who were not taken onto the NFNO caseload, and bring the NFNO work into PHP development.

*'Back in 2015 an assessment was one hour and now with the HRA its 2.5 hours – NFNO was always around two hours – it's fallen in line. Previously if in HOST [Housing Options Singles Team] we did an assessment of eligibility but then if someone is not in priority need there was no assistance just signposting – but*

*now with HRA we have a PHP tailored to each person's need – that mirrors NFNO.* (Housing Options Lead Professionals Team, Tower Hamlets)

While the HRA and the preferred working approach of the Housing Options Singles Team have brought the service more in line with NFNO, the borough's frontline housing options service is under intense pressure. Reasons include housing supply issues, high volumes of people presenting, job vacancies and sickness in the team, and multiple restructures required to refine the pathway for all housing options customers within budgets. At the current time Tower Hamlets Housing Options Team may have an ongoing need for a distinct team to focus on prevention which sits outside the main housing options service.

*'It's a calmer process the approach is different – we are led by the legislation.'* (Housing Options Lead Professionals Team, Tower Hamlets)

*'With the best will in the world it's hard for a client to get through to their HOST officer, it's easier for them to get through to an NFNO worker. It's more one to one with a named person; we are overloaded and it's more about duty than casework.'* (Housing Options Lead Professionals Team, Tower Hamlets)

## **7.2 City of London**

The target group for NFNO (new rough sleepers with a local connection) does not fit closely with the profile of new rough sleepers in the City of London local authority area. Most people who sleep rough in the City do not have a local connection to the area. The City had just two clients accepted onto the project in its first year, and this increased to six in each subsequent year. The decision to open up referrals to those who may have had some prior rough sleeping experience but had low to medium support needs was highly beneficial to the City of London Housing Options Team.

*'Quite a few applicants come to us... they have slept rough for a few weeks [but]... they are otherwise able to manage their own needs – that was getting in the way a bit... most of the single people approaching [the City of London] have some kind of history even if it's just a night or two. From August 2018 I really felt that change [in referral criteria which] opened up the project for more people.'* (City of London Housing Options)

Because the numbers of people presenting as homeless in the City of London is fairly low, the team is small (two officers) and provides a responsive and personalised service; for example, they are able to offer an assessment without a triage process and be flexible about the timing of assessments. The team is, however, limited in the range of options available for those who have a local connection but are not in priority need. A rent deposit scheme is available to people not in priority need, but the team reported that people often struggle to understand their housing benefits entitlement and identify suitable affordable accommodation independently. After the HRA this became more significant; the extended duties that local authorities have towards people who are not in priority need is resulting in an increase in presentations from people who have a local connection to the City through their employment (as opposed to through residing in the City).

The enhanced access to PRS accommodation was the unique selling point of the NFNO project for the City. Staff at the City reported that clients have fed back very positively on their experience of working with NFNO.

*'They have access to pathways that we didn't have any access to... It has been really helpful... they take on a case and get an outcome for people. We have had really positive feedback from clients... It's been interesting to find solutions for people who are challenging [for us to find solutions for]; a group of people we have previously not had to find a solution for but under HRA we have to.'* (City of London)

### 7.3 Hackney

In Hackney the housing options service for single people who do not have a tenancy is provided through the Greenhouse; if people attend the main Hackney Service Centre, they are signposted to the Greenhouse. An appointments system operates and people attend in the morning to seek an appointment, hopefully that day or possibly booked for another day. The Greenhouse service is a partnership between the local authority and the voluntary sector; Thames Reach is commissioned by the borough to provide the service alongside housing options officers from LB Hackney. In 2016 when NFNO started, the Greenhouse service already aimed to find accommodation options for people who were not in priority need and take a holistic support needs-based approach. It was therefore harder for the team to identify the unique role of NFNO for the borough:

*'Greenhouse were already quite proactive about finding people accommodation so would get on with it! There was some ambiguity about who the service was for.'* (Greenhouse)

However, the NFNO team worked effectively with the Greenhouse to build up referrals and identify where NFNO could add value. Cases accepted from the Greenhouse jumped from 48 and 45 in years one and two to 109 in year three. Several factors facilitated this:

- co-location and having the staff member present at the Greenhouse regularly
- open discussions about barriers to referrals
- diversification of the accommodation pathway on offer via NFNO making it a more attractive referral route to Greenhouse staff
- training provided to NFNO so that caseworkers could use LB Hackney monitoring and recording systems.

NFNO was able to access temporary accommodation for people who were not in priority need (see section 9.4) which is not usually possible for Greenhouse staff, and the caseworkers were able to provide more support for those who had lower support needs than would be feasible for Greenhouse staff. These factors encouraged the Greenhouse team to make appropriate referrals for the NFNO target group.

*'[The most helpful things include] being able to access TA [temporary accommodation] for people who are non-priority... NFNO does a lot more than access TA though! Longer term they are able to give a bit more time to clients; having that person there to hand hold a little more. Help people towards employment. It was having that one named link worker with those clients – someone who knows that prevention of rough sleeping is the focus and the specialism.'* (Greenhouse)

LB Hackney was an NFNO partner until the end of 2018/19. The borough had undertaken a wider transformation of housing options services with FutureGov to implement the HRA, and this was viewed as superseding the NFNO pilot for the borough. The data collection demands of the new Jigsaw system and H-CLIC increased the importance of a single point of access for all housing advice. Plans to expand the accommodation offer for single people through a new partnership with Sanctuary Housing also meant there was a risk of duplication if NFNO continued to operate in the borough. The borough is also working independently with two of the PRS providers that NFNO worked with. When leaving the partnership the borough officially recognised the value brought by the NFNO project:

*'As we depart from NFNO, I would like to thank all our colleagues and providers whom we have worked with successfully over the years. The testing, trialling of new ideas and varied learning from NFNO has greatly assisted and shaped our delivery to single persons approaching the service.'* (Housing Advice and Homelessness Team Manager, LB Hackney)

## **7.4 Outreach and colocation for other teams**

The project targeted three organisations to pilot intensive partnership work including co-location with services: Jobcentre Plus, Citizens Advice and Tower Hamlets Ideas Store library service. The outreach aspect of the team's work involved proactively seeking referrals from non-homelessness specialist agencies across the tri-borough area. This involved meeting with staff to promote the project and also attending services to undertake assessments and provide advice. For this group the aim was to encourage referrals for anyone identified as at risk of rough sleeping; the team filtered these to ascertain whether they were suitable for NFNO casework or should have been referred on to another service, or given basic advice and signposting. This has worked variously in different contexts, as described below.

### **7.4.1 Libraries**

In the initial research, several potential clients referred to libraries as a place where they spent time when they were in a precarious housing situation or homeless. The NFNO team targeted libraries, promoting the service to staff and putting up posters, as well as attending on specific days at Dalston Library and Whitechapel Ideas Store. Overall, there were six referrals from staff in libraries – five from Dalston and one from Whitechapel Ideas Store; none of these yielded casework clients. In four cases NFNO workers were able to provide basic advice relating to housing and benefits, but people receiving this were not in the target group for the project.

The team ceased regularly attending libraries because this was not effective in yielding good-quality referrals. The reasons for this were felt to be that people may feel reluctant to disclose their housing problems in a library setting, and that people who did approach the NFNO officers tended to have general housing problems as opposed to be at imminent risk of rough sleeping. Ensuring that library staff are equipped to signpost people to housing options and to StreetLink proved to be a more proportionate response.

### **7.4.2 Jobcentre Plus**

The initial research highlighted Jobcentre Plus as a frequent contact point with people at risk of rough sleeping, but that people often do not disclose housing problems to their advisors. The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Borough Relationship Manager for Hackney, Tower Hamlets and City of London was keen to

explore the potential of enhancing the response to housing and homelessness issues through a partnership with NFNO. The approach worked as follows:

- The NFNO team provided awareness training through a series of workshops at the five Jobcentre Plus branches in the tri-borough area.
- In each area a member of staff was identified as a key point of contact for NFNO and a local champion for housing and homelessness issues.
- Co-location of the NFNO service was piloted at the Poplar Jobcentre Plus with a NFNO caseworker attending the service each week and seeing people 'on spec', as well as by appointment.
- The pilot in Poplar was successful and the co-location was extended to Dalston Jobcentre Plus. Dalston Jobcentre has subsequently closed (the overall level of provision in the area has reduced from five to three centres).

In total 36 people were taken onto the caseload from Jobcentre Plus referrals. Very high numbers of referrals were rejected; in these cases, advice and signposting was often provided via the NFNO caseworker.

*'Having experts [NFNO staff] co-located with the JC [Jobcentre Plus] has helped us understand more about the implications of homelessness, about the questions we can ask and the dialogue we can have with someone who may be at risk of homelessness... at the point at which Duty to Refer became a statutory duty we were already fairly well placed to deliver this... Overriding legacy is better skilled people in job centres.'* (Partnership Manager, JobCentre Plus)

Outreach into Jobcentre Plus has now ended. While co-location was helpful in terms of capacity building and raising awareness of homelessness issues, the Duty to Refer has now placed an ongoing statutory obligation on Jobcentres to refer people at risk of homelessness to housing options through a formal process. Jobcentres may also decide to refer directly to NFNO in addition to this, but the main duty is to refer to housing options.

#### **7.4.3 Citizens Advice and Shelter**

Shelter and Citizens were part of the Hackney's Homelessness Partnership Board prior to the establishment of NFNO and this paved the way for building strong links with NFNO in the borough. Representatives from these services were interviewed for the evaluation at the end of year one. The NFNO team held regular discussions about potential referrals with staff at Shelter and Citizens Advice in Hackney, and took referrals for those who might have been suitable for casework, arranging to meet with clients at an appropriate location or via a phone conversation. Often clients referred from Citizens Advice had already been rough sleeping and so were not eligible for a casework service.

Both services viewed NFNO as a very valuable new resource for clients who were at risk of rough sleeping. Citizens Advice, like Jobcentre Plus, reported that the team at the Hackney Citizens Advice bureau were more likely to identify and discuss housing issues with clients when they knew there was a potential referral route for someone identified as at risk; for example, they might explore a sofa-surfing situation with a client in more detail than previously to see how precarious it was.

Outreach to Hackney Citizens Advice bureau and Shelter ceased in 2018. The introduction of the HRA meant that the best option for advice agencies working with people facing risk of homelessness was to refer to the single access point to ensure consistency of approach (see also section 3.1).

#### **7.4.4 Other referral agencies**

Providence Row Dellow Centre and Crisis were the most significant other referrers to NFNO, representing 32 and 16 cases respectively over the three years. The anticipated model at the start of the NFNO project was to seek a very broad spectrum of referrals from many agencies. In 2018/19 the team provided training, presentations and trialled co-location sessions at Reset, Providence Row, Mind in Tower Hamlets and Newham, The Recovery Centre (Lookahead) and Hackney Probation Team, as well as libraries (see section 7.4.1). While this work did not yield many referrals, it was felt that it had contributed to building awareness of prevention of rough sleeping and of NFNO's work.

## Case study 2: Deborah

After a breakdown in her relationship with her mother, Deborah, in her late 40s, moved in with a friend, where she lived for about one year. One night, Deborah's (male) friend physically assaulted her, and she called the police. When she told the police that she had nowhere else to go they told her to contact the local authority. The council arranged for Deborah to spend the night in temporary accommodation at a hotel.

The next day an NFNO caseworker called and organised an assessment. Deborah found this period very difficult because she was not aware of how the system worked and was suffering shock following the attack. However, she felt very comfortable with her caseworker and was grateful for their empathy and compassion.

*'It was hard for me because I've never been in that situation before... I didn't know what to think at the time after what happened, it was a bit of a shock... If it wasn't for NFNO and [my caseworker] I don't know what I would have done.'*

Deborah stayed in the hotel for around three months, although she found it a difficult place to be due to the poor conditions especially in the bathroom. Her caseworker encouraged her to remain positive while she waited for alternative accommodation to become available. She initially registered with a PRS provider who was able to accept her while she was working a small number of hours due to a health condition. However, she managed to secure a new job, working more than 16 hours per week to be eligible for another PRS provider.

She was invited to look at two properties, and she accepted a studio flat. Although it is far from her work, Deborah is enjoying her new home. She says the best thing is that *'I've got my key to get in downstairs, and a key to get into my own place'*. Deborah is feeling *'a lot happier now, a lot happier'* and is taking on additional responsibilities at work. She is considering increasing her hours again to save up a deposit for a one-bedroom apartment and come off universal credit. Deborah attributes her improved situation to NFNO.

*'If it wasn't for [my caseworker] and NFNO, what they've done, I ain't got a clue where I would be. [They've] helped me so much and I can't thank [them] enough.'*

## 8 Profile of casework clients

This chapter explores the profile of NFNO clients, looking at their housing situation at the time of referral to NFNO, their routes into homelessness and rough sleeping, and their demographic profile.

### 8.1 Housing situation on referral

By far the most common recent tenure recorded for clients was staying with friends or family (65%), followed by people who had private rented tenancies (13%). Smaller numbers of clients had recently stayed in temporary accommodation (6%), supported accommodation (4%) or prison (4%).

**Figure (g) Recent tenure of casework clients by borough**

Recent tenure	% of all clients
Staying with friends or family	65%
PRS tenant	13%
Temporary accommodation	6%
Supported accommodation	3%
Prison	3%
Rough sleeping	2%
RSL tenant	2%
Not known	2%
Hospital	1%
Squatting	1%
Leaseholder	1%
Lodger	1%
	100%

### 8.2 Routes into homelessness and risk of rough sleeping

The clients interviewed described a broad range of reasons for their housing problems, including evictions, job loss, and having to leave unstable or informal housing arrangements such as staying with a friend or sofa-surfing. Relationship breakdowns – both romantic and family – were common reasons for clients to have become unstably housed. For some clients the relationship breakdown itself was not the triggering factor for their referral to NFNO; several had suffered relationship breakdowns previously, which had led to an unstable housing situation – sofa-surfing or informally living with family or friends – which had then become untenable, leading to their referral to NFNO.

Most clients interviewed felt that they had been at imminent risk of rough sleeping when NFNO intervened. For some clients this risk was very clear, while others did not necessarily see how serious their situation had become at the time. Several clients had a defined tipping point – for example, two had suffered physical attacks while staying informally with friends or family; others described a slow progression towards realising their situation was not sustainable and then seeking help.

### 8.3 Demographic profile

The demographic profile of NFNO clients is summarised below:

- Six in ten (62%) clients over the whole evaluation period were male and four in ten (38%) were female; Hackney had a higher proportion of female clients (45%) than overall.
- Just over a quarter of clients (27%) were in their 20s and a similar proportion (25%) were in their 30s. This young age profile was significant in terms of ensuring that the PRS pathway developed was suitable for clients who needed to share accommodation due to the single room rate restriction. The remaining clients were mostly in their 40s and 50s with a small number of clients in older age groups (24 in their 60s and four in their 70s). Twenty-two clients were aged just 18 or 19 years. Variations by borough were minimal.
- There was considerable variation in the ethnicity of clients by borough:
  - In Tower Hamlets 30% of clients were Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi and 22% were Black or Black British with most being African. A further 22% were White British.
  - In Hackney the majority (60%) of clients were Black or Black British and the split was fairly even between African and Caribbean ethnicity; 10% of clients were White British.
  - Seven of the 14 clients from the City of London were Black or Black British and other clients were from a spread of other ethnic groups.

## 9 Housing outcomes and the accommodation pathway

This chapter provides figures on accommodation outcomes achieved for clients working with NFNO, and then explores different types of accommodation and how these were used and experienced by clients. The NFNO *Pathways* report provides a detailed account of the accommodation options.<sup>15</sup>

### 9.1 An overview of housing outcomes

Figure (h) shows how many NFNO clients had one or more accommodation outcome by the end of the evaluation period and how many had a longer-term outcome. Overall, two-thirds (66%) of those taken onto the caseload had an accommodation outcome. This was fairly consistent across the three local authority areas. Just under four in ten people (38%) had a longer-term accommodation outcome, accessing either PRS or supported housing. Examples of situations where people had a housing outcome but no longer-term housing outcome were: someone in temporary accommodation who was referred back to housing options because their support needs were higher than initially thought; people who found their own solution after mediation or temporary accommodation; and those who disengaged from the project.

The reasons for this were explored in quantitative and qualitative analysis; people who had no housing outcome (44% of those taken on to the caseload) were clients who were not contactable after having been accepted onto the project, those who disengaged from the project, or those who found their own solution or decided they did not want to accept the NFNO offer. In a significant number of cases (51), the client was referred back to the housing options service, usually (in 44 cases) without having been provided with an emergency accommodation option by NFNO. This group were assessed by the team as likely to be in priority need and therefore more suitable for a housing options service than NFNO.

**Figure (h) Clients by whether they had an accommodation outcome and whether they had a longer-term accommodation outcome, by borough, 2016/17 – 2018/19**

Outcome type	City of London	Hackney	Tower Hamlets	Total
One or more accommodation outcome (emergency, longer term or both)	9	119	194	322
% of clients with one or more accommodation outcome	64%	67%	65%	66%
Longer-term outcome – PRS or supported housing	6	70	113	189
% with one or more longer-term outcome	43%	40%	38%	38%
<b>Clients on caseload</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>491</b>

Figure (i) shows all housing outcomes achieved over the project period. In total 316 emergency solutions were secured, including mediation; 145 PRS accommodation outcomes were secured and 57 supported housing outcomes. Accommodation

<sup>15</sup> MacNamara C. (2019) Pathways to prevent homelessness (NFNO)

outcomes for Tower Hamlets clients accounted for the majority (60%) of accommodation outcomes, followed by Hackney (37%) and a small number of outcomes for City clients (3%). Crisis was the major provider of PRS placements with 78 placements over the period. The project extended the PRS offer over the period of the project and in the latter years there were also PRS outcomes from Irish Causeway, HOPE Worldwide and The Forward Trust (formally Vision Housing). See section 9.4.1 for more information on PRS access.

**Figure (i) Overview of accommodation outcomes, 2016/17 – 2018/19**

Outcome	City of London	Hackney	Tower Hamlets	Total
Emergency B&B*	3	29	63	95
Mediation with host	2	17	29	48
Night shelter		4	1	5
TA – City of London*	6			6
TA – Hackney*		68		68
TA – Tower Hamlets*			94	94
<b>Emergency housing solution subtotal</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>316</b>
PRS access scheme (Crisis)	3	32	43	78
PRS access scheme (HWW)	1	10	5	16
PRS access scheme (Irish Causeway)		7	1	8
PRS access scheme (LA)		3	5	8
PRS access scheme (Other)		3	5	8
PRS access scheme (Vision Housing)		5	7	12
PRS client sourced	1	5	9	15
<b>PRS subtotal</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>145</b>
Refuge		1	1	2
Self-referral hostel		1	3	4
Supported hostel	1	7	43	51
<b>Supported subtotal</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>518</b>

\*TA refers to temporary accommodation provided by the local authority. This was accessed via local authority officers and did not incur a cost to NFNO directly. B&B refers to nightly paid bed and breakfast projects, which were paid for by NFNO. In the first year of the project the distinction was not always used in monitoring and analysis and there is some margin of error in these figures, overestimating B&B compared with the use of TA.

## 9.2 Mediation

Mediation featured far less in client accommodation journeys, and emergency bed and breakfast and temporary accommodation was used far more, than expected when the project was proposed to DCLG. The main reason for this was the precariousness of people's housing situations when they come into contact with NFNO. The team sought to mediate with hosts where possible because this was preferable to placing someone in emergency accommodation. For casework clients, mediation was usually a temporary solution rather than a final outcome; the

living situations were generally not sustainable. The team found that mediation often put pressure on hosts who needed reassurance that a longer-term solution would be forthcoming – for example, because the accommodation was overcrowded. One of the people interviewed for the evaluation felt that it was the initial mediation with his host by the team that had prevented him from spending a night rough sleeping.

There may have been hidden mediation outcomes for clients who did not receive a casework service. For example, caseworkers advised people when there was unlikely to be a suitable service for them if they left their current accommodation and suggested that they try to repair relationships in their current home; this would not have been recorded consistently on the monitoring system.

### 9.3 Temporary accommodation

The team relied heavily on placement in emergency bed and breakfast and temporary accommodation as an interim prevention measure for those at immediate risk of rough sleeping.

NFNO had access to temporary accommodation that would not usually be accessible to people who are not in priority need; temporary accommodation was provided through local authority processes that were adapted for NFNO incurring a cost for participating local authorities. Access to local authority temporary accommodation was not always possible and was reported by the project to be increasingly challenging in 2018 after the HRA.

On occasions where the service could not access local authority temporary accommodation due to a lack of available properties, NFNO would provide placements in bed and breakfast accommodation or a private hostel, such as a backpackers' hostel. This incurred a direct cost to the project unlike temporary accommodation.

Temporary accommodation and emergency bed and breakfast are costly options with variable outcomes. As such they were not favoured by NFNO staff or the Steering Group, but were often the only options available to prevent rough sleeping, particularly for those referred to the project from housing options teams. NFNO worked hard to minimise the time clients spent in temporary accommodation, evidenced by the average length of stay reducing from 56 days in 2017/18 to 42 days in 2018/19.<sup>16</sup>

Drawbacks of using temporary accommodation included:

- stays in temporary accommodation often left clients in arrears due to the unaffordability of services charges and delays with benefits payments
- conditions and experience of temporary accommodation were often poor, as highlighted by NFNO research
- in some cases clients disengaged and/or were reluctant to move on from temporary accommodation.

Four of the 2019 interviewees had stayed in temporary accommodation before finding housing. The clients who had stayed in temporary accommodation had been in crisis situations: two had been physically attacked while in their current accommodation and two had been forced to leave straightaway without any alternative accommodation for the night. The other interviewees all stayed in their

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<sup>16</sup> NFNO (2019) Pathways to prevent homelessness

current situations while waiting for a housing outcome, including sleeping in a workshop, sofa-surfing, and informally staying with family or friends. The clients who stayed in temporary accommodation mostly reported that it was not a good experience due to poor conditions, such as pests and shared facilities, but that they were glad to have had somewhere secure to stay. In the interviews for the 2016 evaluation report, feedback on temporary accommodation was also poor, with most clients finding it an uncomfortable experience, particularly the women.

With temporary accommodation a scarce and expensive resource, there was a challenge in mainstreaming this aspect of the project. However, as the project progressed and developed a comprehensive PRS pathway, the chance of rapid move on from temporary accommodation increased making temporary accommodation with move on to the PRS a more viable option. Several interviewees mentioned that having some temporary accommodation available was vital to the success of prevention projects because people would be identified when they were very close to rough sleeping. The NFNO *Pathways* report concluded that *'the advantages of having direct access to local authority temporary accommodation cannot be understated'* and providing this emergency solution has prevented rough sleeping for NFNO clients.

*'We didn't realise how immediate the need would be. Mediation as an outcome often wouldn't cut it.'* (Steering Group member)

## 9.4 Long to medium-term outcomes

### 9.4.1 PRS access

The *Interim Evaluation Report* (2016) highlighted the shortage of available housing options to which caseworkers could refer clients. This was causing extended client stays in temporary accommodation and limited the number of clients the project was able to take on. Subsequently, the NFNO Steering Group commissioned Homeless Link to produce a report to explore gaps in provision, to investigate existing referral options for NFNO clients (e.g. into supported housing) and to explore ways to increase the supply of suitable accommodation to the project. The Steering Group felt there was enough potential in the options identified to appoint a full-time Pathways Coordinator to develop a unique NFNO accommodation pathway.

The main aspect of the development of the NFNO pathway was access to PRS accommodation through small, specialist PRS organisations who specifically seek to work with people at risk of or facing homelessness. This was considered an ethical sector to link with, to ensure support to clients and a reasonable standard of accommodation. The NFNO service had ongoing contracts with four providers: Crisis, HOPE Worldwide, The Forward Trust and Causeway Irish Housing Association. Crisis was the most long-standing PRS provider and yielded over six in ten (61%) of the PRS outcomes for the project.

None of the organisations financially incentivise landlords or act as guarantors. All said that the incentive for landlords was the benefit of having an organisation providing support to tenants; it is in their common interest for tenancies to be successful. This is in contrast to many PRS placements by local authorities where incentives are paid.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Earlier this year the Guardian and other press highlighted the millions spent on incentives for landlords to house homeless clients, especially in London: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/mar/25/london-councils-pay-landlords-14m-in-incentives-to-house-homeless-people> (accessed July 2019)

NFNO provided fees of between £1,000 and £1,500 per outcome for PRS providers (with the exception of Crisis). Towards the higher end of this range providers were expected to deliver a more intensive support service. For example, included in Causeway Irish Housing Association's fee was a package of 30 hours of support for each client, delivered by their in-house life skills team over the first six months of the client's tenancy. Support included assessing affordability and setting up viewings, pre-tenancy training, referrals on to other services, and helping people address issues in their properties such as reporting repairs. The Crisis model was for NFNO to part-fund a housing coach and secure a target number of outcomes via this role, as opposed to payments per outcome.

Each provider has a unique offer suitable for specific client groups; the *Pathways* report identified which group each service works best for – for example, Causeway Irish Housing Association works with young people who are often priced out of the PRS market and are willing to share facilities and The Forward Trust is able to work with people with an offending history, which could be a barrier to accessing other PRS schemes, and who are flexible about where they live.

PRS providers interviewed for the evaluation gave very positive feedback about the success of their partnership with NFNO. There was a recurring theme of excellent relationships and partnership working, which interviewees put down to the following factors:

- skill of NFNO caseworkers
- frequency of communication (face-to-face meetings usually quarterly, but constant and efficient email contact)
- team working to reinforce consistent messages to clients, e.g. managing expectations about the accommodation available
- emphasis on ongoing learning and development of the model, and willingness to try new things and learn from things that have not worked so well.

*'I think the communication between the caseworkers and our housing coaches at Crisis has been a strength of the partnership over the last three years... Every decision that has been made, we've done it as a team.'* (Housing Team Leader, Crisis)

*'As we've developed our relationship, we've developed a better understanding of working with each other... It feels like it's been a really positive partnership and trusting relationship.'* (Interim Recovery Support Manager, The Forward Trust)

Professional stakeholders interviewed for the project all had positive perceptions of the 'impressive' PRS options provided by NFNO, highlighting as benefits the expanded range of PRS providers over the course of the project and support from the providers including tenancy training and planned viewings.

*'There is really good tenancy training... and it's great that viewings are set up for clients so the affordability has already been assessed... It speeds up the process – avoids people searching and searching for properties without pinning anything down.'* (City of London Housing Options)

#### **9.4.2 Supported housing**

The majority of people who went into supported housing were from Tower Hamlets, which has far more supported housing and hostel provision for single homeless people than the other boroughs. The supported accommodation was from a range of providers, usually within borough but also included seven placements at YMCA Thames Gateway, which accepts referrals for clients from any borough.

#### **9.5 Clients' views on longer-term housing outcomes**

Of the nine clients interviewed in 2018, seven had medium to long-term outcomes (two in supported housing and five in PRS provided by three of the contracted providers and in one case self-sourced). In the six interviews undertaken for previous evaluation reports, all clients had housing outcomes, again mostly in PRS accommodation.

Overall clients were satisfied with their outcomes and were grateful to have a private space where they could feel safe. For several clients the independence gained had a significant positive effect on their overall wellbeing, and they reported being very happy in their lives at that moment. Even clients who were not happy with their current accommodation acknowledged that having their own place, and being able to come and go as they pleased, was very important to them. Two of the interviewees had young children (both men with non-resident children) and both stated that being able to have their children to stay with them in their housing was a priority. For one client this was possible and it was the most important thing to him about his housing outcome; the other client was not able to have his children stay because his accommodation was too small, which was distressing for him.

Some clients who were less satisfied with their current accommodation reported spending very little time in the accommodation during the day, and primarily using it as a safe place to sleep. One client said that he usually left the house to study during the day, while another went to the library most days. The main issues reported with accommodation were being very small, the location being difficult, and for those in shared and supported housing, having to share facilities such as kitchens, bathrooms and washing machines with too many other people.

Many of the clients saw their current living arrangements as temporary, with plans to try and move on to another PRS tenancy in the near future. Many clients have an aspiration to rent their own one-bedroom or studio flat, although the cost of housing in London was clearly an issue. Most interviewees raised issues around the cost of private renting during their interviews, including extremely high rental rates in London, the difficulty of saving money for a deposit, or the issue of landlords not wanting to rent to tenants receiving benefits. Several clients expressed a preference for coming off benefits and having more financial independence. There was a sense that while benefits were important as a starting point, it is better to earn money through work and be autonomous.

#### **9.6 Wider impact of housing outcomes**

The clients interviewed were very positive about the impact of working with NFNO. Interviewees reported an improvement in their mental health and wellbeing since moving into their accommodation, with some only recognising in hindsight how poor their mental health had become when they were unstably housed. For many of these clients moving into more suitable accommodation has also allowed them to seek help to improve their mental health.

Clients also reported that once they were settled in their accommodation they were more able to focus on improving other areas of their lives. One client said that in her previous housing she had found it very difficult to do her college homework, but now she was in supported housing she could come home and complete her work in peace. Another client had started taking on new responsibilities at work and was considering taking on more hours so she could save for a deposit on a larger flat. Other clients felt that now they were settled they could focus on finding work and becoming more independent.

### **9.7 Without NFNO's intervention**

Most of the clients interviewed felt that without NFNO's intervention their housing situation would have deteriorated, and rough sleeping would have been a real possibility. One client was sure that if he had not received help from NFNO he would have died. Only one client felt that without NFNO's intervention things would not have been significantly different. This client received PRS accommodation through Crisis and thought that if he had not had contact with NFNO, another service probably would have referred him on.

Interviewees were aware of the serious potential consequences of sleeping rough for their health and safety, as well as their personal relationships. One client thought that he probably would not have started rough sleeping straightaway because he had friends who would have been able to help, but he felt that over time those relationships would have become strained by his situation. This client, as well as several others, felt that they simply did not know what would have happened to them without NFNO's intervention, because their paths had been so uncertain when they were referred. All the clients were grateful for the assistance and support they had received from their caseworker, and many now felt in a position to make plans for the future in a positive way.

### **9.8 Sustainability of outcomes**

While there is no consistent, long-term data about the sustainability of outcomes from NFNO placements, after six months there is evidence that outcomes achieved are being sustained in the short to medium term. From the information that is available, the following findings were noted:

- The project tracked whether clients placed in Crisis PRS in 2016/17 were still in tenancy the following year; the vast majority had remained in their accommodation.
- For those placed in PRS with one of the contracted providers, several key risks related to PRS accommodation were mitigated:
  - affordability was checked
  - in nearly all cases landlords providing placements for the PRS providers had a commitment to offer tenancies of at least 12 months
  - support was provided for all clients to address issues such as arrears or problems with the property early.
- CHAIN data was checked to see if any of those who had been taken onto the NFNO caseload had subsequently been seen sleeping rough by outreach teams in London. Over the whole project period one NFNO client was seen rough sleeping and this was someone who did not wish to pursue the NFNO offer of help to access PRS out of borough.

## Case study 3: Carol

After the breakdown of her marriage, Carol, in her 30s, stayed with family members in London for several months. One day she was told she was no longer welcome and had to leave immediately. With no one else to contact for help, Carol went to housing options and was referred directly to NFNO.

Carol met with her caseworker for an assessment, and although she was '*scared at the beginning*', by the end of the meeting she felt more confident about the way forward. Following the assessment Carol's caseworker organised temporary accommodation for her to stay in for the night.

*'That first night at the hotel, all night I was thinking, "I'm safe, I'm somewhere now, I'm not on the street."'*

Carol had a very positive experience at the temporary accommodation; she felt it was '*a safe place and there was good people*'. While Carol was staying in there she opened up to her caseworker about some problems she was having, and her caseworker referred her to a counselling service. After a few months of waiting, she's now attending counselling weekly.

After two and a half weeks in the temporary accommodation, Carol's caseworker told her a flat was available in a supported housing project. Since Carol had lost her way when trying to find the temporary accommodation, her caseworker met her and helped her move into her new accommodation. Her caseworker also brought some basic items such as plates, cups and towels for her new home, using the project's flexible personal budgets fund.

Carol is very happy in her accommodation; her neighbours are friendly and polite and she's '*feeling safe and I'm living independent*'. Carol is studying at college and now she has her own place she is able to keep up with her studies and focus on her mental health. Carol is sure that without NFNO's intervention she would have been sleeping rough, and she is very aware of the risks associated with rough sleeping. She's extremely grateful to her caseworker and credits NFNO with saving her life.

*'Now it's easier: my college is easier, my life, all my problems I'm forgetting one by one.'*

## 10 New rough sleeping in the tri-borough area

This chapter provides information about new rough sleeping in the tri-borough area.

Throughout the evaluation the CHAIN team worked with local authorities and outreach teams to collect data about new rough sleepers to enhance the standard information entered onto CHAIN. This data provides helpful context to the work of NFNO, but it should be noted that there is no reliable way to find out how many people who would have been eligible for the NFNO service slept rough for the first time during the project period. The information we have does not tell us for sure that someone would definitely have been a good fit for the project. For example, some people who appear to be eligible for NFNO from the data (i.e. they have a local connection to the area) may have complex needs and a rough sleeping history (despite not being on the CHAIN system); others may in fact not be eligible for welfare benefits despite having a local connection.<sup>18</sup> Where people disclosed prior rough sleeping they were referred on to appropriate services such as housing options, outreach teams and day centres.

### 10.1 Overall levels of people seen rough sleeping for the first time (CHAIN data)

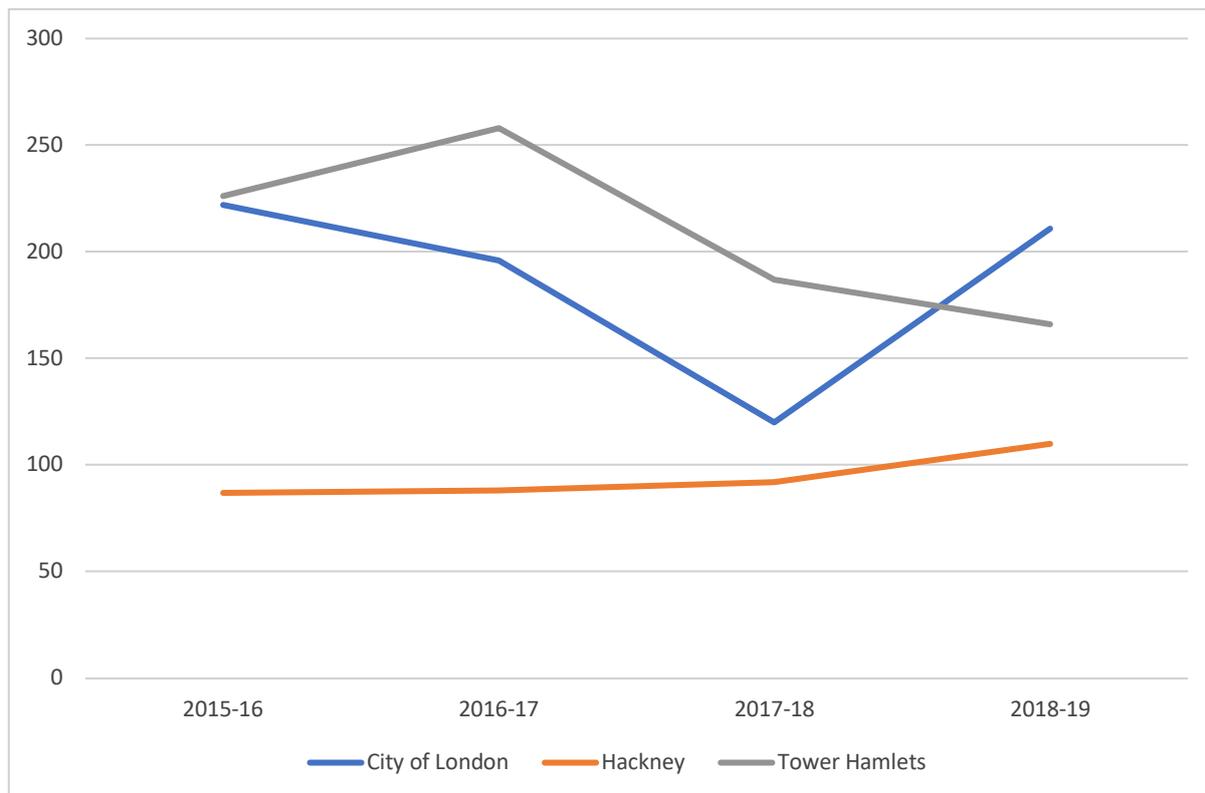
Figure (j) shows that between 2015 and 2019 in London overall there has been a 5% rise in people seen rough sleeping for the first time. Hackney has seen an increase of over a quarter (26%) and Tower Hamlets has seen a decrease of just over a quarter (-27%). The City of London saw a small decrease of -5%. If only UK nationals are considered, the overall pattern is the same; Hackney saw an increase in new rough sleepers with a UK nationality and Tower Hamlets saw a decrease. In the City of London there has been an increase in people from the UK seen sleeping rough for the first time, despite the decrease overall, which suggests that the decrease was disproportionately among people from non-UK backgrounds.

Overall, stakeholders from Tower Hamlets felt that NFNO, along with other initiatives, has resulted in a drop in the number of new rough sleepers in the area and this is supported by the data. In Hackney, stakeholders felt that NFNO has prevented rough sleeping for some individuals and that the rough sleeping figures may well have been higher without NFNO; however, the borough is experiencing increases in rough sleeping and has also increased outreach efforts over the period, which may have resulted in better identification of rough sleepers in the borough.

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<sup>18</sup> Outreach teams (for the purposes of this research) and No Second Night Out (NSNO) record a local connection to an area if someone has been resident for six of the last 12 months or three of the last five years, even if their eligibility is not confirmed. For example, during the research undertaken in 2018, one interviewee had been resident in the tri-borough areas for many years so had a local connection; however, he had a spousal visa and when his relationship broke down he was not eligible for assistance through the local authority or for the NFNO service.

**Figure (j) Number of people contacted rough sleeping for the first time by outreach teams (CHAIN data) by borough, 2015/16 – 2018/19 (with all London also shown in table)**



Borough	Number of rough sleepers 2015/16	Number of rough sleepers 2016/17	Number of rough sleepers 2017/18	Number of rough sleepers 2018/19	Total	Difference between 2015/16 and 2018/19	% Difference between 2015/16 and 2018/19
City of London	222	196	120	211	749	-11	-5%
Hackney	87	88	92	110	377	+23	+26%
Tower Hamlets	226	258	187	166	837	-60	-27%
<b>All London</b>	<b>5,235</b>	<b>5,042</b>	<b>4,418</b>	<b>5,517</b>	<b>20,212</b>	<b>+282</b>	<b>+5%</b>

Figure (k) shows the last settled base of new rough sleepers as recorded by outreach teams and No Second Night Out (NSNO) assessment staff over the whole project period. Data is available for 615 people in total. In line with figures for rough sleepers in London, and data from housing options teams, the most common recent accommodation was in the PRS. Social housing was the next most common type of accommodation (122 people with local authority and housing association/registered social landlord accommodation combined). Fifty-four people reported being newly arrived in the UK, so their last settled base was overseas. Other types of accommodation constituting the last settled base for more than 25 people were hostel accommodation, prison and owner-occupied accommodation. This data does not tell us whether the person lived with friends and family or in their own home, but it does demonstrate that there is a need to target prevention efforts

across tenures and also ensure targeted efforts to avoid homelessness, and repeat homelessness, when people leave hostel accommodation and prison.

**Figure (k) Last settled base of new rough sleepers, as recorded by outreach teams and NSNO assessment staff over the whole project period**

Last settled base	Hackney	Tower Hamlets	City of London	Tri-borough area
PRS accommodation	65	111	53	229
Local authority social housing	17	48	14	79
Hostel	18	37	16	71
Newly arrived in UK – not homeless in home country	1	35	18	54
Housing association/RSL accommodation	11	25	7	43
Prison	8	21	10	39
Owner-occupied accommodation	4	15	7	26
Squat	1	11	2	14
Temporary accommodation (LA)	4	5	4	13
Asylum support accommodation	4	8	0	12
Newly arrived in UK – homeless in home country	0	5	6	11
Tied accommodation	3	6	1	10
Hospital	0	4	3	7
Sheltered housing/registered care accommodation	2	1	0	3
Clinic/detox/rehab	1	1	0	2
B&B (not via LA)	0	1	0	1
Outhouse	0	1	0	1
<b>Total recorded</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>615</b>

## 10.2 Local connection data provided by outreach teams and NSNO teams

CHAIN data does not tell us the local connection of rough sleepers unless they have been to an NSNO assessment hub. This is because local connection is hard to accurately assess without an in-depth assessment and because the information can be contentious and potentially misleading; an outreach worker's assessment of local connection could be contrary to the view of the local authority once they have undertaken more research. For the purposes of this research, we asked outreach staff to give their best judgement on whether new rough sleepers had a local connection to the area in which they were first contacted rough sleeping. It is important to note that someone with a local connection may not be entitled to benefits and this would affect the services and resources they can access. The data revealed the following:

- During the project period outreach teams identified 86 people with a local connection to Hackney and 190 people with a local connection to Tower Hamlets. One person was identified with a local connection to the City of London. Some of this group would potentially have been eligible for NFNO assistance. In Tower Hamlets the figure went down year on year (82/68/40); in Hackney it was variable (32/22/32).
- The numbers were similar to above where the outreach team assessed that the person did not have a local connection to the area in which they were first seen rough sleeping (85 in Hackney and 183 in Tower Hamlets).
- In around four in ten cases in Hackney and Tower Hamlets, the outreach teams were not able to provide an indication of the person's local connection. This was far higher in the City of London. Where the local connection was unknown it was unlikely to be within the borough, although this would be possible if someone had not engaged in any conversation with the outreach team.

Data from NSNO provides an additional insight; it tells us about people with a local connection to the three boroughs who were first contacted rough sleeping in a different borough to that of their local connection. The data from NSNO shows that between 2016/17 and 2018/19 43% of people with a local connection to Hackney were first contacted rough sleeping outside Hackney, and that 18% of those with a local connection to Tower Hamlets were first contacted rough sleeping outside the borough.

While it is not possible to ascertain a person's suitability for the NFNO service from data alone, local connection data suggests that there are people who may have been eligible for NFNO who slept rough during the project period. Data from NSNO also shows that many of those who have a local connection to the area, especially those with a local connection to Hackney, are first identified rough sleeping in other boroughs.

### **10.3 Attendance at housing options before rough sleeping**

Housing options managers checked the records of all new rough sleepers identified as likely to have a local connection to the area in which they were first contacted rough sleeping. Where they found a match, they recorded the most recent attendance at housing options *prior to the first rough sleeping contact*. The data showed the following:

- The teams identified 161 (58% of those for whom a borough of local connection was identified) new rough sleepers with a local connection who had attended housing options before they were first recorded on CHAIN as sleeping rough.
- The most common scenario was for people to have attended housing options and then to have been contacted sleeping rough within a week. This applied to one-third of those identified. Ten people likely to have a local connection attended housing options and were contacted sleeping rough the same day.
- For nearly half of people who attended housing options before sleeping rough the most recent attendance at housing options was a month or less ahead of being contacted sleeping rough.
- Nearly one-third of those who attended housing options before sleeping rough attended more than six months prior to being contacted by outreach teams.

**Figure (I) Interval between last attending housing options and being contacted rough sleeping for the first time**

Interval	Hackney	Tower Hamlets	City of London	Total	%
Same day	5	5	0	10	6%
2-7 days	12	31	0	43	27%
8-14 days	8	13	0	21	13%
15-30 days	5	9	0	14	9%
1-3 months	7	14	0	21	13%
3-6 months	6	9	0	15	9%
6+ months	5	32	0	37	23%
<b>Total</b>	48	113	0	161	100%

Base: those identified by outreach teams as having a local connection who were identified on housing options systems

Data from housing options teams shows that people are likely to attend housing options when rough sleeping is imminent for them. This confirms that for rough sleeping prevention projects emergency options are an essential part of the pathway. It also highlights that for those who attend housing options a long time before sleeping rough it is important to encourage people to return if their situation worsens and leave the 'door open' to future contact.

## 11 Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings of the NFNO evaluation and research over the whole period from 2016 to 2019.

### **Recommendations for policy makers**

- Efforts to tackle the extreme pressure in housing supply and affordability across sectors should be a top priority. Measures to help people in housing crisis through the HRA and new funding for rough sleeper services need to go hand in hand with reducing the flow of new people in housing crisis.
- Investment in innovative prevention projects should be considered where high levels of homelessness and /or a lack of resources may impede work on earlier prevention.
- The NFNO research projects showed that people from all tenures are at risk of rough sleeping; work should be done with supported housing providers, social landlords and PRS landlords to link people to housing advice early. This more universal and/or targeted prevention work was outside the scope of NFNO (see definitions of prevention work in chapter 3).

### **Recommendations for projects seeking to prevent rough sleeping**

- It is likely that after the HRA the best point of access for housing advice is housing options; new prevention services should be as integrated as possible with the local authority's statutory service.
- Carefully identify the target group you can work with in light of the accommodation pathway available, the intensity of support on offer, and the availability of other services.
- Create an ongoing dialogue with referring staff to identify barriers to referrals and make adjustments as appropriate.
- Develop joint assessment and shared information systems where possible to avoid people being asked the same questions repeatedly.
- Review the balance between new clients and casework in an ongoing way; an overemphasis on the former will negate the ability to undertake the more intensive casework valued by clients.
- Consider any 'conditionality' the service will place on clients and make this clear to clients as early as possible creating a client agreement or similar.
- Be clear on the limitations of the service and how it might fit in with other prevention offers.
- Provide a 'client expenses' budget to enable small purchases to support casework – for example, client travel or items for new accommodation. Encourage the use of small flexible budgets by PRS providers.
- When recruiting and training staff, ensure that teams are trauma informed, person centred and able to provide a holistic and inclusive service, as well as having good knowledge of housing options and welfare benefits.
- Plan accommodation pathways before taking on clients and seek to develop as much diversity in the accommodation pathways as possible.
- Have access to emergency temporary accommodation, but seek to minimise its use as far as possible. Take steps to manage and prevent arrears from temporary accommodation service charges from the outset of each placement and review this at a project level regularly.

- Produce and disseminate an accessible information sheet for clients to explain temporary accommodation and manage expectations in terms of temporary accommodation and move on.

### **Recommendations for developing an accommodation pathway for those at risk of rough sleeping**

- Use the NFNO *Pathways* report for detailed information about the experience of the tri-borough partnership in developing an accommodation pathway.<sup>19</sup>
- Seek a range of PRS providers to create a more personalised and flexible service for clients.
- Ensure that providers share an emphasis on affordability, sustainability and reasonable quality, and accommodating people who struggle to self-source PRS accommodation.
- Ensure that processes are put in place to monitor the quality of accommodation provided by PRS partners.
- Invest in finding landlords who will be prepared to house the client group. Engage with partners with existing strong relations with landlords.

### **Recommendations for projects working across local authority areas**

- Secure senior buy-in from the outset including support for testing and innovation and dedicating resources.
- Create a distinct name and brand for projects which are working across boroughs and are seeking to innovate and influence.
- Consider whether your project should be a legal entity in its own right to allow for flexibility in procurement and commissioning in line with the project's needs rather than the needs of the host local authority.
- Take steps to ensure that efforts are appropriately spread across different authorities – for example, ensuring access to IT systems and induction in each area for staff expected to work across local authority areas.
- Consider the support offered to staff working in small teams, including line management, data recording systems, training and reflective practice from the outset.
- Implement a shared log of learning including challenges and how they have been overcome.

### **Recommendations for NFNO and the partnership**

- Continue to develop and expand the links with PRS providers and explore options for working with Solace Women's Aid and Providence Row Young People's Employment Scheme to further diversify the pathway.
- The individual boroughs should consider the legacy of NFNO for their area and ensure maximum value from the NFNO experience:
  - For Hackney, this is likely to be the extension of partnerships with PRS providers independently of the NFNO project.
  - For Tower Hamlets, there may be an ongoing need for a team specifically funded to undertake prevention work with single people who are not in priority need. If this is the case, continuation funding will need to be sought. Embedding the work of the NFNO team should continue with joint assessments and co-location and this work can

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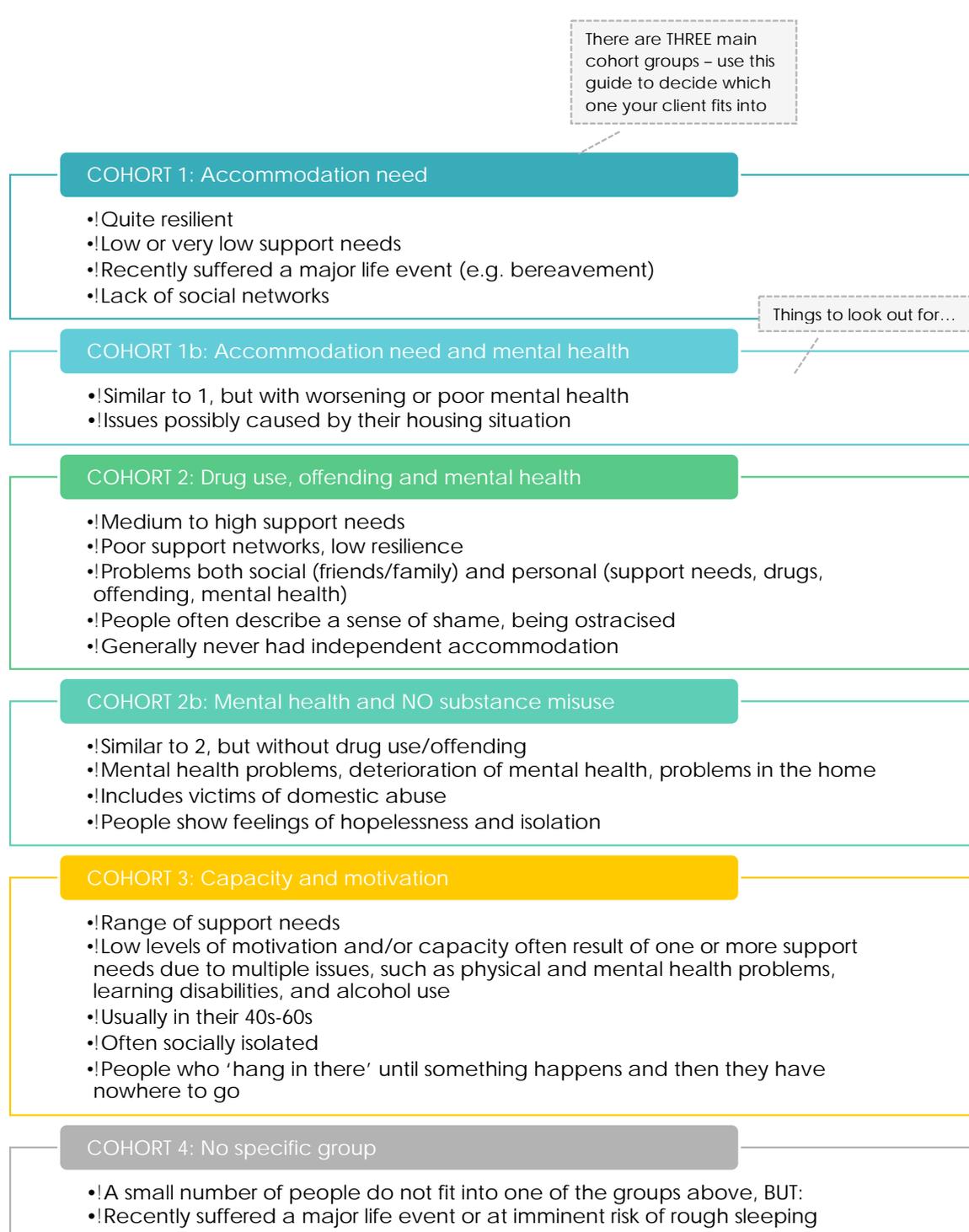
<sup>19</sup> NFNO (2019) Pathways to prevent homelessness

increase because the size of the team remains the same across two boroughs (rather than three).

- For the City of London, there may be an advantage to having access to specialist prevention staff and putting in joint bids for continuation funding. This should be assessed in discussion with LB Tower Hamlets. Work to increase access to NFNO for City of London clients should continue, ensuring that maximum value is extracted from the project.
- For both City of London and LB Tower Hamlets, whether or not continuation funding is secured, the project should focus on sustainability in the coming months and in particular ensuring that the links with PRS providers will outlive the NFNO project and be mainstreamed.



## Appendix (a) NFNO client typology



This typology is an updated extract from the No First Night Out research project conducted in 2015 and 2018 into new rough sleepers in the City of London, Hackney and Tower Hamlets. It is used to target people at risk of rough sleeping for the NFNO project.

Please note: to be eligible for the project, clients must also have a local connection to one of the three boroughs, have recourse to public funds, and not currently be rough sleeping.

NFNO Typology of new rough sleepers (2015) – Updated 2018

# NO FIRST NIGHT OUT

No First Night Out is an innovative approach to preventing people from sleeping rough for the first time.

[www.nfno.org.uk](http://www.nfno.org.uk)

