

NO FIRST NIGHT OUT

No First Night Out Project Evaluation

Key findings and recommendations

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Contents

NFNO timeline	4
1 Introduction	6
2 The NFNO model - an overview	6
3 Referrals and targeting	8
4 Working with housing options teams	9
5 Housing outcomes and the accommodation pathway	10
6 Rough sleeping in the tri-borough area	12
7 The broader partnership and influencing prevention work	12
8 Conclusions	12
9 Recommendations	13
Appendix (a) No First Night Out client typology	15

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NFNO timeline

2015			2016			2017			2018			2019															
MARCH			FEBRUARY			APRIL			MAY			JULY			SEPTEMBER												
The tri-borough partnership was initiated by LB Tower Hamlets, LB Hackney and the City of London with the input of St Mungo's and Homeless Link. St Mungo's funds initial research.			Report about pathways provided by Homeless Link to the project Steering Group.			Homelessness Reduction Act received Royal Assent.			Full-time Project Manager was recruited to the project to oversee the team.			End of year one evaluation report finalised and summary report published. Project commissioned Real Systems to develop a bespoke database to capture all prevention work carried out by the team.			The first Partnership Board event was convened bringing together representatives from across the tri-borough area working in housing, advice and support services. Memorandum of understanding was agreed with partners to galvanise support for and understanding of the NFNO project. Pathways Coordinator started in post and began a programme of expanding accommodation options for NFNO clients.												
JANUARY			APRIL			OCTOBER			APRIL			JUNE			OCTOBER			MARCH		MAY		JUNE		SEPTEMBER		NOVEMBER	
Research published on new rough sleeping in the tri-borough area, which informed the development of the service delivery project.			Service delivery commenced with a team of two NFNO caseworkers who were hosted by LB Tower Hamlets but worked independently across the tri-borough area.			Initial evaluation report published.			The Homelessness Reduction Act came into force changing the duties that local authority housing options teams have towards single homeless people. A third caseworker was recruited to assist with the high demand for the service, funded by MHCLG Rough Sleeping Initiative.			NFNO hosted the first London-based Homelessness Prevention and Trailblazer meeting and established membership for the working group.			The Duty to Refer came into force.			LB Hackney left the NFNO partnership; the remaining partners secured funding from the MHCLG PRS Access Fund to continue until April 2020.		NFNO hosted a national event bringing Trailblazer projects together to share learning around prevention.		The NFNO caseworker funded by MHCLG PRS Access Fund starts in post.		Pathways to Prevent Homelessness report published.		Final evaluation report published.	

1. Introduction

This is a summary of the final evaluation report for the No First Night Out (NFNO) project, covering the period April 2016 to April 2019. The evaluation was conducted by an independent research team over the whole project period. A full findings report is also publicly available. The evaluation took a mixed-methods approach. Key sources of evidence included monitoring data from the project, rough sleeping data from CHAIN, interviews with fifteen NFNO clients, and interviews and focus groups with professional stakeholders.¹

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) and the Greater London Authority (GLA). 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.² 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.³ Research and a learning approach were central to the NFNO project.

The NFNO tri-borough project was part of, and impacted by, moves towards a more prevention-focused agenda in housing options in England. The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) came into force in April 2018 impacting on homelessness prevention work across the country. This occurred in a highly challenging context for housing options

teams, especially in London, due to factors including affordability and supply of private rented sector tenancies and availability of temporary accommodation.⁴

2. The NFNO model — an overview

The NFNO project started in 2015 with the development of the tri-borough partnership and independent research to identify those at risk of rough sleeping. The evidence-base from the research provided focus to the project and helped to ensure the credibility of the pilot and best use of resources.⁵ The pilot project commenced service delivery work in April 2016. NFNO has been closely supported and directed by the project's Steering Group, comprising senior representatives from each borough, to ensure the project continued to learn and meet its original aims.

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. The NFNO model worked in 'crisis prevention' – preventing homelessness likely to occur within 56 days – and 'emergency prevention' – support for people at immediate risk of homelessness, especially sleeping rough.⁶ 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 NFNO team was initially hosted by LB Tower Hamlets but worked flexibly across locations in the tri-borough area. The City of London took over the hosting of the project from January 2018. The host boroughs provided desk space, payroll, HR and finance support. 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.

¹ 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.

² '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.

³ 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>

⁴ Scanlon, K, et al (2019) The costs of homelessness services in London, London Councils and London School of Economics

⁵ Rice, B, Reed, L (2016) No First Night Out – Help for Single Homeless People: Interim research report and Rice, B (2018) No First Night Out – Help for Single Homeless people: Research to explore prevention opportunities: <http://www.nfno.org.uk/reports-briefings>

⁶ Fitzpatrick, S, Mackie, P, and Wood, J (2019) Homelessness prevention in the UK policy briefing, Cardiff University and Heriot-Watt University

Referrals were taken from a range of agencies; 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 not taken onto the caseload were often provided with basic advice and signposting.

The typology of new rough sleepers (see [appendix \(a\)](#)), an output from the initial NFNO research 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.

Overall, while it was a helpful tool to communicate the target group for the project to the NFNO team and referrers, the evaluation found that it had limitations when applied on a case-by-case basis. Over time the typology was used less in the initial screening; however, the work of the team was still strongly informed by evidence from the research undertaken in 2015 and 2018.

Key characteristics of the NFNO service model were as follows:

- **Personal 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 also described an emphasis on being 'solution focused', 'creative' and 'strengths based'. 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.
- **Conditional:** This was illustrated by the 'client agreement' which was created to make it clear that the client was expected to take steps, with the support of their caseworker, to secure longer-term accommodation. Most clients needed to accept that they would be accessing PRS accommodation and that this would be outside their local area. The work on pathways enabled NFNO to offer support and choice around PRS offers by working with PRS accommodation providers.
- **A rapid, but not an emergency, response:** The project offered a rapid response; however, it operated weekdays only and there was a cut off for new referrals (2pm). The team aimed to respond to referrals within 24 hours.

CASE STUDY: 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 credits NFNO with improving her situation.

'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.'

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.

3. Referrals and targetting

Initially NFNO sought referrals from a broad range of agencies across the tri-borough area. With the introduction of the HRA and the Duty to Refer, housing options teams became the main referral route.

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. Attempts to identify clients through outreach in libraries were not effective and ceased.

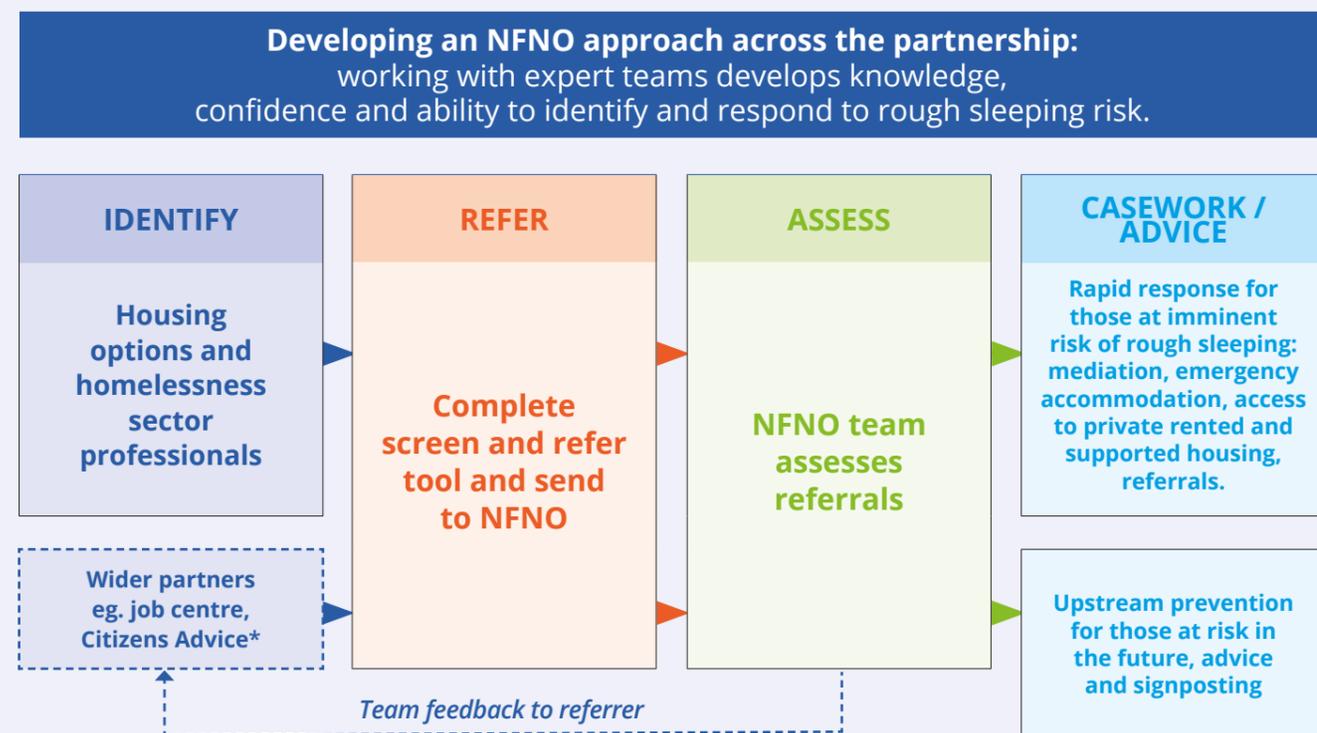
After some initial challenges, referral forms and processes were refined and simplified. The need to categorise clients into a 'cohort group' and to

exclude those with any history of rough sleeping were lifted as the project progressed. The project became focused on people with low to medium support needs; other services were better placed to work with people with multiple and complex needs.

Over the whole period the team took 491 clients onto the NFNO caseload. Most referrals (67%) were from housing options teams; other significant referrers were Jobcentre Plus, Citizens Advice and Providence Row Dellow Centre. Over half (60%, 300) of those accepted onto the caseload were clients from Tower Hamlets (which is to be expected given the higher number of new rough sleepers in Tower Hamlets). From Hackney 177 people were accepted and 14 from the City of London.

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 (a) The NFNO model



* Wider referral routes were a key feature of the project in its first years but less post April 2018 when the Homelessness Reduction Act came into force.

4. Working with the individual local authorities

Each local authority had a unique experience of working with NFNO, outlined in this section.

Tower Hamlets

- Tower Hamlets initiated the NFNO project in 2014, taking a leading role in terms of writing bids to secure funding for the NFNO project and securing senior support for the project internally to enable the borough to host the project in its first year.⁷
- Tower Hamlets Housing Options Single Team (HOST) was the largest referrer to the project. The NFNO service fitted well with the triage approach of the borough's housing options services. Challenges in identifying the right clients to refer were resolved through close working with the NFNO caseworkers. Staff referred to NFNO as an 'extension to the team'.
- The HOST 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.

City of London

- The target group for NFNO (new rough sleepers with a local connection) did not fit closely with the profile of new rough sleepers in the City of London, most of whom do not have a local connection to the area. This was anticipated from the project's outset. The City was very supportive of sub-regional partnership approaches, had extensive expertise in rough sleeping innovation and had previously undertaken work in partnership with LB Tower Hamlets.
- The City had just two clients accepted onto the project in its first year increasing to six in each subsequent year. The decision to open up referrals to people who may have had some minimal prior rough sleeping experience was highly beneficial.
- Reflective of the low numbers of people presenting as homeless to the housing options service in the borough, the NFNO team was small (two officers) and provided a responsive and personalised service. The team was, however, limited in the range of options available for people with a local connection but who were not in priority need.
- The enhanced access to PRS accommodation was the unique selling point of NFNO for the City. The City team reported that clients had been very positive about their experience of NFNO.

⁷ LB Tower Hamlets hosted the NFNO project providing premises, HR, payroll and other services to NFNO during the first year of the project, after which the City of London hosted the project with a larger staff team in place.

CASE STUDY: 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. Joseph was appreciative of this hands-on approach.

Because he was able to stay in his workshop Joseph 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 that sharing facilities is less than ideal for him. 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 was 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.'

Hackney

- The housing options service for single people who do not have a tenancy in Hackney is provided through the Greenhouse, a partnership between the local authority and the voluntary sector. Thames Reach is commissioned by the borough to deliver services from the Greenhouse alongside LB Hackney housing options officers. It was initially harder to identify the role of NFNO in the borough because the Greenhouse service already aimed to find accommodation options for people who were not in priority need and took a holistic support needs-based approach.
- The NFNO team worked effectively with the Greenhouse to build up referrals and identify where NFNO could add value. Co-location with a staff member present at the Greenhouse regularly facilitated this and case numbers increased each year.
- NFNO was able to access temporary accommodation for people who were not in priority need, which was not usually possible, and was also able to provide more support for people with lower support needs. These factors encouraged the team to make appropriate referrals to NFNO.

5. Housing outcomes and the accommodation pathway

In summary, for 491 clients there were:⁸

- **316 emergency housing solutions**, most commonly local authority temporary accommodation
- **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.

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). People who did not have outcomes tended to be clients who disengaged with the project, found their own solution, or preferred not to take up the offer of support to access PRS. In other cases, those without an accommodation outcome were people who the team referred back to housing options teams because NFNO considered they were likely to be in priority need having made an assessment of their needs.

Mediation

Although the team sought to mediate with hosts wherever possible, mediation featured far less in client accommodation journeys than expected. The main reason for this was the precarious housing situations of people when they came into contact with NFNO. For casework clients, mediation was usually only a temporary solution; the living situations were generally not sustainable.

⁸ Clients often had more than one outcome.

Figure (b) **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 of any type of 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%
Clients on caseload	14	177	300	491

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 which were adapted for NFNO. Where it was not possible to 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. NFNO worked hard to minimise the time spent in temporary accommodation. With temporary accommodation a scarce and expensive resource, there was a challenge in mainstreaming this aspect of the project.

PRS access

The *NFNO Interim Evaluation Report (2016)* highlighted the shortage of available accommodation options for caseworkers to refer clients to. The NFNO Steering Group commissioned a consultancy report on housing pathways and then appointed a full-time Pathways Coordinator.

A central aspect of the development of the NFNO accommodation pathway was expanding the PRS offer by working in partnership with specialist PRS access organisations. These organisations broker tenancies for homeless people with landlords. NFNO worked with Crisis part-funding a housing coach to work with NFNO clients and help them secure PRS accommodation. The NFNO service had ongoing contracts with three providers: HOPE Worldwide, The Forward Trust and Causeway Irish Housing Association. NFNO paid providers for each outcome and all the providers offered additional support to clients.

Clients' views on housing 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

CASE STUDY: 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 to stay 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.

'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 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. As 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 bought 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.'

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 reported with accommodation were 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.

6. Rough sleeping in the tri-borough area

There is no accurate way to identify whether people who would have fitted the NFNO criteria have gone on to sleep rough in the area. However, data shows us that the number of new rough sleepers in LB Tower Hamlets has decreased significantly over the course of the project.

In Hackney, the number of new rough sleepers has increased year on year between 2016/17 and 2018/19. Stakeholders felt that NFNO has prevented rough sleeping for some individuals and that the figures may well have been higher without NFNO in the borough.

In the City of London there has also been an increase, driven by the number of people who do not have a local connection to the area.

Analysis of CHAIN data shows that only one person who was taken onto the NFNO caseload over the period of the project was subsequently seen rough sleeping by outreach workers in London.

7. The broader partnership and influencing prevention work

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. Partnership meetings were held about once every six months, bringing together stakeholders from across the partnership. Content included updates on NFNO and presentations from PRS providers and Jobcentre Plus. Feedback from stakeholders was very positive.

'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

NFNO sought to share innovation in prevention work for single people at risk of rough sleeping. For example, NFNO hosted the first London based Homelessness Prevention and Trailblazer meeting and established the resulting working group. The Steering Group and staff team undertook speaking events at high profile events throughout the project. Evidence shows that NFNO was influential in the development of prevention approaches – for example, MHCLG cited the work of NFNO in its prospectus for the national Trailblazer projects.

8. Conclusions

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 context for NFNO is 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.

The key strengths and factors in the success of the project can be grouped under 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 and the poor client experience staying there
- the extremely challenging environment in terms of the housing market and welfare benefits
- balancing 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 services due to procurement legislation and process that local authorities have to work within, which can hamper fast delivery

- as with many pilot projects uncertainties around funding 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.

9. 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 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.

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 people 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.⁹
- Seek a range of 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.

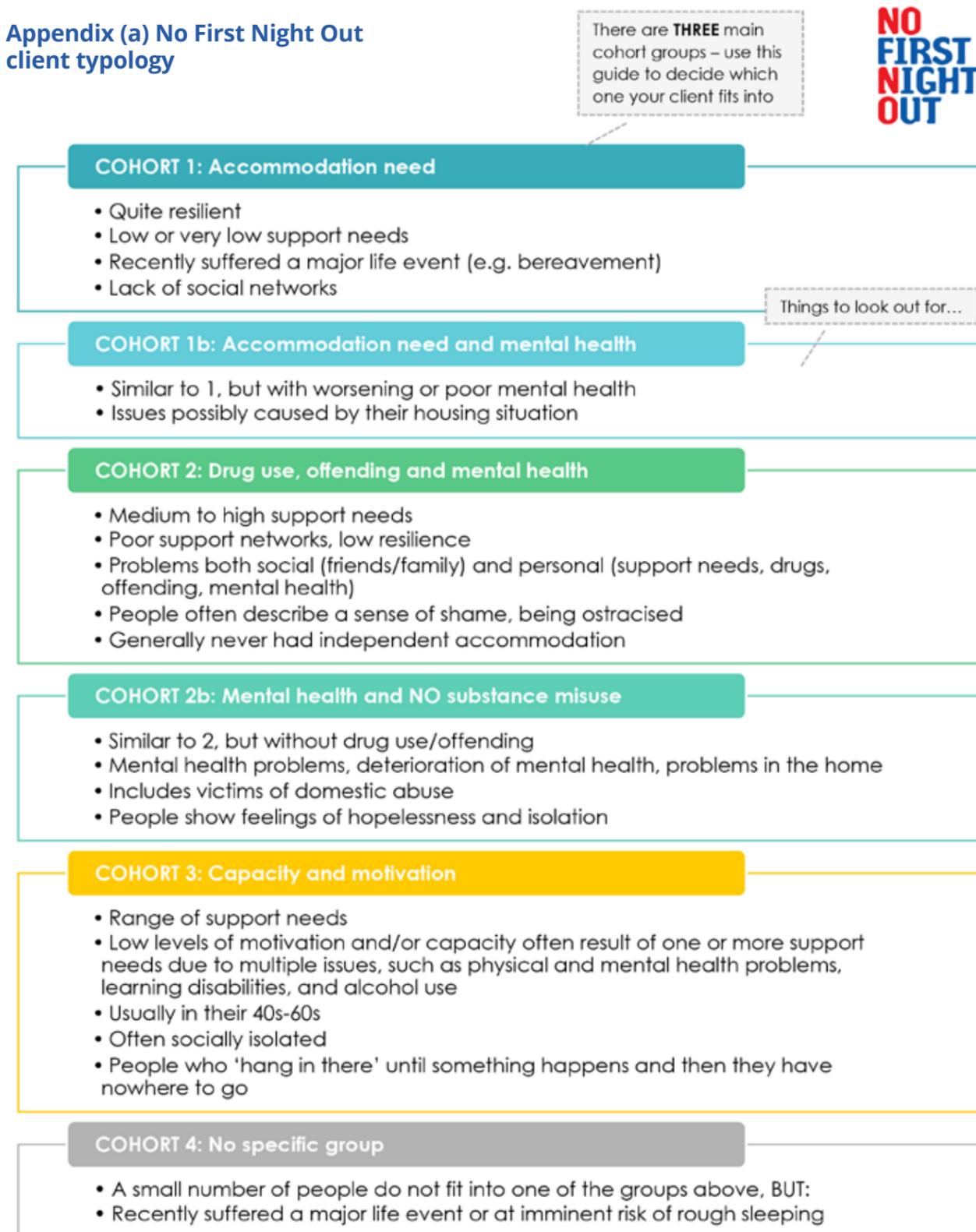
Recommendations for projects working across local authority areas

- 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 a 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 Peoples' 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 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 continuation funding is secured or not, 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) No First Night Out 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.

⁹ NFNO (2019) Pathways to prevent homelessness

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

