



No First Night Out – Help for Single Homeless People

Summary report: end of pilot evaluation

July 2017
Author: Becky Rice

**NO
FIRST
NIGHT
OUT**

St Mungo's
Ending homelessness
Rebuilding lives

Contents

1	Key findings and recommendations	P4
2	Introduction and methodology	P8
3	The NFNO model – an overview	P9
4	Reaching those at risk of rough sleeping	P11
5	Casework and client journeys	P15
6	Client feedback on NFNO casework	P22
7	New rough sleepers in the tri-borough area	P26
	Appendix (a) Typology of new rough sleepers	P27

Acknowledgements

The Steering Group would like to extend thanks to all those who have contributed to the development of the No First Night Out pilot year. An extensive partnership has made this project possible including colleagues working in local authorities, Jobcentres and the voluntary sector across the tri-borough area. We are grateful to the clients and stakeholders who gave feedback for this evaluation report to help us learn and move forward with preventing rough sleeping in years two and three of the project. We are grateful to our funders at the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Greater London Authority (GLA) and also to our colleagues in local authorities who have been flexible with their resources to help meet the needs of the project. We are particularly grateful to Crisis for its support in helping clients secure private rented sector tenancies and learning opportunities; Jobcentre Plus, Crisis, Providence Row and Shelter for supporting the NFNO team with referrals; and St Mungo's for their contribution to NFNO research and evaluation work.

1 Key findings and recommendations

1.1 Key findings

No First Night Out (NFNO) is a tri-borough project operating across the City of London, London Borough of Hackney and London Borough of Tower Hamlets. This report presents the findings from the project's pilot year in 2016/17; the project has now been extended for another two years until 2018/19. Research undertaken as part of the development of the NFNO project and an interim three-month evaluation are also publically available.¹

The main source of project funding was Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Rough Sleeping Funding, which the tri-borough partnership were successful in securing through the 2016 bidding round. Additional funding and in-kind contributions formed a key element of the project. The project has secured funding for the next two years 2017/18 and 2018/19 though the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Homelessness Prevention Programme.²

The overall stated aim of the project is to reduce to zero the number of people found sleeping rough in the three boroughs, who have a local connection to the tri-borough area and qualify for access to the No second Night Out London hubs (i.e. they are new to rough sleeping as denoted on CHAIN).

A model has been developed whereby a wide range of services refer people at risk of rough sleeping to a team of two NFNO caseworkers. The team works with single people who:

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

A typology of at risk groups (see Appendix (a)) is also used to target people at risk of rough sleeping.

The project provides enhanced support to a group of people who are only eligible for basic advice from local authority Housing Options teams and can find it hard to get the right help until their situation deteriorates and they end up rough sleeping.

There were 277 referrals to the project by 14 different organisations during the first year. The main referral organisations included Housing Options advice teams, Jobcentre Plus and advice services such as Citizens Advice. A third of referrals resulted in casework. Those who did not received a casework service often received advice or signposting from NFNO either directly or via the referrer.

¹ 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> and Rice, B (2016) No First Night Out – Help for Single Homeless People Evaluation – interim summary report, St Mungo's: <http://www.mungos.org/documents/7328/7328.pdf>

² For information about the Homelessness Prevention Programme see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-prevention-programme> accessed July 2017

Ninety-eight people were accepted onto the NFNO caseload (54 from Tower Hamlets, 39 from Hackney and three from the City of London, where very few new rough sleepers have a local connection). Seventy-nine people taken onto the caseload had a housing outcome, as at 31st March 2017; 68 people had an emergency outcome (usually emergency bed and breakfast accommodation or mediation), and 47 people had a medium-term outcome (usually private rented sector or supported accommodation). Many had both an emergency and medium term outcomes.

Particular strengths of the project identified in the evaluation

- Simple, flexible referral processes and tools that create minimal burden on referring agencies, and providing feedback on referrals
- The link with Jobcentre Plus and other advice services (Citizens Advice and Shelter) creating an enhanced awareness of and response to potential rough sleeping within these services.
- Very positive feedback from casework clients about the working approach of NFNO, including the longer and more detailed assessment interview, a sense of working in partnership with the caseworker to reach a solution, and effective communication so that clients understand their accommodation options.
- The partnership with Crisis that has not only enabled access to PRS accommodation for 17 people, but has also offered NFNO clients many training opportunities and positive ways to spend time when living in emergency bed and breakfast accommodation. NFNO provided match funding to Crisis, for the enhanced service they offered to the NFNO project.
- The tri-borough approach has enhanced learning from the project by testing approaches in different contexts. The project has developed a high profile through the work of the partnership including hosting of national and local events and attending and speaking at events to inform the future of prevention work. The tri-borough partnership has been able to secure substantial in-kind contributions from the boroughs (for example, senior staff time for management and governance, costs of emergency bed and breakfast accommodation, and hosting of events) and from the partnership (for example, researcher time from St Mungo's).

Challenges and areas for development for the NFNO project

- A key challenge for the project is the context of increasing levels of new rough sleepers in Tower Hamlets and Hackney despite the delivery of the NFNO project.
- Overall the number of new rough sleepers contacted in London fell between 2015/16 and 2016/17, whereas in Hackney and Tower Hamlets there were increases of seven per cent and 14 per cent respectively). Not all of this group have a local connection; work with outreach teams and the CHAIN team identified 82 new rough sleepers who had a local connection to Tower Hamlets and 32 who had a local connection to Hackney. There was a drop in the number of new rough sleepers in the City of London, but no one found rough sleeping in this area was identified as having local connection.³

³ It is important to note that the local connection was unknown for over one-third of people contacted rough sleeping by outreach teams, so these figures potentially underestimate the number of people with a local connection to the area.

- A substantial number of new rough sleepers with a local connection to Hackney and Tower Hamlets had attended Housing Options prior to their first rough sleeping contact. This shows that there is more work to be done with Housing Options teams to identify those who should be referred to the project. It is also suggested that a review of referral criteria should be undertaken.
- The increase in numbers of new rough sleepers in Hackney and Tower Hamlets in 2016/17 appears to contradict the evidence from other data that the project is reaching people at risk of rough sleeping who meet the project criteria. This disparity is partly explained by the fact that many of those who are seen rough sleeping with a local connection had support needs (recorded on CHAIN); those with support needs are more likely to self-disclose prior rough sleeping making them ineligible for the project, and NFNO is more effective at targeting those who have low support needs.
- There is some confusion about the target group for referrals among some referring teams and in particular the way the typology is applied and how rigidly.
- The operating context is extremely challenging in terms of providing pathways into medium-term accommodation in the private rented sector. Factors include:
 - reluctance among landlords to take tenants in receipt of Local Housing Allowance (LHA)
 - the benefits cap which means claimants having even less money available for rent than they would have had previously
 - lack of shared accommodation options for young people with low support needs who are not working
 - problems faced by those making a Universal Credit claim including new claimants not being paid for the first seven days of a claim.
- Emergency bed and breakfast accommodation is vital to preventing rough sleeping for those identified at imminent risk, but it is expensive with variable outcomes and the client experience is often poor.
- Attempts to reach potential clients through a caseworker attending local libraries was not an effective approach to obtaining self-referrals and a new approach to working in partnership with libraries is being explored.

1.2 Recommendations

- New prevention projects should draw on learning from the NFNO model including:
 - using evidence to help target prevention efforts, for example through local research into the profile of new rough sleepers
 - ensuring simple and quick referral processes and a rapid response to referrals
 - ensuring ongoing communication and feedback on referrals
 - a tailored approach to partnership working, including identifying a small number of key organisations locally to invest in intensively (with NFNO this was Housing Options, Jobcentre Plus and Citizens Advice) within the context of a wider partnership of organisations that are all able to refer into the project
 - establishing and clarifying accommodation pathways in advance of taking clients onto caseloads as far as possible
 - linking in with opportunities for clients to increase employability and learn new skills (with NFNO this was achieved through the partnership with Crisis)

- providing a service that engages clients in a partnership to resolve their situation, including regular contact and encouragement from caseworkers where appropriate.
- The NFNO team and Steering Group should review the format and way in which the typology is used to try and clarify further the target group for casework.
- NFNO should seek to capture basic information about advice and signposting interventions provided by the team, so that data reflects more fully the NFNO service offered to those who do not go on to receive a casework intervention.
- The relationships with Jobcentre Plus, Shelter and Citizens Advice should be continued in years two and three of the project. In the case of Jobcentre Plus opportunities to expand work to other branches should be considered.
- The link with Crisis should be continued. Crisis has been a key source of accommodation outcomes in the first year via its PRS access scheme. Client feedback on accommodation accessed via Crisis was very positive. Expanding and developing the range of pathways into the PRS should also be explored.
- Establishing links with landlords and housing providers should be a key ongoing priority for the project. This requires dedicated resources and cannot be effectively undertaken within the caseworker role.
- Steps to alleviate the negative aspects of living in temporary accommodation should be considered, including ensuring referral to activities (including at Crisis Skylight) and providing travel expenses for a limited time.
- Options for alternative emergency bedspaces, outside of the Bed and Breakfast facilities used by local authorities should be explored given the challenges faced by those placed in emergency bed and breakfast accommodation.
- The Steering Group should consider the issue of increased numbers of new rough sleepers in two of the three areas and consider the profile of people identified as new rough sleepers. Areas for consideration are:
 - The fact that many people are not eligible for the project because of self-disclosed prior rough sleeping. It may be that the correct referral routes or a strategy for this group (who have slept rough before but not been contacted by outreach teams) needs to be defined across the partnership to avoid this group sleeping rough again.
 - How well the project reaches new rough sleepers who have support needs.
 - Taking steps to explore examples from the group of people who attended Housing Options, were not referred to the project but then went on to sleep rough.

2 Introduction and methodology

The No First Night Out (NFNO) project began operational work with clients in April 2016; this report covers the pilot year of the project. The project has secured funding for the next two years, 2017/18 and 2018/19, through the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Homelessness Prevention Programme.

This summary report describes the operational model that has been developed, the casework undertaken with clients, and the outcomes of this work, and presents learning from the NFNO experience to inform ongoing innovation in the prevention of rough sleeping nationally.

Evaluation methods included interviews and discussions with NFNO clients and stakeholders, and analysis of monitoring data and rough sleeping data.

3 The NFNO model – an overview

Figure (a) provides an overview of the NFNO model of operation. Over the pilot year NFNO has developed and embedded a model of working to identify and provide casework interventions to those at risk of rough sleeping for the first time. The NFNO approach provides an enhanced response for those who would otherwise only have received limited signposting and advice from housing options services. This includes intensive casework to secure:

- emergency solutions to alleviate the immediate rough sleeping risk
- medium-term solutions, for example in supported housing and the private rented sector, according to clients needs.

People who are identified as at possible risk of rough sleeping in the future but not imminently are provided with advice and signposting by NFNO, via the referrer or directly.

3.1 Target group

The NFNO team works with single people who meet the follow criteria:

- a local connection to the tri-borough area
- eligible for public funds
- at risk of rough sleeping (for the first time).

In addition, the typology of new rough sleepers developed in the initial NFNO research phase is used to target people in groups known to be at risk of rough sleeping. The typology is included in Appendix (a). The NFNO workers provide a casework service to those who fit with the criteria above and fall into one of the typology groups.

3.2 Pathways

Within the first six months of the project it was clear that finding suitable accommodation options for clients was very challenging and some clients were spending long periods in emergency bed and breakfast accommodation.⁴ The Steering Group commissioned a specific report to explore potential pathways for single homeless people in East London. This led to the project advertising for a full-time Pathways Coordinator. The NFNO team does not have capacity for liaising, negotiating and undertaking regular promotional work with landlords and housing providers. A Pathways Coordinator will assist in ensuring a more diverse and rapid pathway for clients, although stakeholders universally pointed out the challenging context in which the project is operating with low supply of PRS housing available at both self-contained and shared LHA rates.

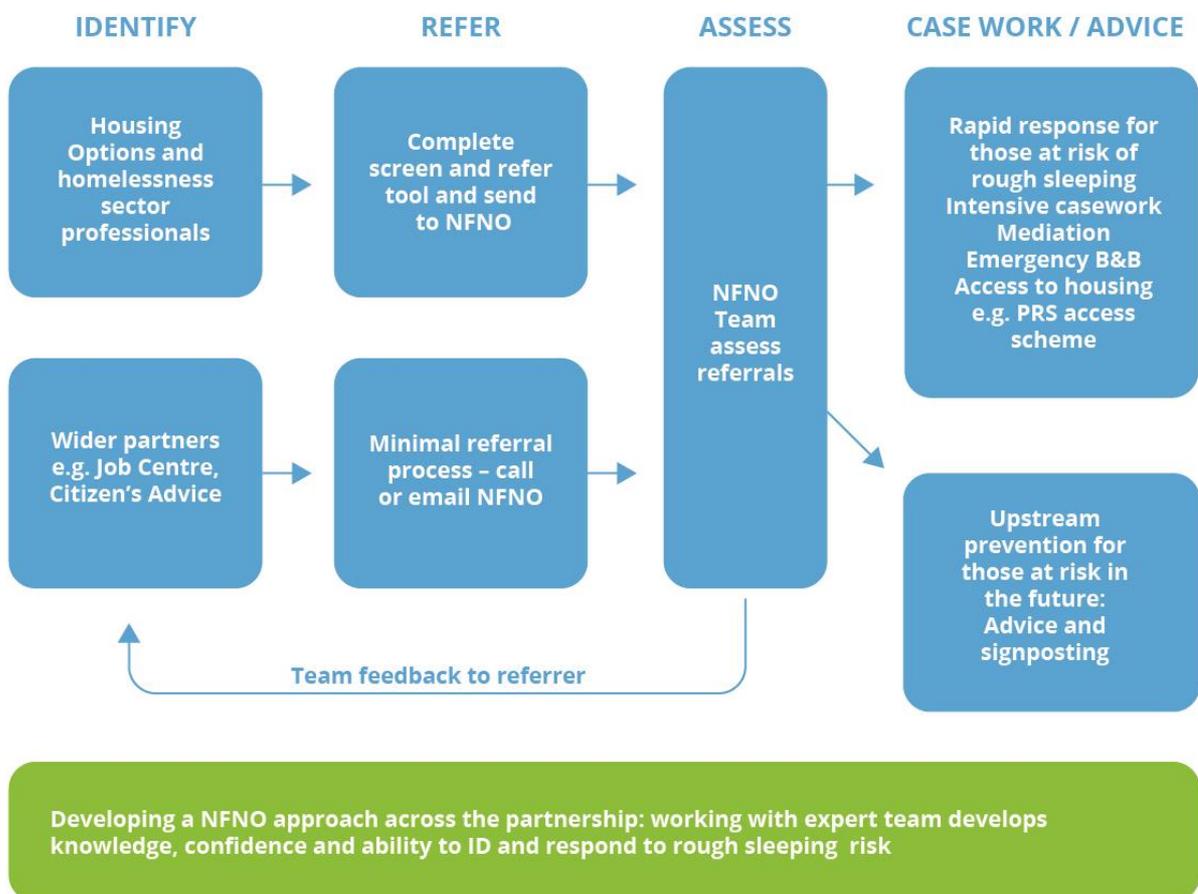
3.3 Tri-borough working

The tri-borough approach has enabled the testing of new approaches and enhanced learning; it has also enabled the project to take on a unique identity separate from the individual boroughs. The project was lead by a

⁴ Rice, B (2016) No First Night Out – Help for Single Homeless People Evaluation: Interim summary report, St Mungo's: <http://www.mungos.org/documents/7328/7328.pdf>

Steering Group comprised of senior staff from each borough and a representative from Homeless Link. This was an intensive working group, which met once every three weeks, discussing a range of issues, and making decisions collaboratively to ensure the project remained on track. Areas that the Steering Group worked on regularly included referral criteria, model of delivery, outreach approach, managing a complex budget, evaluating and promoting the project. Working across boroughs has been challenging: caseworkers have had to interact with several different systems and extensive input has been required from the project Steering Group to make decisions about the project during the first operational year. The Steering Group and wider partnership structure has also assisted in giving the project a high profile; for example, the Steering Group has organised and presented at local and national events on homelessness prevention.

Figure (a) The NFNO operating model



4 Reaching those at risk of rough sleeping

There were 277 referrals to NFNO from 14 different organisations in the first year of the project. The team assessed all referrals either with the referrer or with the client directly. Just over one-third resulted in casework. Where people were referred from non-homelessness organisations (e.g. Jobcentre Plus), but were not suitable for casework interventions, the team provided basic advice to the client or the referrer.

4.1 Referral sources

The main referrers to the project were:

- Tower Hamlets Homeless Options and Support Team (HOST)
- Hackney Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)
- The Greenhouse, which is run by Thames Reach and provides the Housing Options service for single people without tenure in Hackney
- Jobcentre Plus (two branches)
- Providence Row Dellow Centre.

4.2 Ineligible referrals

Over the year 179 referrals did not result in casework. These cases often still received a signposting and advice service. The most common reasons for referrals not resulting in casework were that the client had already slept rough; was not in one of the cohort groups; or did not have a local connection to the tri-borough area. The team provided examples of cases where people did not fall within one of the qualifying cohort groups for example where a clear imminent risk of rough sleeping could not be identified.

In May 2016, the Steering Group clarified that people who had already been rough sleeping – whether recently or historically – are not in the target group for the project. This was to ensure the project focuses on prevention and testing new approaches. Overall, most stakeholders supported this decision and felt it to be a necessary step. Several stakeholders did express concerns, however that this could exclude people who would otherwise be suitable for the service. Some stakeholders felt that this policy needs to be viewed with some flexibility, for example in the case of someone who has slept rough but a long time in the past.

4.3 Referral processes

There is some confusion among referring organisations about who is eligible for the project; this is especially prevalent in the wider homelessness sector. It is less an issue for CAB and Jobcentre Plus, from whom the NFNO team encourage as many referrals as possible for people at risk of rough sleeping, providing signposting where casework is not appropriate. While some teams state that they have a good understanding of the typology groups, others report some confusion.

Referral processes were considered to be clear and straightforward; they are flexible depending on the level of expertise and capacity of the referring organisation. A straightforward 'screen and refer' form is used by the homelessness sector and Housing Options referrers; other non-specialist organisations contact NFNO by email or phone.

The team were praised for a very proactive and rapid response to referrals and for providing feedback on rejected referrals. Some stakeholders, however, commented that NFNO only operates in standard office hours whereas a critical rough sleeping risk can be identified outside these times.

4.4 Referrals from Housing Options and homelessness sector

Working across the tri-borough area has highlighted that different local authority areas require different targeting approaches. For example, referring people to NFNO has fitted in well with the Housing Options approach in Tower Hamlets; the team has submitted a high number of referrals (38) and four in ten (42 per cent) of those resulted in casework. In Hackney, the local authority direct single homeless people without tenure to seek advice at the Greenhouse Day Centre, which is commissioned to provide housing options advice to this group. This has resulted in fewer referrals (15); the same proportion (42 per cent) of referrals resulted in casework. The way in which the Greenhouse is set up makes a referral to NFNO a less natural process to embed than in the HOST service; the service seeks to provide a 'one stop shop' as opposed to an 'assess and refer on' service. In Hackney, the CAB has made as many referrals as the Greenhouse, showing that the outreach approach targeting voluntary sector partners is vital to targeting people in the borough. Many referrals from wider homelessness sector organisations did not result in casework because of people self-disclosing prior rough sleeping.

4.5 Outreach with referral organisations

The outreach aspect of the NFNO team's work involves proactively seeking referrals from a range of agencies across the tri-borough area. This involves meeting with staff to promote the project and also attending services to undertake assessments and provide advice. The aim with these organisations is to encourage referrals for anyone identified as at risk of rough sleeping and the NFNO team then filter these to ascertain whether they are suitable for NFNO casework or given advice and signposting.

The initial research undertaken to inform NFNO highlighted that people who are new to rough sleeping or in 'hidden homeless' groups sometimes spend time in libraries as a place of shelter, comfort and access to the internet. The NFNO team undertook outreach work in two libraries, attending regularly and making themselves available to library users as well as displaying publicity about the service. However, this approach did not prove effective in yielding good quality referrals: people who approached the team were not eligible for the project presenting with a wide range of housing and other issues. While the NFNO team has stopped attending libraries to deliver direct client work, libraries are still considered a potentially important place for staff to be aware of homelessness and risk of rough sleeping. The team is reviewing how best to maintain an active link with libraries and ensure that library staff are aware of NFNO and know how to refer to the team.

Work with advice services, notably Shelter and Citizens Advice has been successful. While regular surgeries are not an efficient use of time in these settings (because the chances of referrals coming in on any particular day are very limited) ongoing liaison with staff ensures a continued flow of referrals and attendance on site, by appointment, as appropriate. In Jobcentre Plus settings, regular attendance and links with a single contact point within a branch have proven effective and this work is to be extended (see case study on partnership working with Jobcentre Plus on page 14).

Overall, NFNO has built confidence and capacity across non-homelessness partner organisations such as Jobcentre Plus, encouraging identification and discussion of the risk factors of rough sleeping. Regular 'surgeries' or appointments on request are considered beneficial by non-homelessness organisations and offer a more seamless and comfortable service to clients.

'It's had a very positive impact as we know if we get service users of certain background, we know what to do... One of the reasons we work with NFNO is early intervention; to help people, as soon as possible – if people are staying with friends or family we look at how secure that is.... We know clients will get a good service. [They get] realistic and appropriate advice from NFNO – [to] sit down with someone who will explain their options.' (Hackney Citizens Advice bureau)

'It makes giving advice to people a lot easier. We can explain the statutory routes and then explain that if these are not an option then NFNO may be a route. That's incredibly valuable... It's a hidden service in that it's not public facing, but it is really valuable. Even professionals can't keep up with how quickly services are changing, so clients just can't navigate these routes alone.' (Shelter)

Case study: Working in partnership with Jobcentre Plus

Initial research for NFNO highlighted that Jobcentre Plus is a common contact point with those at risk of rough sleeping, but that people often do not disclose housing problems to their advisors. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Borough Relationship Manager – 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 was as follows:

1. NFNO team provided awareness training through a series of workshops across the five Jobcentre Plus branches in the tri-borough area.
 2. A member of staff in each branch was identified as a key point of contact for NFNO and a local champion for housing and homelessness issues.
 3. Co-location of the NFNO service was piloted in the Poplar Jobcentre with a NFNO caseworker attending the service each week and seeing people 'on spec' as well as by appointment.
- The initial pilot in Polar was successful and the co-location has been extended to the Dalston branch.

An important context to this work is that work coaches are able to reduce the requirements on claimants to actively seek work – 'the claimant commitment' – for people who are homeless. Easement of the requirement to seek and be available for work is designed to take into account a person's need to find accommodation and recognises that this is essential to their employment journey. The flexibility offered by legislation combined with a NFNO service has enhanced the response of Jobcentre Plus in the tri-borough area to those at risk of rough sleeping.

'Where someone has an issue with the roof over their head, if someone is needing to sort their accommodation out they will invest more time in looking for accommodation than in job search. Easements are in there for if someone falls into being potentially homelessness... We get the easement in place and adjust the claimant commitment – but then who can we signpost to? That expertise is outside the Jobcentre Plus so we have to be integrated and joined up. NFNO provided a way of doing that.' (Partnerships Manager, DWP)

Thirty-three referrals from Jobcentre Plus were made across Poplar and Dalston. Eight people were taken onto the caseload and in the remaining cases feedback was provided to coaches or to clients directly including signposting and advice.

5 Casework and client journeys

5.1 Profile of clients

Women made up just over one-third of clients taken onto the NFNO caseload. The age profile of clients in Tower Hamlets was younger than that of Hackney clients; the most notable feature of the age profile of client was that one in three Tower Hamlets clients were in their 20s. The ethnic profile of casework clients was diverse. In Tower Hamlets the most common ethnic group was White or White or White British, followed by Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi. In Hackney the most common ethnic groups were Black and Black British, followed by White and White British and European – other groups, which included, for example, people with Turkish, Kurdish and Iranian nationalities (one person in with each of these nationalities).

The NFNO team captured information about the recent or current tenure of those referred to the project. The most common 'recent tenure' of people accepted onto the NFNO caseload was staying with family and friends. The next most common housing situation was being a private rented sector tenant.

5.2 Typology cohort

More than two-thirds (69 per cent) of the pilot year caseload was assessed as fitting into typology cohort one. By comparison, in the original research into new rough sleepers, one-quarter fitted into this cohort. In research with stakeholders, several reasons were identified for the casework client profile being weighted in favour of cohort one:

- People with support needs, for example around offending and drug use, which feature in cohort two, have often slept rough before they are contacted sleeping rough, so this excludes them from casework.
- Housing Options and advice services (Citizens Advice and Shelter) are among the referral routes: people who seek advice from these organisations may be more motivated and resilient than people in cohorts two and three who face barriers to accessing advice.
- People who are more vulnerable (for example older people with health needs who are more likely to fit into cohort three) are more likely to be referred to Housing Options to make an application as homelessness under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and therefore will not receive casework from the NFNO team.⁵
- There are concerns about the available pathway and housing options for the group with higher support needs, especially offenders. This acts as a barrier preventing the team from proactively seeking additional referrals for this group.

5.3 Housing outcomes

Figure (b) summarises the main housing outcomes achieved for clients through the NFNO project. Forty-seven people were supported to find medium-term housing through the project; 11 people were supported straight into a medium-term options and 37 people had an interim emergency

⁵ See Part VII of the Housing Act 1996: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/part/VII> (accessed July 2017)

housing solution, most commonly emergency bed and breakfast accommodation but sometimes mediation with their host (for example, negotiating that someone can stay a little longer with friends or family to avert the immediate risk of rough sleeping).

The housing outcomes shown in figure (b) do not reflect the complexity and intensity of work done to explore clients' housing options and support them to access benefits and services. For example, in many cases multiple move-on options are explored simultaneously because waiting times for private rented sector accommodation are variable. The new client monitoring system being developed may help with recording casework milestones to illustrate the work undertaken with clients without excessive data entry burden on caseworkers.

Figure (b) Summary of housing milestones for casework clients (on 31st March 2017)



5.4 Key elements of the client journey

Assessment

NFNO caseworkers undertook in-depth assessments of people who were initially thought to be suitable for a casework service on the basis of information provided by the referrer and sometimes an initial call with the client. Assessment interviews took up to two hours and provided an

opportunity for a flexible, in-depth exploration of the client's situation. Feedback from clients in Chapter (6) highlights that this created a good foundation for engagement and was viewed very positively by clients interviewed.

The client agreement

The project has put in place a written client agreement that must be signed by clients receiving a casework service. It specifies, for example, that emergency bed and breakfast accommodation is only available for a short period, ideally three weeks or less; that clients must proactively search for accommodation as directed; and that input from the team is conditional on compliance with appointments, progressing benefits claims etc. The team recognises the challenging situation that clients are in and is proactive in encouraging clients to engage fully. The aim is to work in partnership with clients:

'Before, it was like I'd been given a book in a foreign language and I was expected to know exactly what to do with it. I didn't want to turn up to places and make an idiot of myself because I didn't know what to do. The caseworker just really broke it down for me: "This is what I can do, and this is what you need to do." It's just having that partner; that other person you can go to and talk to... He just went above and beyond.' (Client)

Accommodation pathways

The team drew on a range of accommodation options to prevent rough sleeping and move people towards a suitable housing outcome. Often the team would explore multiple options for accommodation, for example referring to both Crisis and local authority private rented sector schemes, as well as encouraging the client to undertake their own property searches. This was essential to ensure as quick an outcome as possible, because waiting times for private rented sector access schemes vary depending on procurement of new properties.

In the initial phases of the project caseworkers were testing what accommodation options were available for people; for some clients there was such a paucity of suitable options that they had extended stays in emergency bed and breakfast accommodation (in excess of eight weeks). This particularly applied to unemployed people, under 35, with no support needs, subject to the shared accommodation LHA rate. In some cases young people with relatively low support needs were diverted into the supported housing pathways because this was the only option available to them.

Accessibility and affordability, especially in light of the benefits cap for single people, are issues that are to a large extent outside the control of the NFNO project. It is uncertain to what extent the outcomes for certain clients in the private rented sector are scalable in the current housing context.

'The concept is brilliant but they don't have options for move on... There are limited housing options. We can't necessarily offer them what they want or need. That's the bigger picture of the housing crisis in London. It's hard for people who want private rented sector and are quite independent as [...] people are not accepted when they are on benefits... [Over time this problem has] got worse as there are more of this type of people...' (Stakeholder, Greenhouse)

Emergency bed and breakfast accommodation

The team relied heavily on placements in emergency bed and breakfast accommodation as an interim prevention measure for clients at immediate risk of rough sleeping; 45 clients were placed in emergency bed and breakfast services during the first year of NFNO. This was provided directly by the NFNO project (as opposed to the local authorities). It is a costly option with variable outcomes and as such is not favoured by NFNO staff and Steering Group, but it is often the only option to prevent rough sleeping, particularly for people referred from Housing Options who have presented at a crisis point where they could face sleeping rough that night.

The mean average stay in emergency temporary accommodation was 56 days, equivalent to £1,484. Clients were also required to pay a service charge from their benefits **equivalent to nearly 30% of their main benefit (for example their JSA payment) in many cases**. In at least 15 cases the client had debts outstanding at the end of their stay in emergency bed and breakfast accommodation. The target maximum length of stay for people in emergency accommodation is three weeks. While this is helpful in terms of emphasising to clients that they need to seek accommodation and work with NFNO proactively, it is often unrealistic to secure a move-on solution in this time. The waiting times for private rented sector schemes and supported housing generally exceed three weeks.

Several stakeholders commented that travel costs for clients in emergency accommodation outside the borough would be beneficial to enable people to attend appointments and take up training opportunities at Crisis Skylight.

Mediation

The team sought to mediate with clients' host where possible, rather than placing someone in emergency accommodation. For casework clients, mediation was a temporary solution, not a final outcome; such living situations were generally not sustainable. One of the clients interviewed for the evaluation felt that it was the initial mediation with his host by the NFNO team that had prevented him from spending a night rough sleeping.

Private rented sector access

The main source of medium-term accommodation was in the private rented sector. Seventeen people were placed via the Crisis scheme, 12 by local authority schemes, and four through other schemes. For more information, see case study: working in partnership with Crisis on page 21.

Supported accommodation

Ten people went into the supported housing or a hostel via a local authority's pathway, and a further three went into self-referral hostels.

Other medium-term accommodation

People with support needs were put forward for supported housing pathways in their respective boroughs; there would generally be a few weeks' wait for a place to become available but this varied. Similarly, younger people who applied to self-referral hostels with the support of the team (primarily the YMCA in Romford, and on occasion another YMCA that started taking self-referrals); the wait for these **tended to be four to ten weeks**. **Some self-referral** hostels were reluctant to take clients making new universal credit claims because of the lack of payment in the first week of a claim (meaning that the

client starts their tenancy with a deficit) and the direct payment of the housing component to the claimant which creates a risk of further arrears.

Those who had only had emergency solutions

Thirty-one people had an emergency housing outcome without a later medium-term outcome. More than one-quarter (eight) of these clients were referred to the project within the last eight weeks of 2016/17, so the final outcome of the case is not yet known. Analysis of comments from the monitoring spreadsheets shows that other outcomes of these cases include: five people whose cases have been referred to the HOST team for consideration under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996; four people who ceased to engage with NFNO, were not contactable or were asked to leave temporary accommodation; and three people who decided to find their own solution (for example, moving in with a family member or where it became evident that the client could afford to save for a deposit).

Case study: working in partnership with Crisis for private rented sector access

The link with Crisis is considered to be one of the strengths of the NFNO project. As a member of the wider NFNO partnership, Crisis has been flexible and provided a high-quality service to the NFNO team and clients, supporting innovation in the prevention of rough sleeping.

It is generally very difficult to find landlords or letting agencies willing to accept tenants on LHA, even if they are working. The expert private rented sector access team at Crisis work with landlords and are able to provide a deposit or bond arrangement in lieu of a deposit, making the private rented sector accessible and affordable. The team also provide pre-tenancy training to clients to help ensure that their tenancies are sustainable and to give landlords confidence in prospective tenants.

It was beneficial that this link to private rented sector access was established in the early days of the project so that the team had a clear housing option for certain clients. The scheme is open to people over 35 years who are in receipt of housing benefit or people under 35 who are working.

Crisis offered special arrangements for private rented sector access to NFNO clients, giving priority to people referred from NFNO despite a substantial waiting list. This reflects the importance given to testing new prevention approaches at Crisis.

Clients referred to the Crisis scheme are provided with pre-tenancy support and are able to access other services at Crisis Skylight in Tower Hamlets.

'After NFNO referral the client attends an 11am session with the Skylight Reception Team. [They are] given a tour and fill in a contact form. We quickly follow-up with a one-to-one session with a housing coach. Clients go through housing induction with the coach, where they learn about the reality of the London housing market through real-life case studies – a reality check on affordability and what kinds of properties are likely to be available to them. [There are] sessions on budgeting and property searches as well as tenants' rights and responsibilities.' (Crisis)

In the first year of NFNO, 17 clients secured tenancies through Crisis.

6 Client feedback on NFNO casework

Case study interviews were conducted with six clients during the pilot year. All those interviewed were casework clients who had housing outcomes from the project. Two interviewees also took part in follow-up interviews. It should be noted that the people interviewed were more likely to have had a positive experience of the project and be more settled than clients overall because they had had housing outcomes; had the same phone number as when they were in contact with NFNO; and were willing to speak with a researcher.

6.1 Routes to homelessness and risk of rough sleeping

The case studies highlight a wide range of factors that have led clients to situations where they are at imminent risk of rough sleeping. Relationship breakdown, often in combination with one or more other factors including remittance commitments, job loss and recent release from prison, is a common trigger. Some clients had experienced mental and/or physical health problems leading to irregular employment, rent arrears and eviction.

All the clients interviewed felt retrospectively that they had been at imminent risk of rough sleeping at the time of their referral to NFNO. In one case a client was sleeping at work and believed he could have been caught and dismissed at any time. Many others had reached a point where sofa-surfing with family and friends was becoming an untenable option with relationships strained to a point where clients felt rough sleeping might well be their only option.

"I felt like an inconvenience. Someone can only help for so long and then you outstay your welcome." (Client interviewee, female, early 30s)

"I think I probably would have [slept rough]; there was no-one else to turn to." (Client interviewee, male, early 40s)

6.2 Experience of NFNO

- Some clients approached their referral to NFNO with low expectations because of their previous disappointment at not qualifying for statutory assistance.
- Interviewees were overwhelmingly positive about their NFNO assessment. Almost all commented on how it was different to their previous experiences of assessment, feeling that the session gave them an opportunity to explain their situation in a detailed and unrushed way.
- They highlighted leaving the assessment with a realistic understanding of the possible outcomes and a clear sense of what Caseworkers' next steps would be and what the expectations on them were.
- Clients spoke very positively about how working in partnership with their caseworker had helped them navigate a system by which they had been overwhelmed and intimidated.

6.3 Outcomes

- Several interviewees had spent extended time in temporary accommodation. All of these clients accepted this option as the only one available to them at the time, but most found it an uncomfortable experience, particularly the women. People felt intimidated by other residents engaging in alcohol and drug abuse.
- Most of those interviewed have been housed via private rented sector access schemes or are in supported accommodation.
- Clients felt a strong sense of gratitude when a housing solution was found for them. Most felt that their particular needs have been met by their housing outcome – for example, accommodation being suitable for their children to visit or being located close to family, friends or work.
- Clients were keen to focus on the positive aspects of their accommodation, but when pushed they identified issues such as having experienced minor difficulties with other tenants in shared accommodation, cramped living conditions, and in one case not having any of the home contents to create a comfortable environment for children to visit.
- Some clients reported problems receiving benefits payments following their move. Follow-up interviews with two clients several months after moving in suggested issues with benefits payments were resolved within weeks.
- Most of these clients viewed their current accommodation as a stepping stone to a future tenancy that they hoped to secure independently.

“Now I have a place of my own I can have my kids not feeling like we're in the way at my friend's or my mum's.” (Client interviewee, male, mid 30s)

“Next on my list is to get back into gainful employment, get some bigger accommodation in this area eventually. I really like it here” (Client interviewee, male, early 40s)

6.4 Impacts

- Clients were very positive about the impact of NFNO's interventions.
- The majority of clients shared a sense that now they were not at imminent risk of rough sleeping they were in a much better position from which to address other issues in their lives. Two clients spoke about re-establishing regular contact with their children as a result of being housed, and another of receiving more positive feedback from job applications.
- All those who had experienced mental and physical health problems at the time of their referral to NFNO felt that their conditions had improved as a result of being housed.
- In a limited number of cases, clients may not have disclosed drug use, alcohol dependency and mental health conditions during the NFNO assessment process, and are not receiving professional help with these issues.

- Clients who had received employment advice and training as a result of their referral to Crisis from NFNO were very positive about the impact of this on their employment prospects.

"Now everything is better; I have somewhere to live and a job, and I feel a lot better too." (Client interviewee, female, early 20s)

"I was feeling shame for myself that I didn't have no future... I buy my electricity - things I didn't know how to do - to have some more responsibility and (see that) I can manage that; I can look after myself. All this because (those) guys gave me a chance." (Client interviewee, male, late 50s)

6.5 Without NFNO's intervention

- All clients interviewed felt that rough sleeping was a strong possibility without NFNO's intervention and recognised the potentially serious consequences of this for their mental and physical health, relationships with family and friends and employment prospects.
- Several clients had a sense that NFNO's intervention had stopped their life from spiraling out of control because they were affected by the risk of rough sleeping in combination with multiple other problems such as unemployment, mental health issues and relationship breakdown.
- There was a clear sense among clients that the NFNO service has given them a platform of stability from which to turn their lives around.

"It made me realise how close we all are to it all going wrong. I just don't know where I'd be if people like (the caseworker) hadn't helped me." (Client interviewee, male, early 40s)

"I think it [sleeping rough] would have traumatised me. I would have taken a different route in life. I wouldn't be the same person as I am now." (Client interviewee, female, early 20s)

Client case study: Jay

Jay is in his mid-30s and was referred to NFNO by Jobcentre Plus in Hackney. Following his release from prison around two years ago, Jay was placed in hostel accommodation but had to leave because of rent arrears. He spent a year sofa-surfing but this was precarious and he considered it likely that he would end up on the streets. *'[If I had not had help] I think I would still be nowhere; wearing the same clothes for a week; waking up on someone else's sofa and having to leave straightaway because I've overstayed my welcome.'*

After his referral to NFNO, he was able to attend an assessment with a caseworker right away, on site at the Jobcentre. Jay gave positive feedback on the assessment process reporting that the discussion was unrushed and explored his situation in-depth before methodically reviewing the possible options open to him.

Although attempts to find an emergency bed and breakfast or hostel place for Jay were unsuccessful, the caseworker kept him informed of progress and contacted him within ten days with viewings for three private rented sector properties. *'I got a call from him with these three options. I was really impressed that he'd been chasing all those options for me.'* Jay accepted an ensuite room in shared accommodation in outer London and moved in within a week. He was happy with the size and quality of the room.

Registering with Crisis enabled Jay to use his professional experience in catering to undertake a work programme in the Crisis Café, as well as a work placement at a nearby restaurant. At the time of his first interview with the evaluator, Jay was facing a number of challenges; he was struggling with drug and alcohol use and his mental health but felt reluctant to seek help. He had also had issues with his benefits claim. He saw finding work as key to dealing with these issues: *'I know there is an underlying problem, but I think getting into work and sorting out the housing is helping me to get back to where I need to be. The Crisis work placement has been a huge boost for me mentally. It's all on me now.'*

At the time of his follow-up interview, Jay had settled into the area and reported feeling well physically and mentally, and spending a lot of time exercising. *'I'm in a much better place than I was last year. I'd say I'm feeling really positive.'* He has been for several interviews in recent weeks and feels he is getting closer to finding a job. *'I'm getting there. I have felt disheartened, but I'll keep on going.'* The issues he experienced in relation to his universal credit payments when he first moved into his accommodation have now been resolved, and he says he is just about making ends meet financially.

He remains very positive about the service he received from NFNO. *'Still to this day I'm so grateful. It's given me some kind of stability; a foundation to build from.'*

7 New rough sleepers in the tri-borough area

Analysis of data from the NFNO team's monitoring system, CHAIN, Housing Options and outreach services was undertaken to explore numbers of new rough sleepers in the tri-borough area with a local connection to one of the three boroughs. Key findings from this analysis are summarised below:

- Levels of new rough sleeping are high in Tower Hamlets and Hackney. There has been an increase in new rough sleepers contacted in 2016/17 compared to 2015/16. During the same period there has been a decrease in London overall.
- It was possible to identify 82 new rough sleepers in 2016/17 who had a local connection to Tower Hamlets and 32 who had a local connection to Hackney.
- A search on the database used by the Housing Options services for single people in the boroughs found that a significant minority of those with a local connection to Hackney had attended Housing Options prior to sleeping rough and a majority of those with a local connection to Tower Hamlets had contacted Housing Options before sleeping rough. There was a wide divergence in terms of how recently people had contacted Housing Options at the point of their first rough sleeping contact with outreach teams.
- Profiling new rough sleepers with a local connection to the boroughs, highlights that people still sleeping rough for the first time tend to have support needs and are likely to fit into cohorts two and three of the typology of new rough sleepers.
- The majority of those assessed had mental health support needs and the prevalence of alcohol and drug support needs was very high, especially drug support needs in Tower Hamlets.
- The profile of new rough sleepers in Tower Hamlets was younger than in Hackney and included high numbers of White British and Bangladeshi people. In Hackney the most common ethnic groups were White British and Black and Black British.
- A small number of people who were referred to the project, but not taken onto the caseload, were subsequently seen rough sleeping by outreach workers (source: CHAIN analysis provided for the project). In most cases it was clear that the individual did not fit the criteria for the project. This analysis did not reveal a flow of NFNO referrals to the streets. This analysis will be repeated in the final year evaluation in 2018/19 when there will be a longer observation window.

Appendix (a) Typology of new rough sleepers

This typology of new rough sleepers in Tower Hamlets and Hackney is an extract from the NFNO research project conducted in 2015. It is used to target people at risk of rough sleeping for the NFNO project.⁶

Description	No. and % of people*	Key features of group
Cohort 1: Primary need is for accommodation	8 (24%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium to high levels of resilience • Low or very low support needs • Low or reduced social networks • Some common features from the research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ several from refugee background ◦ often one off/unusual life event as major contributor to homelessness (e.g. bereavement)
Cohort 1b: Primary need is for accommodation with complicating factor/s arising partly due to housing situation	3 (9%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar profile to 1 but with notably deteriorating and or/poor mental health
Cohort 2: Homelessness is linked to support needs including drug use, offending, often combined with mental health	8 (24%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium to high support needs • Medium to low support networks • Low levels of resilience • Problematic drug use and offending prevalent in this group • Problems both socially (friends and family) and personally (support needs, drugs, offending, mental health) • Some common features from the research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ nearly always in 20s and 30s ◦ most are Bangladeshi men, others spread across ethnic groups ◦ generally never had independent accommodation – family home/prison/hidden homeless ◦ people often described sense of shame, being ostracised
Cohort 2b: Homelessness is linked to mental health and family problems (but not substance misuse)	2 (6%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same profile as 2 but without drug use • Mental health problems, deterioration of mental health and problems in the home • Some common features from the research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ included victims of domestic abuse ◦ people showed feelings of hopelessness and isolation
Cohort 3: Capacity and motivational issues are key, often more isolated and older age groups	10 (29%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People in 40s/ 50s/ 60s • Range of support needs • Low levels of motivation and/or capacity due to a range of issues • Some common features from the research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ All were White British or Irish or Black Caribbean in the research ◦ Often had transient/insecure backgrounds, people who just about 'hang in there' until something happens and they then have nowhere to go
Cohort 4:	3 (9%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small number of people who did not fit into the groups above

* Refers to the number and % of the 34 people interviewed in initial research.

⁶ 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 already be rough sleeping.