

Westminster Homelessness Partnership: strategy 2021 – 2024

1 Introduction

This strategy describes how Westminster Homelessness Partnership (WHP) organisations will work together to progress our work to end rough sleeping in Westminster, in 2021/22 and beyond. To create this strategy, the core members of the WHP have identified key areas where only by working in partnership can we unlock blockages to ensuring that rough sleeping is tackled in an effective, compassionate and sustainable way.

We have five broad strategic priorities around the themes of:

- evidence
- health and equity
- influence
- service delivery
- supporting our partnership to thrive.

For each we have developed:

- specific objectives for 2021/22 as we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic
- longer-term priority areas for 2022/23 and 2023/24 as we shift to the challenges and opportunities of the new landscape

2 Context

The WHP, created in 2019, is the legacy of the Westminster Homeless Action Together partnership (2017 – 2019), and before that, a campaign led by St Mungo's in 2016, which gave rise to a much-needed partnership of commissioned and non-commissioned agencies.¹

The WHP consisted of key leaders in larger organisations in direct contact with people experiencing rough sleeping; Connection at St Martins, St Mungo's, The Passage, West London Mission, Westminster City Council (WCC). This core membership group was supported by Groundswell, Great Chapel Street and Housing Justice.²

The priority for the group was to increase joint working at a senior and strategic level and develop a more systematic and less siloed approach across services. Terms of Reference for the group were established and a regular programme of meetings and work began. A strong sense of shared endeavour and a willingness to work together, despite the challenges, was developed.

During 2020/21, the WHP's work shifted to provide a regular, often weekly, touch point for leaders discussing the key issues affecting people rough sleeping during the Covid-19 pandemic. This included the use of emergency accommodation as part of Everyone In, policing during the Covid-19 lockdown period, public health responses and cold weather provision.³ This was a rapid period of change and innovation in response to rough sleeping, ranging from Everybody In, the cessation of open-access day services and an increasingly public-health-focused approach.

The year 2020/21 has changed for the better the work we are doing and relationships across organisations; we can now have more ambitious plans than those previously developed in 2019 and early 2020. This strategy reflects a refresh and refocus. Already the WHP is extending its membership to include larger supported housing providers, SHP and Look Ahead, and Turning Point.

¹ Report from the Week of Action, 2016: <https://whpartnership.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/WHATExecutiveSummary-Oct2016.pdf>

² As service providers in Westminster at the time, Mayday Trust also inputted into the development of the WHP.

³ The 'Everyone In' initiative during the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic was a Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) directive that put the onus on local authorities to provide emergency, self-contained accommodation for anyone who would otherwise be rough sleeping.

3 Vision, mission and values

The current vision, mission and values for the WHP were developed in November 2019.

Vision

Working together to end rough sleeping in Westminster

Mission

The WHP is a vehicle for partnership and systems change in Westminster. By working together, we will help more people, more effectively, more sustainably.

The WHP identifies barriers to ending rough sleeping and acts collaboratively to address them, sometimes through changing our services or developing new provision, sometimes through influencing work. We will develop our partnership to include those with experience of rough sleeping, those working directly with people rough sleeping and the many organisations that have a role in ending rough sleeping in Westminster.

Values

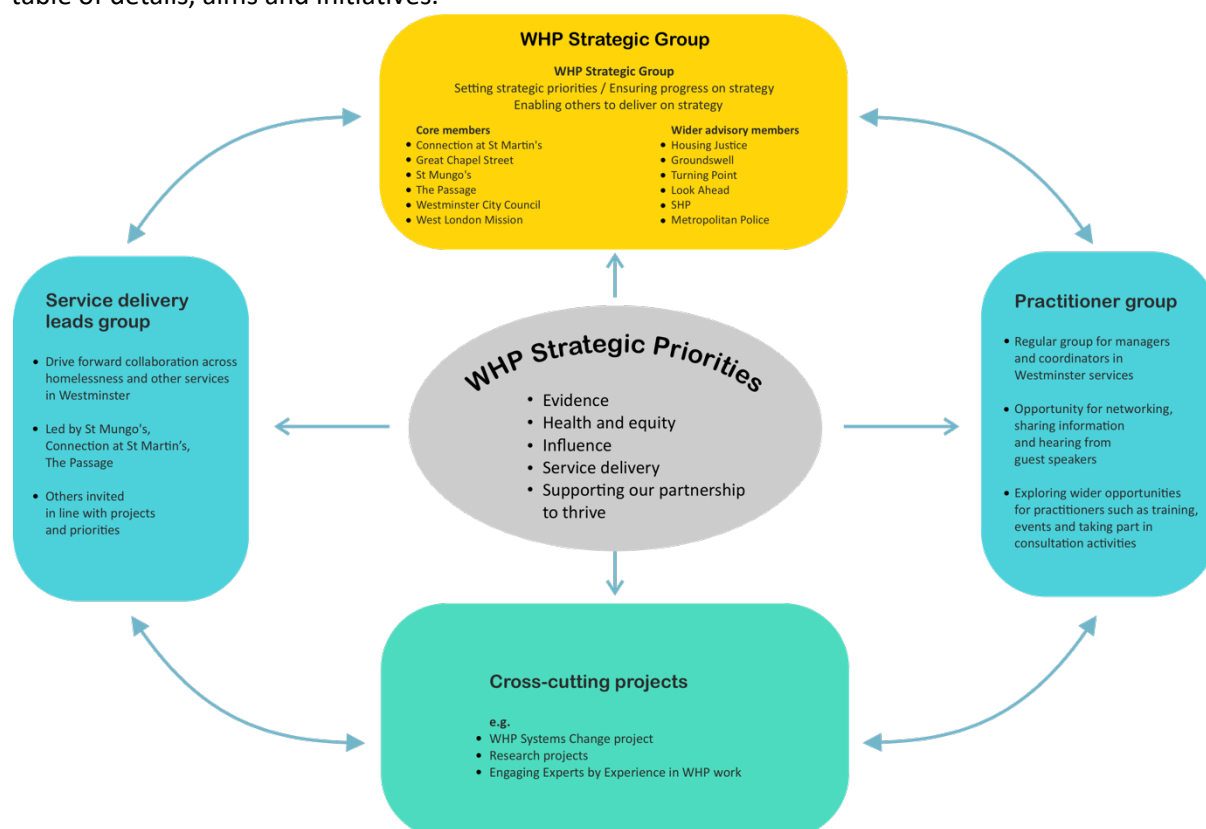
- We achieve more by working in partnership than in isolation.
- We are honest and straightforward in all our dealings.
- We are innovative and proactive.
- We are responsive to emerging needs.
- We are open minded and are always looking to learn from others.
- We are passionate and determined in our belief that together we can end rough sleeping.

4 Our strategic objectives for 2021/22 – 2023/24

The Strategic Group has identified the following priority objectives for the period April 2021 to March 2024.

1. We will take a **data driven and evidence-informed approach** to reducing and ending rough sleeping in Westminster; data and evidence will drive our learning, the way we work together, and our external messages.
2. We will build on the progress of our partnership, and learning during Covid-19 in 2020/21 to **drive access and equity in healthcare** for people who have experienced rough sleeping.
3. We will **develop our influencing approach** at different levels to bring about systems change.
4. We will **create stronger links between our service delivery leads** increasing joint working on the ground.
5. We will **create a structure that supports the rapid expansion and deepening of partnership work**, and increases the sustainability, effectiveness and reputation of the WHP.

The diagram below provides a basic model of the way the WHP works as context to the following table of details, aims and initiatives.



5 The WHP's strategic objectives and key initiatives for 2021/22

The following tables provide information about the specific aims and key initiatives of the WHP for 2021/22 against each of our strategic objectives. It is intended to give an overview of agreed projects and aims; a more detailed workplan will also be developed with additional detail on each initiative. These tables are not exhaustive; the group will also work on priorities as they emerge and the need to ensure a clear focus.

Strategic objective one	Specific aim	Initiatives for 2021/22
We will take a data driven and evidence-based approach to reducing and ending rough sleeping in Westminster; evidence and data will drive the way we work together and our external messages.	Better understand the issues of flow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Service Delivery Leads Group will explore ways to ensure a joined-up response and messaging to those who are new to the streets, including a written protocol and/or commitments. The WHP will support efforts to increase understanding of flow through engagement in the proposed MHCLG flow research.
	Capitalise on the relatively low numbers of people currently sleeping rough in Westminster to sustain this progress as the context changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Test new approaches to multi-agency work with people currently sleeping rough in Westminster. Utilise street count intelligence to test a focused 'by name approach' to ensure a targeted response to individuals and a systematic approach to identifying and escalating blockages to leaders in homelessness, adult social care, substance misuse, health and other services.
	Influence the scope of Everyone In locally, pan-London and nationally, highlighting risks and opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use data to describe the likely and real time impact of approaches to reductions in hotel spaces on offer, and share this information.
	Develop our data quality and data use through shared key statistics and forecasting approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek opportunities to influence the structure and analysis of CHAIN data. Create key statistics report which provides headlines across organisations for the Strategic Group. Explore different options for modelling and predicting future rough sleeping trends and responding to these including the possibility of additional external analytical input.
	Ensure complete, effective and high-quality mechanisms for sharing data across organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake targeted work to ensure the CHAIN/Inform link up is fully implemented and maintained on an ongoing basis. Consider ways in which specialist health services could access and use data from homelessness services.
	Promote and model a sophisticated approach to foreign nationals ensuring that people receive the best possible service offers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work together to ensure access to immigration advice and support including exploring opportunities to submit bids together or in consultation across the WHP for future immigration support funding. Create shared ways of describing this group – challenging assumptions that people have No Recourse to Public Funds. Capture evidence of the work of the Roma mediators project in Westminster through a piece of WHP research, to promote better understanding and practice with this group.

Strategic objective two	Specific aim	Actions for 2021/22
We will build on the progress of our partnership, and learning during Covid-19 in 2020/21, to drive access and equity in healthcare and social care for people who have experienced rough sleeping.	Improve support for those with alcohol support needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will rapidly capture evidence from partner organisations about the gaps in provision of effective alcohol support and treatment and what we feel is needed. • The service leads group will review this and create a plan of actions they can take in this area from a service-delivery and influencing perspective – for example, providing evidence to the Health and Wellbeing Board and making recommendations for commissioning. • The Strategic Group will review this information and create a plan of dissemination (to Public Health and service providers).
	Innovate in our response to those with the most complex needs and promote systems change in this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the WHP Systems Change project, led by CSTM, reporting to WHP. • Working together on improving the response to our service users from adult social care (ASC), e.g. ASC thresholds for care, how care packages are applied in supported accommodation environments, and responses to safeguarding.
	Review data about the uptake of vaccinations and opportunities to capitalise on engagement with vaccination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pull together data from different sources to understand the situation. • Identify reasons for the success of vaccination of the homeless population in Westminster and how this can be built upon with continued efforts to increase vaccination rates.
	Create a new link with Pathway and Faculty for Homeless and Inclusion Health to explore opportunities for joint work and research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an initial link with the faculty explaining the WHP to them.

Strategic objective three	Specific aim	Actions for 2021/22
We will develop our influencing approach at different levels to bring about systems change.	Provide targeted input on WCC strategy and commissioning plans on rough sleeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide a sounding board and expert group for new ideas or changes that WCC are exploring in the commissioning of services for people experiencing rough sleeping.
	Create mechanisms for sharing information about influencing opportunities and plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy leads and Hidden Network will identify the best way to share relevant communications plans across organisations and propose to the WHP.
	Influence the narrative on rough sleeping in Westminster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work with the Hidden Network to enhance the education and awareness aspects of the Hidden Network as a priority over alternative giving. • Create a clear link between the Hidden Network and the WHP to prevent duplication and help to ensure the Hidden Network has a clear direction.
	Begin to build the WHP influence beyond Westminster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify areas where we want to promote the work of the WHP more widely through sharing our experience and learning.

Strategic objective four	Specific aim	Actions for 2021/22
We will create stronger links between our service delivery leads and teams increasing joint working on the ground.	Regular service delivery leads meetings convened and supported by the WHP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 meetings held with one or two priority areas for action selected and progressed. • Testing ways of working more closely as a Service Delivery Leads Group and sharing information through this small forum – for example, to increase joint working and prevent duplication within services. • After six months, review and reflect on membership, effectiveness and priorities for the next six months.
	The Systems Change project will bring a team of systems changers from across WHP organisations and others together in a regular way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisations commit to supporting the Systems Change project in the best way they can. • CSTM provides staffing, external training and oversight and reports to the WHP Strategic Group on progress including outcomes of the project for individuals and at a systems level.
	A regular Practitioner Group will encourage those working in services across sectors to share their insights, experiences and plans with each other and learn together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six weekly meetings held each featuring a guest speaker and an open forum for discussion and information sharing.
	One joint training or event held and evaluated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service delivery leads and Strategic Group will identify possible areas for a WHP training event and commission and deliver this.

Strategic objective five	Specific aim	Actions for 2021/22
We will create a structure that supports the rapid expansion and deepening of partnership work, and increases the sustainability, effectiveness and reputation of the WHP.	A programme of meetings to progress the strategy will be held	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership of the WHP extended to Look Ahead, SHP, and Turning Point. • Membership will be reviewed on an ongoing basis. • Appropriate guests and advisors will also be invited – for example, a connection with the new Police Chief Inspector will be established. • A review of how the WHP can be an effective resource for accommodation projects, as well as services working with people currently rough sleeping, will be convened after we have expanded the partnership. • Forward plan for all meetings in 2021/22 produced. • A focused session on how we can extend our work to link with other areas (for example, neighbouring boroughs, reconnection destinations, areas from where we see flow) will be held.
	Increase reach of the WHP and the external-facing component of communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An inclusive broader event held for anyone working across homelessness services in Westminster including faith and voluntary networks. • A newsletter will be sent out at least four times to update people on the activities of the WHP. • At least four blogs will be published on the WHP website and promoted via Twitter.
	Full funding for WHP for October 2021 to April 2022 and ideally 2022/23 secured by September 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundraisers from WHP organisations will input on the options available for funding. • The possibility of funding from WCC and also contributions from members will be explored to create a financial plan by September 2021. • Applications will be made as appropriate.
	A review of the best approach to coordinating and leading the WHP will be undertaken in June/July.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A delegated group will review the current arrangements and make proposals. • Succession planning for the Coordinator and Chair roles will be undertaken in June by a delegated group. • Risks around sustainability and funding will be explored.

6 Additional strategic objectives for 2022/23 – 2023/24

The following are our broader objectives for 2022/23 – 2023/24. They will evolve and be refined as we progress through this critical year and a more detailed strategic plan produced for each year.

1. We will take an evidence-based approach to reducing and ending rough sleeping in Westminster; evidence will drive our learning, the way we work together, and our external messages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clear shared metrics and reporting will provide a view of needs, work done and outcomes at a Westminster level. ▪ The WHP will publish a research report on two areas linked to key strategic priorities. ▪ Research into the experiences of new rough sleepers in Westminster will be published and the WHP will be acknowledged for their input. ▪ Examples of how the WHP has used evidence to inform change and analysis of statistics about this work are provided on the WHP website and also used by WCC in their strategy and commissioning work.
2. We will build on the progress of our partnership, and learning during Covid-19 in 2020/21 to drive access and equity in healthcare for people who have experienced rough sleeping.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Health services and homelessness services will become ever more closely linked through regular contact for operational leaders/clinicians via the WHP and other routes. ▪ Challenges in delivering a health-informed approach within homelessness services will be identified and addressed through the WHP practice leads group and Strategy Group, as well as with targeted initiatives as appropriate. ▪ People with lived experience will inform the WHP's work to create a health-centred approach to addressing homelessness.
3. We will develop our influencing approach at different levels to bring about systems change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The WHP will have public reports or briefings available building its credibility. ▪ The WHP will consider building on its strategic priorities to create an outward facing 'charter' or campaign.
4. We will create stronger links between our service delivery leads increasing joint working on the ground.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Systems Change project will be embedded and evidence outcomes for individuals as well as influence at a systems level. ▪ A functioning interface between Inform and CHAIN will be used across the board for service delivery and reporting; this work will be promoted to other areas to demonstrate the potential of data linkage across systems.
5. We will create a structure that supports the rapid expansion and deepening of partnership work, and increases the sustainability, effectiveness and reputation of the WHP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The programme of WHP meetings and events and the structure of the WHP will be reviewed and adjusted. ▪ The framework of meetings, events and other opportunities such as joint training will be developed and evaluated. ▪ The work of volunteers across WHP services will be mapped and celebrated in a WHP report. ▪ The Service Delivery Leads group and Practitioner Group will explore shared opportunities for training and networking for volunteers.