



Commissioning

The commissioning function is a process undertaken by a local or regional authority; to identify a need i.e. rough sleepers/complex needs accommodation. Then allocate funds/resources, procure a provider within a tender process to deliver the service. A contract is awarded for a set price and period of time within agreed outcomes e.g. Housing support for 15 people for 18 months and 90% moved on etc.

The commissioning team would monitor the service throughout the contract period receiving operational data and regular updates RE incidents, staffing changes etc.

Local authority commissioning for homeless services typically cover out-reach, hostels, semi independent, specialist supported accommodation, housing first, day centres and floating support.

Why do it?

Commissioning homeless services aims to provide best value for the public purse and meet local strategic need while avoiding duplication. Provides an over view ensuring various services work together meeting local need and that service design/spec's and outcomes come under relevant overarching strategies like housing and community safety. The monitoring of data gives the opportunity to observe any changes in need impacting homeless people. The idea is to compliment and best design services across the board including NHS, adult social care services and community safety etc.

Pathway

Homeless services within local authorities typically work in a pathway approach where numerous services operate different types and levels of homeless support across a geographical area and commissioning teams track and allocate bed spaces to best support each individual. An example would be someone coming from the street going into a general needs hostel for 3 months then moving to specialist accommodation like mental health or step down 9-5 accommodation for 12 months, then moving onto independent accommodation and receiving floating support. Commissioning team's would be responsible for all referrals into the pathway and to evaluate individual's progress and track each unit of

supported accommodation across all services. Including allocating resources to help with move on and provide support to people who have moved out of supported accommodation into independent living through services like floating support and Housing first. All services across the pathway work closely together on a day to day bases coordinating moves between services and attend networking and forum events.

Types of services

First Stage Hostels

Commissioned within Pathways and run by either local authority, charity or voluntary organisation's providing housing related support in Assessment centres and first stage hostels. Predominately covering high support and complex needs but also low and medium support for single homeless people; offering single rooms, activities, meals, support and Staffed 24 hours.

Semi-Independent / Supported Housing

Lower to medium support in communal settings working towards increasing independence and either 9-5 or visiting support with 24 hour on call system typical maximum length of stay 2 years. Each service may have a specialist allocation and cater towards needs such as; mental health, complex needs, substance use, young people, single sex, LGBT or offenders.

Dual Diagnosis

High support accomodtion for people needing support around mental health and susbtance needs commissioned through NHS Clincical Commissioning Group (CCG). Both mental health and substance support is provided by mental health services rather than drug or alcohol services. Will receive referrals from pathway services and typical to work with first stage hostels.

Housing First

Provides stable independent accommodation typically within the private sector with no conditions on being able to maintain a tenancy. Then provided with intensive personalised support to gain the skills and emotional stability to maintain a tenancy through actual experience. Meeting someone's hierarchy of needs at the foundation point of housing being first rather than being move on ready first.

Outreach

Commissioned teams who go out to both look for people sleeping rough and also follow up on intelligence and reports about people sleeping rough. Assessing and providing support to get people sleeping rough to access appropriate support and accommodation. Outreach teams verify people who have been confirmed as sleeping rough and allocate a CHAIN Number to be able to access clearing house accommodation.

CHAIN

A system overseeing verified referrals from commissioned services that provide support to people with experience of sleeping rough and allocated a CHAIN number. Ensuring only verified individual's access clearing house properties and the Clearing House gate keep and coordinate access to properties from 50 housing associations.

Clearing House

Provides supported housing in Self-contained one-bed or studio flats from housing associations in London for people with a verified CHAIN number who have a history of rough sleeping as part of the Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI). Tenants are supported by Tenancy Sustainment Teams (TSTs), are provided a floating support service. Partnership between approximately 50 housing associations and two Tenancy Sustainment Teams delivering support to people coming from the street, hostels and other supported housing projects. The process is overseen via an online system for making referrals, requesting nominations and managing cases. The Clearing House is coordinated on behalf of the Greater London Authority.

StreetLink

StreetLink gives members of the public a means to act when they see someone sleeping rough, and ensures rough sleepers are connected to the local services and support available to them. This can be done via www.streetlink.org.uk, mobile app, available, or by calling 0300 500 0914.

The details provided by a member of the public are sent to the local authority or outreach team, so they can help connect the person to local services and support.

Floating support/TST's

Also known as Tenancy Sustainment Teams (TSTs) and provides housing support services helping maintain an independent stable housing situation. Typically provides support to people moving out of hostel / supported accommodation and clearing house properties. The support will allocated for a set period of time which can be up to 2 years.

Day Centres

Day centres offer help with practical housing related issues, emotional support and leisure activities. A place to get cheap warm food, shower, clean clothes and have one to ones with support workers.

Models of Support

Recovery Based Key Working

Helping individuals to move forward through coaching and using individual creative solutions that work for them and a similar philosophy to the strengths based approach. Very commonly used supporting individuals to accept their difficulties with a focus on what can be done. Making positive changes to reach new realistic goals and develop coping mechanisms. An example maybe for someone who hears voices to use a mobile phone when responding to them in public to avoid negative reactions from people around them. Using a kind of exposure

therapy to get people used to taking responsibility building up to being able to undertake tasks like speaking to benefits agencies or opening and responding to mail. The same approach and ethos can be applied to substance dependence and overcoming barriers to attend groups and appointments by timing their usage to ensure they can attend and participate meaningfully building confidence, personal fulfilment and providing a platform to progress to the next stage.

Harm Minimisation

Focuses on the prevention of harm, rather than on the prevention of drug use itself with a focus on people who continue to use drugs'. An example would be safer injecting practices where the risk of over dose is reduced dramatically if someone smokes rather than injects a substance. Alongside access to clean needles and education around injection practice and sites on the body reducing over dose and contracting blood born viruses. It is recommended to not use alone and for opiate users to be trained and have access to Naloxone, which reverses an opioid overdose. Other examples would be for alcohol dependence and avoiding potentially fatal withdrawal seizures, neurological damage through vitamin supplements, changing type and strength of beverage and appropriate nutrition.

Housing Related Support

This approach is typical used within Local authority commissioned services both hostels and floating support and focuses on providing support and advice to people around benefits, managing housing problems. Including debts, arrears, evictions and developing independent living skills – budgeting, setting up payment plans, accessing education, leisure services, training and employment support, accessing other support agencies and avoiding a crisis and/or hospital admissions.

Gender and Faith Informed Support

Providing tailored support and accommodation to individuals who have faced domestic violence with gender specific staff and informed approaches covering domestic and honour based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage and LGBT. Faith informed support models incorporate an individual's faith within the service and may include a specific area to pray, prepared meals and activities which focus around faith.

Person Centred Approach

A mind-set for support workers who need to be warm, genuine and understanding as a starting point, this alone has capacity for self-healing and personal growth. Person centred forms part of various support models and requires a combination of empathy balanced with professional boundaries to convey equal partners rather than as an expert treating a patient.

Motivational Interviewing

Motivational interviewing is often used to address addiction and the management of physical health issues also useful helping around anger and hostility. The intent is to promote motivation to change behaviours preventing them from making positive choices. A technique

used at the beginning of the cycle of change when people are unmotivated and focuses on incentives to work through a state of uncertainty or ambivalence and also following up on other interventions like CBT, therapy or AA.

CBT

CBT focuses specifically on the problems and difficulties that you are experiencing now, rather than issues in the past. Based on the theory that it is not the events themselves that are upsetting but the meanings attached to them. This can cause problems if continue to hold onto the same thoughts and patterns of behaviour while failing to see the alternative explanation. CBT aims to show ways to change negative thoughts and composes alternative ways of thinking about the situation all of which make the individual feel better.

Cycle of Change

6 stages of change

- **Pre-contemplation**, people don't want to admit that they have a problem and even avoid consideration of the subject
- **Preparation**, start to make decisions, some people become chronic contemplators and substitute analysis for action, the successful person will make decisions and prepare for them and start to move toward the future.
- **Action**, this is the stage at which real change of behaviour starts happening and is typically stressful, identifying and developing effective ways of coping with stress during this stage.
- **Maintenance**, needs plans and goals and treats lapses as just a temporary delay in progress and something to be learned from. Using the anchor of all well-planned contemplation and preparation.
- **Termination**, This stage, people have no desire to return to their unhealthy behaviours and are sure they will not relapse. Not everyone reaches this stage and some may remain within the maintenance stage such as AA recovery.

Outcome Star

The Outcomes Stars is a measurement tool covering various support needs tracking the difference as people progress on a scale of 1 – 10. Providing a key working framework mirroring the cycle of change, covering various support needs like substance use, meaningful use of time and gives a visual to easily track progress.

Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE)

Takes into account the psychological makeup, thinking, emotions, personalities and past experience of individual's and tailors they're surrounding and actual experience to get the best results. Focusing upon helping staff to understand where behaviours come from and therefore working more creatively and constructively with challenging behaviours. Working in tandem with designing the built environment to be psychologically conducive.

Peer Mentoring

People who have lived experience of homelessness or substance use, recovery and/or mental health issues and reached stability in their journey and wish to use their experience to support others. Being a role model and coming from a shared background to relate and inspire people to make positive changes. Peer mentors are extremely useful and insightful in understanding alternative and improved ways to design a service.

Life Skills Training

Focusing more upon practical than psychological skills and covers needs like managing money, shopping, cooking, running a home and maintaining social networks. Alongside developing basic skills like numeracy, literacy and information technology in both a practical and theoretical way.

Approaches for Shelters

Networking and Joint Working

It is important to understand what up to date resources and external services are available to help provide support to guests both during their stay and as they progress towards move on and beyond.

Developing a networking plan and approaching services and companies, introduce yourself and the work of your shelter with the intent of building relationships, this is vital to improving move on options. As the relationship develops you can agree practices and approaches that suit both the shelter and the external service/company.

This approach would include homeless services in the local authority and other agencies, also building relationships within the property market and meeting letting agents and landlords. The private property sector is increasingly becoming supportive and sympathetic to the issues at hand and the market is becoming more receptive.

This will simply be a matter of making a list of relevant people to contact and calling around. There will be questions from both parties, and can be a healthy place to build a relationship by being honest and open if don't initially know how this relationship and working might look. This will be a good place to build the practice between both parties within the scope of what works for you.

Coordinated Support and Move On with Local Authority

Accessing viable accommodation options for guests moving out of shelters can predominantly come through two options, accessing the local authority and helping to secure independent accommodation in the private sector.

A recent approach that proved fruitful took place in Islington at the Glass House / Solidarity shelter where a relationship was made with Islington Council's Street population manager prior to the shelter opening to support guests during their stay and with move on. This was a shared approach focusing on support and move on which was coordinated at fortnightly case

review meetings led by the shelter coordinator and the Islington Street population manager. Each shelter guest was discussed and actions agreed and Islington complex needs workers provided follow-up support both supporting shelter staff and the guests. Focusing upon measures and interventions to stabilise shelter guests after having spent time sleeping rough. This close relationship gave easier access to refer shelter guests into local authority supported accommodation pathways, temporary accommodation and local authority housing.

An incentive for local authorities to work with shelters within this coordinated model is that it saved significant time and resources both financially through staffing costs and indirectly minimising antisocial behaviour and interventions from police, community safety and NHS.

This approach proved to be extremely successful and arranged successful move on for all guests

Referring Directly to Local Authority Housing Provision

Making direct referrals for individual shelter guest to a local authority and supporting to attend a housing assessment. This usually involves a face-to-face interview with a housing officer and bringing along certain documents, wage slips, proof of benefits and evidence of medical needs etc. Once the assessment is complete the council draws up a personal housing plan. Individuals with support needs maybe able to access local authority pathway commissioned supported housing services.

Maximising Access to the Welfare Benefits System

Contact the local DWP office and request a meeting to discuss an officer coming to your shelter to conduct a Surgery visit to help set up benefit applications. This happens elsewhere and is common for DWP officers to make home visits if people are unable to either, use online services or attend an appointment outside of their home. An example might be following through on eligibility for benefits around habitual residency tests which has a direct knock on towards move on.

Reconnection Services

Some local authorities offer reconnection services and help people to be resettled to different parts of the country or Europe. This can involve people being accompanied back to the places of origin and may provide practical and financial support to make this sustainable. Please check if this is available in your area on the council website.

Shelter Funded Rent Deposit

If it is possible to access funds within your congregation, shelter, trust funding etc to pay for rent deposits to directly contact local letting agencies and help support guests to view and complete the relevant process involved. An assessment and plan of meeting on-going rent expenditure needs to be made and either housing benefit contacted for a pre assessment or guests employment assessed including salary levels and ability to maintain their job. This can include assessing flat shares and self-contained accommodation.

Post Move On Tenancy Sustainment Drop Ins

Shelters can offer a surgery drop in offering basic tenancy sustainment support where an ex shelter guest can come along for a chat and follow up any needs to maintain their accommodation. This may cover issues such as chasing repairs, contacting benefits agencies or helping to mediate with landlords. This type of transitional support is extremely important and most support and actual advice is common sense based.

Meditation

An understanding of what may have gone wrong in the past and a frank and honest understanding if it might be possible to help connect guest back with family or friends and help to discuss the possibility of them returning. Approaching a mediation service could help this process and has proved successful with some younger shelter guests.

Shelter Transfers

Some shelters operate all year round and maybe an option if your shelter is seasonal to transfer a guest to avoid them returning to the streets.

Hosting

Hosting a shelter guest in safe and welcoming accommodation secured through the shelter network in either a local home owner / tenant or clergy property. The placement can be for a fixed time period usually up to 6 months and looking at individuals with low support needs and who have a clear move on plan in place. This type of placement might be suitable for people lower support needs. If interested then Housing justice can provide more specialist information.