

An Interagency Response to End Rough Sleeping in Auckland city

A Practice Guide

(This document sits alongside the Auckland Homeless Steering Group Memorandum of Understanding and applies to the Homeless Steering Group membership and to the members of the multi-sector Homeless Taskforce Group that has project implementation responsibilities)

Practice guide for an interagency approach to end rough sleeping in Auckland city

Introduction

The official New Zealand definition of homelessness as stated by Statistics New Zealand identifies four categories. These include 'people without shelter, people in temporary accommodation, people sharing accommodation and people in uninhabitable housing'¹. The interagency approach to end rough sleeping in Auckland city targets people without shelter (or rough sleepers), although a number of homeless people in the other categories will also benefit from the work of this group. Information gained from this initiative will provide valuable input into the development of policy and improved services for homelessness.

In the Auckland Central Business District (CBD), there are approximately 100-150 people living without shelter (rough sleepers). The interagency approach concentrates on four areas of work with the ultimate aim of moving clients into long-term permanent accommodation, with or without support. The areas of concentration include prevention, intervention, integration and independence services. Applied flexibly it is possible to say that many government departments such as Ministry of Social Development, Housing New Zealand and the district health boards deal with most clients at the preventive stage. Lifewise, in collaboration with other agencies provides assessment, emergency accommodation and meal provision for the intervention stage. Auckland City Mission in collaboration with a wide variety of agencies concentrates on integrating clients with ongoing assessment work so that they can successfully move to independence. The Salvation Army and relevant agencies provide independence services with or without support.

All agencies work to maintain homeless people who are without shelter in permanent accommodation. To do this a number of strategies are undertaken. These include the development and use of common casework methodologies across all agencies, appropriate institutional discharge procedures, and recognition for the need to address cultural factors for Maori and Pacific Island homeless clients. All support has to address social and economic factors that negatively impact on the client group and this means that close relations with government and non-government departments are essential for strong positive outcomes.

This project is also developing new initiatives to support positive homeless outcomes. These initiatives are outlined in the introduction to the MOU of the Auckland Homeless Steering Group and in the brochure 'An interagency response to end rough sleeping in Auckland city'.

The Auckland Homeless Steering Group comprises representatives from government and non-government agencies. It supports, oversees and advocates the above-mentioned project work. Each agency has representation at an operational level to implement projects for their agency. This group is called the Homeless Taskforce Working Group, and in this document it is referred to as 'the group'. The group formalises the working relationships between agencies so that the good work already happening through strong collaborative relationships across the sector is enhanced for the benefit of rough sleepers.

The long-term outcome of this interagency initiative will reduce homelessness in Auckland. Key performance indicators measure the success of projects, assisted by annual informal street count statistics that demonstrate a reduction in the numbers of

¹ Statistics New Zealand, New Zealand Definition of Homelessness, Wellington, 2009. p6

rough sleepers on the street. The quality of casework plans and cultural framework practices (audited annually) will also indicate the number of clients housed in long-term accommodation and the successful processes used. Anecdotal information from clients will also indicate the success of engagement to move people out of homelessness in a culturally useful manner.

This work is outlined in Strand 5 of the Auckland Homeless Action Plan: “An interagency approach for ending rough sleeping in Auckland city and is available on <http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/homless>

2 Strand 5 of the Homeless Action Plan (HAP)

Strand 5: An interagency approach to end rough sleeping in Auckland city

An interagency approach to end rough sleeping in Auckland city focuses the future direction for homeless services in Auckland and highlights how stakeholders from central, local and non-government agencies will concentrate on preventive measures to end rough sleeping. When necessary, agencies will deliver quality services to place homeless people in long-term accommodation. Quality services include the implementation of casework practices that allow for a comprehensive assessment of client need so that clients progress through a continuum of intervention, integration and independence and are housed and supported in long-term accommodation.

Attached to this continuum is an acceptance that for Maori, Pacific Island and migrant clients, emphasis should be placed on the use of a cultural framework that provides a basis to assist homeless people to secure a cultural identity.

The casework practices of each agency working with homeless people will have a:

- Nominated champion to promote effective systems, practices and policies within their organisation
- An organisational response to homelessness
- An ability to demonstrate how the interagency response has reduced rough sleeping in Auckland city
- An ability to organise staff training to promote a cultural framework for Maori, Pacific Island and migrant clients
- Outcomes for Maori, Pacific Island and migrant clients that recognise the cultural potential of an individual and activates, develops and realises this

Other quality services outlined in this work include new project initiatives such as:

- Building the Mission in the City that will house and support marginalised clients to independence
- 24/7 service hub that incorporates emergency accommodation, meal provision and case management services for clients needing assessment
- Special Circumstances Court
- Alternative accommodation
- Support services to ensure tenancy success
- Support services to ensure cultural potential through self development, self determination and self responsibility

3 Key Objectives

The interagency response to end rough sleeping in Auckland city has the following objectives:

- 1 The number of rough sleeping homeless in Auckland is reduced

The primary aim of this initiative is to decrease homelessness in the Auckland CBD by co-ordinating and sequencing service delivery between agencies and to move swiftly to identify and address issues that are contributing to an individual's homelessness

2 Social outcomes for homeless and their families are improved

This initiative will improve social outcomes for the individual and their family (e.g. establish stable housing, provide links to training and/or appropriate employment and enable access to appropriate health care).

3 Costs and duplication of work associated with homelessness are reduced

4 Inter-agency collaboration is improved

There will be benefits for the agencies involved in this initiative. Improved collaboration and information sharing is expected to improve agency knowledge of the homeless environment and circumstances and lead to more effective partnership work between agencies.

4 Definition of Homeless

The New Zealand definition of homelessness was finalised by the Department of Statistics in July 2009. The definition states 'homelessness is defined as living situations where people with no other options to acquire safe and secure housing: are without shelter, in temporary accommodation, sharing accommodation with a household or living in uninhabitable housing.'²

For a complete description of the definition of homelessness please refer to the website www.statistics.govt.nz

5 Homeless Steering Group

For strategic purposes, the Homeless Steering Group comprises senior staff from government and non-government agencies. The Homeless Steering Group provides advocacy, guidance, decision making and support to the Homeless Taskforce Working Group. This group implements the plans to end rough sleeping in Auckland city. The Homelessness Steering Group also receives reports six-monthly and reports to a wider audience when and as required.

The Steering Group will measure the overall success of the work associated with 'the interagency response to end rough sleeping in Auckland city'. This group will also identify future directions that may include addressing homelessness in other areas of Auckland.

6 The Homeless Taskforce Group

The Homeless Taskforce Group comprises the operational staff representatives from each of the agencies represented on the Homeless Steering Group. This group is responsible for the implementation and improvement in homeless services as outlined in the plan 'An interagency approach for ending rough sleeping in Auckland city. It reports project progress to the Steering Group every six months and identifies issues that might need particular assistance from Steering Group members for a successful outcome.

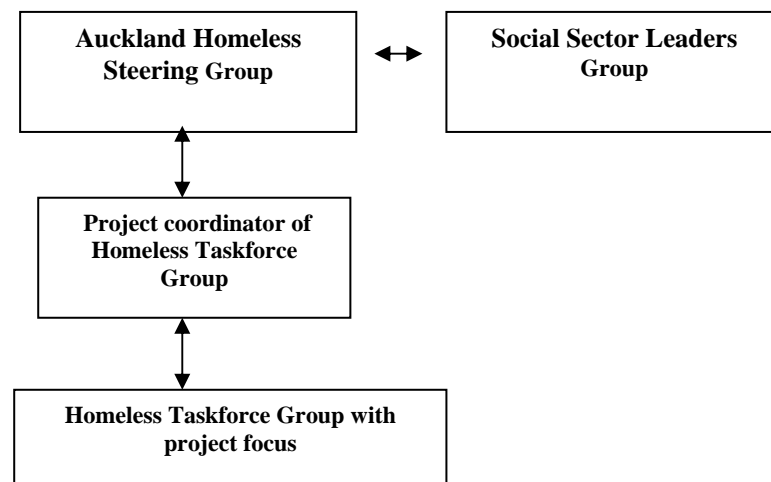
² Ibid p.6

7 Governance and operational structure

The Homeless Steering Group is the governing body of the interagency approach to end rough sleeping in Auckland city. The Homeless Taskforce Group develops and implements new initiatives, such as common casework practices, and reports through the project coordinator to the Homeless Steering Group. Examples of project work of this group include the development of a case-management tool, the Special Circumstance Court and the monitoring of results.

The Homeless Steering Group oversees the future needs and development of projects and supports all initiatives to achieve the objectives and measures of the project. It also ensures that the Homeless Taskforce Group is resourced to achieve its required tasks.

A diagram of the governance structure is outlined:



8 Commitment - MOU

The Chief Executives or senior representatives of all the organisations comprising the Homeless Steering Group have signed the MOU 'The interagency approach to end rough sleeping in Auckland city'. The organisations are listed below.

9 Participating agencies

- Ministry of Social Development
- Housing New Zealand
- Auckland District Health Board
- Waitemata District Health Board
- Auckland City Mission
- Lifewise
- New Zealand Police
- St John
- Accident Compensation Corporation
- Department of Corrections
- Salvation Army

- Te Puni Kokiri
- Auckland City Council

The above agencies interface with homeless clients and all have various systems and practices that impact on successful homeless outcomes. The role of the participating agencies is to provide:

- leadership in the planning, development and implementation of projects
- coordinate and support initiatives of central, local and non-government agencies, iwi / hapu, community and business groups involved in ending homelessness
- contributions to resources when available and applicable
- monitoring the broad trends which impact on homelessness
- advocacy to central and local government about policy issues concerned with homelessness
- evaluation services to measure the success of projects implemented

10 Joint client casework processes

There will be joint casework processes across all agencies signed to the MOU in which a social worker, or health professional, or other worker takes responsibility for the coordination of the case-work plan and its implementation.

Lifewise (Methodist Mission Northern) will be responsible for convening regular case management meetings and outcomes of the Homeless Taskforce Group.

All agencies will be responsible for developing appropriate practices around a cultural framework that will apply when working with clients of Maori, Pacific Island or migrant ethnicities and discussions will occur with Te Puni Kokiri or Auckland District Health Board as to how best to do this.

11 Data collection

Data collection is defined by the agreed performance measures that are outlined in the brochure “An interagency response to end rough sleeping in Auckland city” and the Homeless Action Plan. Auckland City Mission will have responsibility for the collection and collation of data from the case management group and will report annually against the performance measures.

11 Success Criteria and Key Indicators

The criteria for success and the key indicators will be developed, and agreed to by the agencies participating in the initiative, so that what is measured is feasible, useful, ethical and accurate. Accordingly, measures will answer the following key questions:

- Has the incidence of rough sleepers reduced?
- To what extent have social outcomes for the homeless and their families been improved?

- In what ways has interagency collaboration changed or improved as a result of this initiative?
- If there is a reduction in homeless, then we can also ask:
- To what extent have social and fiscal costs due to servicing a homeless cohort been reduced through this initiative?

13 Performance Measures

The performance measures are outlined in the brochure 'An interagency response to end rough sleeping or in strand 5 of the Homeless Action Plan

14 Reporting

- The working groups will meet as required by project milestones. Members are homeless champions for their agencies. A full membership list is included as Appendix A
- Each member of the working group is responsible for the storing and collating of information on their homeless clients based in Auckland City CBD
- Information will be presented as outlined in project milestones and reported to Lifewise and collated by Auckland City Mission every quarter
- Each agency commits to collecting the minimum level of data as outlined in section 3.3
- Each agency champion will be responsible for identifying any issues that prevent the achievement of successful outcomes for the homeless.
- The Steering Group will meet six monthly and will endorse the report or seek clarity from the Homeless Action Plan Project coordinator on any issues.
- The Steering Group is able to report at any given time to any given audience on the previous six months investment in the homeless in the Auckland CBD, on the outcomes achieved and on any issues and how they are being collectively addressing Homelessness in Auckland.