



Frontline agencies in partnership

Reducing Rough Sleeping Among Central and Eastern Europeans in London:

Report on the Action Plan

March 2009



Introduction

The context of Central and Eastern European homelessness in London

Expansion of the European Union in 2004 and 2007 has led to an increase in migration from Central and Eastern Europe to Britain. The majority of individuals from these A8 and A2¹ countries successfully obtain employment and accommodation in the UK. However, for those who find themselves homeless, options can be limited due to the restrictions placed on access to social provision and benefits.

In March 2008, Homeless Link was funded by Communities and Local Government to develop and implement an action plan² to reduce rough sleeping among Central and Eastern Europeans.

The action plan was developed in response to our members' concerns over the growing number of Central and Eastern European (CEE) rough sleepers in London. This concern had been highlighted by a report produced by Homeless Link in 2006, 'A8 nationals in London homelessness services'³, which indicated that 15% of all the clients who used day centres, outreach services, night shelters and other homelessness provision in London were from A8 countries.

This report

Since the launch of the action plan in June 2008, Homeless Link has been working with a range of partner organisations, government agencies and other stakeholders both in the UK and in CEE countries to deliver the actions outlined in the plan. This report provides a summary of this progress, looks at what has been achieved and makes some suggestions for where further work is needed.

Background to the action plan

The plan was guided by the following principles:

- The issue of CEE rough sleeping requires a response wider than the homelessness sector. The action plan was therefore produced in collaboration with government departments, embassies, homelessness agencies and a range of other partners
- It contained solutions aimed at reducing rough sleeping among Central and Eastern Europeans. It did not examine wider areas of immigration policy
- Mainstream solutions were seen as preferable to specialist provision

¹ 'A8' countries refers to those countries which joined the EU in 2004: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. 'A2' countries refers to Bulgaria and Romania who joined in 2007.

² Homeless Link (2008) *Reducing Rough Sleeping among Central and Eastern Europeans in London: Action Plan* <http://www.homeless.org.uk/policyandinfo/issues/EU10s/ceeactionplan.pdf/>

³ See <http://www.homeless.org.uk/policyandinfo/issues/EU10s/a8report>

- Some solutions were possible within existing local funding structures. Those requiring further, possibly national, resources were clearly marked
- The action plan was for London, with the expectation that the solutions identified can be transferred to other regions of the country
- The plan took account of the different solutions required for the two distinct groups of Central and Eastern Europeans known to be rough sleeping, namely:
 - (a) Those with no or very low support needs who are out of work and suffering a problem with housing
 - (b) Those that have medium to high support needs and vulnerabilities that have developed at home or during their time in England⁴

The action plan was split into eight key areas:

- Reconnection and return home (for those that want to)
- Access to and protection in employment
- Communication on available services
- Work in Central and Eastern European States
- Accommodation
- Support needs of Central and Eastern Europeans
- Support needs of homelessness agencies and staff
- Incentives and enforcement

⁴ It is important to recognise that people from the first group may develop support needs and become part of the second group if they continue to experience homelessness

What has been achieved

When the A8 countries joined the EU in 2004, the homelessness sector started to experience a sudden increase in demand from Central and Eastern European clients who could often not access state services. These clients tended to have low support needs and required help with accessing employment and accommodation. The homelessness sector found it had limited resources and knowledge to respond to these needs and the new challenges presented by this client group.

The picture in 2009 is very different. Although the issue of CEE rough sleeping remains a major concern and there is evidence of increasing need among this group⁵, agencies are better placed to respond to their needs. The progress made over the past 12 months demonstrates the key role homelessness agencies have played in supporting vulnerable CEE clients on a day to day basis in the absence of other services. Better information, resources, and the development of innovative, specialist services have all contributed to this change.

In particular, recent developments such as the London Reconnections Team⁶, and the Olallo project⁷ are playing a key role in providing support to vulnerable CEE clients who are not able to easily access the labour market. The effect of these services is just being felt and can be built on in the coming months.

The work undertaken has also helped raise the profile of rough sleeping amongst Central and Eastern Europeans, something now recognised as a key issue which requires cross-government, targeted action if the government is to meet its commitment of ending rough sleeping by 2012. Action 6 of the new Rough Sleeping strategy, *No One Left Out, Communities Ending Rough Sleeping* commits to tackle rough sleeping among new migrant populations, focussing on strengthening joint working with the UK Borders Agency (UKBA), work with CEE embassies and improving early interventions⁸. These measures signal a positive change in how the needs of this client group will remain a priority in the future.

Overall, the CEE action plan has led to:

- Closer co-operation and improved interagency working
- The development and funding of new practical services
- A wide programme of support, training and information sharing with the homelessness sector and beyond leading to improved practice
- Increased awareness of the policy challenges both in the UK and abroad

The key achievements under each section of the action plan are outlined in this report from page six onwards.

⁵ See Homeless Link's Repeat Survey Report of CEE rough sleeping, conducted November 2008
<http://www.homeless.org.uk/policyandinfo/issues/EU10s/repeatsurvey/>

⁶ Please see page 7 for more information on the London Reconnections Team (www.londonreconnect.org.uk)

⁷ The Olallo project is a reconnection and employment based accommodation project for CEE clients run by the charity St John of God.

⁸ See *No One Left Out, Communities Ending Rough Sleeping* (HM Government, November 2008)
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/roughsleepingstrategy>

What still needs to happen

Despite the progress outlined in this report, a number of challenges remain:

- Non-homelessness agencies still need to be better engaged in responding to the needs of CEE clients. This includes employment agencies, health services and Job Centre Plus, who could play an important role in facilitating access to the labour market
- Homeless Link is aware that rough sleeping among A8 and A2 clients is not an issue confined to London. As other areas across England seek ways to respond to this issue, there may be a need to extend reconnection services and other interventions to areas beyond the Capital
- The restrictions placed on access to social assistance for some CEEs mean that vulnerable clients are often at risk of destitution. We believe the lack of a basic welfare safety net for those EU citizens left destitute as a result of being unable to access the labour market requires a response at a European level
- There is a need to respond to the wider migrant groups who are at risk of rough sleeping and destitution. Homeless Link welcomes the commitment in the new Rough Sleeping Strategy to tackle rough sleeping among new migrant groups as part of its wider goal of ending rough sleeping by 2012. As part of this, Homeless Link believes that more action must be taken to bring about step changes in current policy to prevent people sleeping rough as a result of their migration status.

Future plans

Homeless Link is committed to supporting its members to respond to the needs of CEE clients. We will maintain an open dialogue with government departments, the sector and other stakeholders to ensure the needs of this vulnerable group are represented. In May, Homeless Link is holding a conference, *Migrants - contribution, integration, destitution?* to further this debate and share approaches which can help prevent rough sleeping and destitution among CEE clients as well as other migrant populations. Together with the work undertaken as part of the action plan, this will provide a firm base upon which to continue this work.

Homeless Link will also continue to maintain effective web based resources for agencies working with CEE clients. Homeless Link would welcome your feedback and contributions, please visit www.homelesslink.org.uk/issues/EU10s for more details.

Finally, we would like to offer our thanks to Communities and Local Government for funding this project and all the agencies who have been involved in the development and implementation of the action plan.

Action Plan

Outlined below are the key actions achieved under each section of the plan.

Reconnection and return home (for those that want to)

For some clients, returning home offers the most appropriate option. The action plan recognised that many clients would be unable to do so without assistance and that capacity and resources in London to provide this were limited. Three levels of reconnection were recognised.

Aim: to ensure that those who want to are supported to return home	
Action Plan Objective	Action achieved
Continue/expand ticket-only return home schemes for individuals with no or low support needs who don't need links to services at home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigated types of reconnection services including ticket only schemes and produced a reconnection 'how to' guide and web resource Raised awareness about and encouraged the use of local authority prevention funds to fund ticket-only schemes by writing to all local authorities Housing Options teams in London
Collect and disseminate information from homelessness agencies willing to take referrals of people returning home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted research with FEANSTA members about services in home countries for self/agency referral Developed reconnection web resource to disseminate these findings to London agencies. It currently includes information on services in Poland, Romania, Czech Republic, Estonia and Hungary
Create a pan-London team to develop an international reconnections protocol and support Central and Eastern Europeans with medium to high support needs to return home, including those requiring abstinence, non-abstinence and mental health services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produced a service proposal for the 'London Reconnections Team', submitted to the CLG Worked with the CLG to commission this team. Thames Reach was awarded this contract in December 2008 and started work in January 2009.⁹ In its first month five clients were reconnected to detox services and their families in home countries. The service aims to reconnect six clients per month Worked with Thames Reach on set up and promotion of new team and continue to act in an advisory capacity
A link to reconnection unit (as discussed in accommodation section) for the highest need individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LRT are currently working with the Olallo¹⁰ project to establish referral links

⁹ For more on the LRT please see www.londonreconnect.org.uk

¹⁰ The Olallo project is a reconnection and employment based accommodation project for CEE clients run by the charity St John of God.

Access to and protection in employment

Access to employment is one of the main routes out of homelessness for CEEs. However, this client group cannot always access mainstream services, and the action plan recognised that specialist information, schemes and training are essential to enable agencies to support clients to access employment opportunities.

<p>Aim: to ensure that Central and Eastern Europeans can access employment and move away from homelessness. To ensure that Central and Eastern Europeans in employment are not exploited in the workplace and this does not result in homelessness</p>	
Action Plan Objective	Action achieved
Influence Government to provide targeted support to Central and Eastern Europeans seeking work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lobbied the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) for engagement from Job Centre Plus, currently without success Responded to the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) consultation <i>Focusing English for Speakers of Other Languages on Community Cohesion</i>. We highlighted the need to extend the priority list for ESOL (English for speakers of Other Languages) provision to CEE migrants who require help to enter the labour market
Support staff in homelessness agencies to help Central and Eastern Europeans access mainstream or specialist employment services and provide information on employment rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Held a 'Spotlight' event focussing on ETE for CEEs, attended by over 30 representatives from the homelessness sector to share good practice. Feedback highlighted the value of this: 93% attendees found it an 'excellent' or 'good' opportunity to be updated on policy and strategic developments relating to CEEs. 89% of attendees found it an 'excellent' or 'good' opportunity to share best practice and meet colleagues working with this client group Produced a 'how to' guide focussing on supporting CEE clients into employment Promoted specialist job search software for CEE clients at 'Spotlight' event and via the website
Increase access to good quality employment agencies and reduce exploitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produced a 'how to' guide for staff on how to reduce exploitation in the workplace, in partnership with the Vulnerable Workers Project (VWP). This is downloadable on our website, and was also sent to 53 London day centres Wrote to the Gangmasters' Licensing Authority (GLA) in support of an extension of their current remit to other employment sectors, leading to a meeting with the Chair of the GLA

	<p>to discuss this issue further and share information about protecting clients from potential exploitation. Resources are available on our website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoted Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform's (BERR) agency blacklist website and a range of other related resources via our web pages
Expand training opportunities for Central and Eastern Europeans (including statutory ESOL classes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launched a small grants programme for CEE employment projects and funded London based organisations to deliver specialist employment services to this client group, including those to meet needs of A2 clients • Worked with the Olallo project¹¹ and SET (construction training providers) to establish training opportunities for clients. Three out of four clients from the pilot successfully passed CSCS exams and were supported to register with employment agencies providing a model for future schemes
Research difficulties with the Workers' Registration Scheme and influence its removal in 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produced a briefing on transitional arrangements, including the Workers' Registration Scheme (WRS), with the AIRE centre¹² • Wrote to DWP about the lifting of transitional arrangements in April 2009

¹¹ The Olallo project is a reconnection and employment based accommodation project for CEE clients run by St John of God.

¹² The AIRE (Advice on Individual Rights in Europe) Centre is a specialist law centre whose mission is to promote awareness of European law rights and assist vulnerable and marginalised individuals to assert those rights.

Accommodation

This section of the action plan responded to the limited accommodation options available to CEE clients and concerns about the suitability of some private accommodation accessed by this group.

Aim: to improve access to services that can support people to return home. To help people access suitable rented accommodation	
Action Plan Objective	Action Achieved
Develop a reconnection unit to provide short stay emergency accommodation for high-needs vulnerable Central and Eastern Europeans, focussed on return home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advised on the service specification of the Olallo project¹³ • Undertook research with other providers about reconnection bed proposals
Increase access to cheap, safe and suitable rented accommodation in the private sector for those with no or low support needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrote to all local authorities in London outlining advice and assistance requirements, prevention funds, Supporting People (SP) eligibility and the use of the National Assistance Act, which incorporated learning from the TB team at Hackney's Homerton hospital • Developed and published an Accommodation Options Resource, which includes information on rent deposit schemes and eligibility for other housing services • Completed a Private Rented Sector briefing which includes information about CEEs

¹³ The Olallo project, see footnote 6, opened in December 2008 and provides short term accommodation to CEE clients, supporting them to enter employment or to return to their home countries.

Work in Central and Eastern European states

Many aspects of the action plan required co-operation from CEE states. The plan identified a need to raise CEE states' awareness of the issues facing their nationals in London and seek opportunities for involvement and future funding from CEE states or the European Union for interventions from UK and CEE based charities, in order to achieve the longer term aim of reducing rough sleeping.

Aim: to ensure that Central and Eastern European states support this action plan and co-operate with its implementation	
Action Plan Objective	Action Achieved
Seek co-operation from governments and agencies in Central and Eastern Europe on all aspects of this plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminated action plan widely across agencies and government contacts across CEE countries • Established relationships with London based embassies of CEE countries and gained their co-operation in disseminating and sharing information, including hosting a meeting in November 2008 • Wrote to relevant ministers in all ten CEE countries to raise awareness of the issues facing their homeless nationals in the UK and request involvement in future work. Four ministerial responses were received to date and further dialogue entered to build on these discussions • Made links with agencies across CEE countries as part of the reconnection work (see above) • Hosted visit from Brother Albert Society, a Polish homelessness agency, to share learning about working with the client group
Strengthen the message on preparation in the UK and in CEE States (UK work)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepared a preparation message and disseminated on our website, via UK based embassies and other relevant channels
Strengthen the message on preparation in Central and Eastern European States (CEE States work)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminated preparation messages to all CEE based UK embassies. To date this has been adopted by Poland, Slovenia and Hungary and we continue to encourage others to do so • Wrote to the Polish Church to request preparation materials to be circulated through their networks • Disseminated the Repeat Survey report¹⁴ to CEE states and generated significant media interest about the issues and wider action plan aims

¹⁴ The Repeat Survey of CEE rough sleeping in London, conducted in November 2008, can be accessed here www.homeless.org.uk/infoandpolicy/issues/EU10s/repeatsurvey.

Communication on available services

Having accessible and up to date information about the services available to CEEs is vital if agencies are to support this client group effectively. The action plan recognised that the knowledge staff and clients have of these services can be limited.

Aim: to ensure that staff and Central and Eastern Europeans have appropriate knowledge on the services available to Central and Eastern Europeans across London	
Action Plan Objective	Action Achieved
Develop and publicise a single resource to show all services available across London	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redesigned our website with clear pages on the project, services across London, resources and research. • Produced regular electronic mailings to 180 voluntary sector and local authority stakeholders working with CEEs in London • Sent out a special day centre mailing to ensure information needs of frontline services were addressed. The mailing went to 53 London day centres and included a range of resources about available services
Ensure that Central and Eastern Europeans are not unfairly excluded from services for which they are eligible i.e. some Supporting People services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produced Entitlements briefing, downloadable on our website, which clarifies access to health and housing services • Clarified entitlements to SP services in both the briefing and separate letter to local authorities
Continue and develop the London Central and Eastern European workers group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offered support to the London Central and Eastern European workers group (this support was not required by the group)

Needs of agencies and staff

Homelessness services need innovative ways to respond to the number of CEE clients who access their services. The action plan responded to the limited access to specialist information and availability of staff who speak CEE languages, which can present challenges for the sector.

Aim: to ensure that homelessness agencies and their staff have the support they need to work effectively with Central and Eastern Europeans	
Action Plan Objective	Action Achieved
Provide support and materials to frontline staff in the homelessness sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Published resources and briefings on our website (including directory of services for CEEs, research, 'how to' guides, updates from agencies on training and events, legal advice). Since September 2008, the main page of the website has had 3,756 hits • Provided materials and guidance to agencies via forums and events (including Brent Homelessness Forum, VWP event for vulnerable Polish Workers, Community Police event at the Upper Room, Conference 'London's response to the new migration' run by BARKA, ECAS (European Citizen Action Service) • Regular mailings and dissemination of materials (including information packs to Crisis during the Crisis Open Christmas provision) • Published resources on embassy processes for obtaining and replacing documentation
Provide training to homelessness, drug & alcohol and council staff on Central and Eastern European history and culture, including information on alcohol, drugs and homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ran two training sessions for staff working with CEEs, covering issues such as substance misuse and cultural awareness. Overall, 17 individuals from 16 different agencies attended these sessions, 100% of delegates gave positive feedback about the training • Shared learning with Homeless Link's regional London Team who have been able to build existing and new contacts with agencies working with this group- e.g. the Olallo project
Improve access to translation services when these are required as an emergency response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produced a 'how to' guide on communicating with CEE clients which includes information about translation services
Recruit more CEE speaking staff to work in homelessness agencies, with improved links to employment services to reduce demand on staff time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produced a 'how to' guide for agencies wishing to recruit CEE language speaking staff in partnership with Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

Support needs of Central and Eastern Europeans

The majority of CEEs come to the UK to look for work, so the action plan highlighted the need for up to date information on how to live and work successfully here. In addition, some CEEs have higher support needs and vulnerabilities, or develop them while they are in the UK as a result of their homelessness. Not all CEEs are entitled to social assistance which means they are excluded from many services.

Aim: to ensure that Central and Eastern Europeans can access the information and the services that they require to live and work successfully in the UK	
Action Plan Objective	Action Achieved
Expand the circulation of publications about how to live and work in the UK (including local authority migration information packs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Published information about available publications on our website and circulated copies of Federation of Poles preparation booklet to all day centres in London
Ensure access to primary healthcare for all Central and Eastern Europeans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarified access to healthcare, including GP services, in the entitlements briefing Published information on supporting clients to access primary healthcare (including in Polish)
Raise awareness around restrictions to secondary care for Central and Eastern Europeans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Met with partners working with health services, including Project London, to research current access and barriers facing CEE clients Researched restrictions to secondary care in partnership with the AIRE Centre Researched support needs of CEEs as part of Repeat Survey of CEE Rough Sleeping and raised awareness of issues facing these clients through subsequent dissemination and press campaign

Incentives and Enforcement

The action plan outlined the need for all agencies, including the Police, to provide information and take appropriate action when working with all vulnerable clients, regardless of their nationality.

<p>Aim: to ensure that rough sleepers can be provided with information on appropriate reconnection offers, or support to access employment, and make an informed choice about moving away from rough sleeping. To ensure that homelessness agencies are able to support vulnerable people</p>	
Action Plan Objective	Action Achieved
<p>Facilitate a discussion on access to homelessness services so that the sector takes a co-ordinated response to the issue of Central and Eastern Europeans without support needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work undertaken as part of the action plan has created an open dialogue between a range of stakeholders about provision of and access to services for this group. The provision of information has helped the homelessness sector to offer services or signpost where appropriate • Homeless Link is organising a conference in May focussing on CEE migration and destitution, which will further promote discussion about how the sector responds to these clients' needs
<p>Ensure that the Police are aware of reconnection offers and employment support available in the local area and that they have the required training to understand the situations of rough sleepers and deliver this information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminated information, including about reconnection and employment support, to Police stakeholders via mailings • Representatives of the Metropolitan Police attended the Spotlight on employment for Central and Eastern Europeans • Homeless Link is working with the CLG and UKBA around developing effective responses to CEE rough sleepers

Homeless Link is the national membership organisation for frontline homelessness agencies in England. Our mission is to be a catalyst that will help to bring an end to homelessness.

Our two goals are to:

- raise standards in the services that support homeless people and tackle homelessness
- influence the development of policy, strategy and investment at all levels of government.

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