**Title: Cross County Collaboration (Redditch and Bromsgrove)**

**Case Study**

**Introduction**

The Homeless Link Partnership Manager (PM) was first introduced to the Strategic Housing and Enabling Officer (SHEO) at Redditch and Bromsgrove Local Authorities in August 2019. This introduction was made initially by the Housing First Project Manager within Homeless Link’s, National Practice Development team. The initial request for support was to outline, explain and provide an overview of Housing First principles, models, and good practice. An initial meeting with the management teams from the LA’s resulted in a presentation being given at the local homelessness forum attended by providers from statutory, non-statutory and third sector organisations. The purpose of this was to develop a better understanding of Housing First in advance of a potential small scale pilot. The PM provided ongoing support and guidance in this area.

Following continued attendance at the forum and additional conversations with the SHEO, concerns were raised around the quality and standard of ongoing work, including the skillset of the workforce. It was agreed that further work and involvement from Homeless Link was required.

**Change Needed:**

Several meetings were held between the local PM and SHEO where the concerns were outlined in more detail and considered objectively from a solution focused perspective. Another meeting was planned to include local stakeholders and the county wide Rough Sleeper Coordinator which was chaired by the PM to ensure impartial and objective direction and perspectives. Through these discussions, it became evident that lines of communication and partnership working had weakened over time and as a result, gaps were appearing in the outreach provision. The Outreach team was funded through a homelessness grant and was not hitting its targets. In addition to this, there were challenges regarding the skillset of the workforce, including recruitment of the right staff; and establishing trauma-informed and person-centred approaches. To overcome these challenges, information advice and guidance was provided by the PM to the SHEO and colleagues within the LA. It was decided that they would complete a small evaluation of current provision to determine the changes needed to the service. Some of the recommendations made by the PM included workforce development; best practice approaches; ensuring that all parties fully understood their responsibilities and accountability; and increased and ongoing monitoring of the service. These suggestions were taken on board and since then the outreach service has improved. All parties are clear on how this provision will continue to achieve its aims as part of the homelessness grant.

It was agreed that a Community of Practice would be facilitated for frontline workers for both Redditch borough and Bromsgrove district and was delivered in February 2020. This was facilitated as a localised event initially. However, following a conversation with the county wide Rough Sleeping Coordinator, it become clear that this would be beneficial to the wider county of Worcestershire, specifically in relation to rough sleeping and associated multiple disadvantage.

The rolling out of the Community of Practice to a county wide footprint took place in the summer 2020. It has provided staff with the opportunity to share good practice and improve communication, enabling frontline workers to take a solution focused approach to the challenges and barriers faced during their daily duties. For example, in the last 6 months CoP themes have included ‘approaches to supporting women and ‘domestic violence’. The Domestic Violence Project Coord inator presented an overview of the service and was introduced to frontline workers and the RSI Coordinator for the first time. They presented county wide data analysis for domestic violence and homelessness, bridging the gap between county and district levels. Other speaker and presenters at the CoP have included:

* Local DWP partnership managers
* CEO of Safer Stronger Consortium
* Birmingham And Black Country Liaison & Diversion Team

As a result of this ongoing support and impact of working with Homeless Link, Redditch and Bromsgrove councils have become Homeless Link members and the CoP has become well established. Throughout the pandemic CoP’s have been delivered online and have had consistent attendance ranging from 15 -25 frontline workers per session.

Relationships with providers and the Rough Sleeping Coordinator have been strengthened and open lines of communication remain in place.

The local PM continues to attend partnership forums and provides support as needed to the strategic leads, Rough Sleeping Coordinator and Homelessness Managers within the LA.

In regards to the initial Housing First pilot; they now have 2 Housing First Navigators supporting 14 customers, alongside a paid peer mentor with lived experience.

**Other support provided:**

Throughout the pandemic the PM has provided information, advice and guidance in some of the following area:

* Suspension of derogation
* EU settled status
* Value of lived experience and need for representation on this
* Attended homelessness forum
* Collation and dissemination updated guidance to members of the taskforce such as winter provision principles for example
* Engagement with frontline workers who independently contact the PM for advice and guidance around issues such as health inclusion, service delivery and providing local intelligence
* Provided advice on changes and planning of annual counts and estimates
* Met with recently appointed homelessness strategy manager provided guidance around workforce development
* Ongoing meetings and support provided to SHEO to allow for reflective and open discussions

**LA feedback:**

*‘The support I have received from Steve Barkess, Partnership Manager for Homeless Link has been invaluable. He has facilitated the setting up of a local Housing First Offer which supported entrenched rough sleepers starting in Redditch in September 2019 with the first placement, quickly accelerating to 5 at the start of the pandemic in March 2020. Steve has helped both Councils to develop stronger relationships with our local partners and helped to inform and educate us on services, legislation and good practice though our local homelessness partnership meetings and the development of Communities of Practice forums. During ‘Everyone In’ Steve helped provide information about how we might support EU citizens without recourse to public funds and we discussed the end of ‘Everyone In’ and how other local authorities were not returning to ‘Business as Usual’. We utilised Steve’s experience to help form an understanding of the definition of rough sleeping when many of our cohort were and are intermittently sofa surfing and also assisting with service redesign to look at how prevention, outreach and support into accommodation differ and the skills required by workers to deliver this.*

*We have two entrenched rough sleepers in a rural part of Bromsgrove who have required a different approach from assertive outreach and Steve has supported the Council when workers were experiencing difficulties in GP access due to their No Fixed Abode status. They have now both received their two Covid vaccinations.*

*Following the recent restructure of the Homelessness and Housing Solutions Team in Redditch we are planning a further meeting with Steve and key managers and officers from the Team to explore ongoing support needs and training requirements. Having become Homeless Link members are looking forward to increased training opportunities to look at strengths based and trauma informed approaches and advocacy skills for our in house homelessness services and partner agencies.’*

 Amanda Delahunty, Strategic Housing & Enabling Officer, Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils