



DAY CENTRES: MODELS, THEMES AND RESPONSES

Working with central and eastern European clients

Many day centres have seen changes in their client group as a result of migration from central and eastern European (CEE) countries. Day centres often struggle to meet the needs of these clients, for example due to language barriers, the lack of housing options and the complexity of employment, benefits and immigration rules. There are also general issues of confidence for staff and volunteers working with clients from other cultures, and the tension that can arise between clients of different nationalities.

This guidance draws on learning from visits and events that have taken place as part of the Day Centres Project, as well as the experience of several day centres that work effectively with central and eastern European clients. Their case studies demonstrate practical ways for services to develop their support.

Homeless Link would like to thank the day centres that contributed case studies: Booth Centre, Bristol Methodist Centre, Dellow Centre, Niebo Project and St Paul's.

For practical guidance on entitlements and reconnection for EEA nationals, see: www.homeless.org.uk/effective-action

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Language

Most services advertise for volunteers with specific language skills and use Google Translate to produce signs and information in key languages. Services with access to speakers of relevant languages have greater success in helping CEE clients to stop squatting or sleeping rough.

Access to translators is essential in order to have meaningful discussions about support and future plans. For example, talking through a person's feelings about returning to their home country without having secured employment and accommodation in the UK requires a certain level of fluency and cultural sensitivity. Trying to address these issues using only basic language is likely to lead to an incomplete understanding of the current situation and future options, for both worker and client.

Booth Centre, Manchester

The Booth Centre advertises for volunteers with specific languages; has secured funding to employ a Latvian/Russian speaking project worker; and has also set up a partnership with Salford University to provide community interpreters.

Bristol Methodist Centre

At Bristol Methodist Centre, project worker Chris found that learning a few Polish words made a big difference to relationships and trust with guests in the drop-in:

“Ask an English speaker among your Polish guests for help and start with the basics – hello, goodbye, please and thank you. Focus on how the words sound and don't worry about having a whole conversation. Once you start using these basic words regularly, it creates more trust. You can build a relationship through small steps, like saying 'thanks' when someone holds the door open for you. Then they want to speak English with you in return, because you're making an effort.

Learn new vocabulary when you need it, maybe 'how are you?' or 'are you drunk?' Phrases like 'be quiet' or 'calm down' are useful if there's an argument happening and you need to manage it.

Keep a bit of paper and a pen on you and write down words as you hear them. Write how they sound to you, don't worry about spelling! Make an effort to use them, in the same way you expect people to try and use English words.

As well as language, don't forget to take an interest in where people are from and what they've done in the past. Ask questions about their home town or previous jobs. It's about seeing people for more than their nationality or their current situation, and getting to know them as individuals.”

Community & culture

The way that a day centre provides support for individuals sets the tone for how groups of clients relate to each other within a service. Where there is a group of clients whose needs are different, e.g. due to language, there can be a perception from other service users that resources are being unfairly allocated. This perception creates resentments between groups of clients. Taking a personalised, case-by-case approach focused on individuals (as opposed to 'one size fits all') will reduce this risk, as will introducing a booking system for support appointments, rather than responding to ad hoc requests.

Cultural differences may have an impact on how people communicate. Understanding this can help staff and volunteers to reflect on their relationships with clients. For example, in some countries, 'please' and 'thank you' aren't used as frequently as in the UK. This may appear rude to staff in a British day centre when the client has no intention to give offence.

CEE clients often have a different experience of homelessness to UK nationals. Rough sleeping typically occurs as a consequence of losing employment or housing rather than a cumulative series of adverse life events. This means that the approach staff normally take may not meet the needs of these clients. For example, services used to offering informal social support in the drop-in might need to introduce a more practical model of advice and support.

St Paul's, Margate

At St Paul's, project manager Elaine (who lives locally) says their success comes from close links with the community, as Margate has a settled population of central and eastern European migrants as well as seasonal workers.

Volunteer translators work twice a week alongside Elaine to support people with welfare benefits, employment, access to healthcare and opening bank accounts. They check that migrants know their responsibilities e.g. paying National Insurance and ensuring school age children are in education.

The translators have been recruited through word of mouth and from the local volunteer bureau. They're given free lunches and the opportunity to take part in accredited courses running in the centre.

St Paul's holds regular events to engage both migrants and British people, including locals, rough sleepers and support providers. These have included a World Roma Day celebration and a Rethink mental health event, featuring live music and food from different countries. The events build support for the community centre and promote integration between people from different parts of the community.

Top tips:

- **Recruit volunteer translators**
- **Incentivise volunteers with personal development opportunities**
- **Hold open days to attract diverse members of your local community. Offer free food and music, and look for themes.**
- **Use events to raise your profile and find local volunteers with the right skills.**
- **Check that migrants know their legal responsibilities, don't assume they know already.**

Advice and support

CEE clients often experience homelessness for the first time after arriving in the UK, as a result of a change in circumstances such as losing employment or accommodation. For many of these clients, practical support is required to access employment or training, housing and any entitlements to welfare benefits. This may require a change of emphasis for those day centres that usually begin by looking at social and emotional support needs.

Booth Centre, Manchester

At the Booth Centre, approximately 30% of people accessing the service are Eastern Europeans. Initially they were all rough sleepers who had either lost their jobs and accommodation or who had never worked since arriving, including new arrivals and entrenched rough sleepers who have been in the UK for 2-5 years. The majority are single men between 30-55 years old. Most have an alcohol problem, some have mental health problems, many have physical health problems relating to their current lifestyle and a few have drug problems.

The Booth Centre offers a range of services to this group:

- **Assessments and the offer of a return home for those that want it. Replacement identification and flights/coaches home arranged and paid for.**
- **Help to find work, including a daily job club, writing CVs, organising work placements, helping with interview clothes/bus fares/mobiles.**
- **Building site health and safety training is run at the Centre, tests are then arranged and paid for. If people get work on building sites we buy them work boots/clothes.**
- **Training courses in First Aid, Manual Handling, Health and Safety, Food Hygiene are run at the centre giving people a useful work-based qualification.**
- **Work placements and Open College qualifications are provided at the centre in catering, warehouse skills and painting and decorating.**
- **ESOL classes.**
- **For those that qualify we help people to make a claim for Job Seekers Allowance, to get into a hostel, register for re-housing and move on to Housing Association or private rented tenancies.**
- **We ensure people are registered with a GP and are helped to access appropriate alcohol, drug, mental health, primary health, dental and optician services.**

In 2011/12 the Booth Centre helped:

- **61 people return to their homes in central and eastern Europe.**
- **27 people get replacement passports or travel documents.**
- **75 people with their benefit claims**
- **68 people to find temporary accommodation and 20 find Housing Association or private rented tenancies.**
- **27 central and eastern Europeans to secure employment.**

Barriers faced:

- ❖ The lack of appropriate alcohol services, particularly rehab and post detox dry accommodation which will accept people with a low level of English.
- ❖ A shortage of appropriate jobs.
- ❖ A shortage of mainstream ESOL provision.

Lessons learned:

Over a number of years we have documented the number of Eastern European rough sleepers and have consistently brought it to the attention of the local authority, UKBA, health services etc. This has resulted in the negotiation of referral pathways and funding.

We've adjusted our services to give more emphasis to getting people back to work, as some of this group are more work ready than more traditional rough sleepers and as many do not qualify for ESA they need to be actively seeking work to qualify for JSA. This has generally benefited everyone who uses the centre and many British people have benefited from the employment related services.

Many of the Eastern Europeans are skilled workmen and are keen to offer their services to us as a way of giving something back, so the Centre has benefited from the skills of plumbers, plasterers, decorators and gardeners. We have been able to incorporate this into our existing service user volunteering programme, with greatly enhanced benefits.

Recruiting volunteers with language skills and setting up the Community Interpreters project has been a huge benefit and made communication much easier.

Housing, employment & reconnections

Access to housing and welfare benefits varies for central and eastern European clients depending on, for example, their country of origin, employment status and length of time in the UK.

Some people in this client group will be unable to exit rough sleeping or squatting, for example because they have no recourse to public funds, are unable to find work or do not have permission to work. Reconnection to their home country may be the best or only offer that support services can make, bearing in mind the increase in complexity of needs and deterioration in health and well-being associated with sleeping rough or squatting.

Many CEE clients only experience homelessness after arriving in the UK – someone who is rough sleeping here will not necessarily be a rough sleeper in their home country.

Dellow Centre, London

The Dellow Centre, part of Providence Row (PRC), has a robust assessment process which every new client completes, which identifies the most appropriate services for each individual and establishes a clear action plan. We identify the strongest local connection, where the client has social capital, and link them to services in this area so that their action plan is sustainable. We look at whether central and eastern European clients are exercising their treaty rights – if so, we link them to UK services as appropriate. If not, we work with partner agencies and clients to supportively reconnect them to their home country or other appropriate place.

In the last quarter of 2011-12, PR helped to reconnect 11 people to their home country and worked with outreach teams to place 9 people in long term accommodation.

Barriers faced:

Keeping clients engaged with services especially when difficult news has to be delivered. A number of CEE nationals have come to the UK with great hopes. They may feel disappointed and embarrassed that these hopes have not been realised. Where a reconnection plan is suggested by PR, clients are sometimes very concerned as to how their family and friends back home will react to their return. Staff discuss how to manage this and are mindful that things like a new set of clothes and a haircut can help to bolster a client's confidence for their journey home. Additionally staff speak with reconnecting clients about what preparations they can make back home that may assist them should they want to return to the UK and successfully find work in future.

Lessons learned:

- **Keep the lines of communication open with clients and partner agencies**
- **Find out what support clients and partner agencies need from your service**
- **Action plan together with clients and partner agencies**
- **Be clear about what you can and cannot do right from the start**
- **Keep accurate records about work with clients**

Dellow Centre client case study:

Client HC was referred to the Dellow Centre by Broadway's Outreach Team in the City of London. HC is an A2 national and had worked in the UK previously but, when a new company took over, he lost his job and could no longer pay for his accommodation. He knew that, as an A2 national, there were restrictions around access to publicly funded services including benefits.

HC was sleeping in a particularly dangerous location. He came to the Dellow Centre for a shower and breakfast after Outreach told him about the service. A keyworker from the Dellow Centre's Local Team met regularly with HC and Outreach to discuss his situation. The keyworker was English-speaking so they used Google Translate or colleagues with language skills when needed.

HC said that he needed a safety certificate to enable him to apply for work in his sector. The keyworker researched providers and certificates and found a free, good quality course, as well as helping HC to work on his CV.

HC and his keyworker discussed housing options with Outreach. This led to HC being placed in short term accommodation via a project specialising in support to work-ready migrants, which allows him to save a deposit while receiving support to find his own tenancy.

Within 2 months of first meeting with the Local Team, HC found employment in his chosen field. With both key areas of HC's action plan completed, and with the agreement of Outreach, the case was closed by the Local Team. HC has stopped using the Dellow Centre as he no longer needs their support.

Specialist service provision

As with any client group, supporting CEE clients is about finding the right resources, skills and approach. However, there is a common perception among day centres that positive change cannot be achieved with CEE clients. Specialist services counter this perception by demonstrating the kind of positive outcomes that are achievable once resources are put in place. Generalist services can learn from the experience of specialist services in working towards positive outcomes.

Niebo Project, Leicester

Niebo Project, part of Leicestershire Community Projects Trust (LCPT), is the only central and eastern European support service in Leicester. The service is based at the Anchor Centre, which also hosts a wet day centre.

Since 2010, a growing number of CEE clients have been accessing the Anchor Centre with issues related to alcohol use. In 2011 LCPT recognised that were other vulnerable eastern European clients with complex needs who did not have alcohol problems but also required a high level of support, especially rough sleepers. LCPT successfully applied to the Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund for 5 years' funding. In April 2012 they launched Niebo Project, employing a full time Eastern European Worker, who can communicate in both Polish and Russian.

Niebo Project's aim is to provide advocacy, help and support to the most vulnerable people from A8 countries. We currently support nearly 40 Eastern European clients, mainly from Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Slovakia, in conjunction with the Anchor Day Centre.

Our project provides support and advice not only to the service users but also to agencies and professionals, who come into contact with eastern European nationals in the course of their work.

The Niebo Project is working to achieve four main outcomes:

- 1. CEE nationals accessing the project will have increased prospects of employment**
- 2. CEE nationals involved in the project will have improved access to all appropriate health services**
- 3. CEE nationals involved in the project will experience reduced homelessness through improved access to housing**
- 4. CEE nationals will be less isolated because the project will participate more fully in the cultural and social life of the city.**

We have worked hard to establish good working links with other agencies that have agreed to work in co-operation with our service to support our eastern European clients.

Actions to achieve outcomes:

1. CEE nationals accessing the project will have increased prospects of employment

We established working relationship with the National Career Service, which agreed to run career and training advice sessions along with CV building sessions delivered by two Polish speaking workers

The manager of the Dawn Centre, where Leicestershire Carers designated worker runs a work club, agreed that our Eastern European clients will be able to access work club every Wednesday supported by the NIEBO Project worker.

We approached organisation called APEX and are in process of establishing joint working activities.

We help our clients with job searches, filling out application forms, supporting those making phone calls to potential employers.

With the co-operation of Leicester City Council's Homeless Outreach Team we organise travel documents/passports for clients by liaising with embassies and making transport arrangements.

2. CEE nationals involved in the project will have improved access to all appropriate health services

We arranged for CPN from Homeless Inclusion Healthcare to deliver one to one sessions at Niebo Project (our worker provides interpretation).

We arranged for HIV awareness presentation to be delivered by LASS, who will also be delivering a Hepatitis awareness session. There is a possibility of LASS offering rapid HIV testing at our centre.

We translated information regarding accessing alcohol awareness sessions and medical checks provided by Homeless Inclusion Healthcare at the Dawn Centre into Polish and Russian to make these services more accessible.

We help clients to register with a GP and dentists.

We arranged a meeting with all agencies offering alcohol support in Leicester to decide how our clients can receive sufficient support.

3. CEE nationals involved in the project will experience reduced homelessness through improved access to housing

Since the NIEBO project launched in April 2012 we have worked in partnership with other agencies such as the Council's hostels and Outreach team, and voluntary sector organisations. We have taken an active role in the Rough Sleepers Task Force and Case Panel, which resulted in reducing the number of Eastern Europeans rough sleepers to zero.

We work closely with hostels and housing providers by accompanying clients to interviews and taking part in joint support sessions

We support clients who have moved into independent accommodation by applying for housing benefits, community care grants, helping to register with utility suppliers.

4. CEE nationals will be less isolated because the project will participate more fully in the cultural and social life of the city.

We have established working relationship with the Polish Church and are planning to establish working relationships with other churches as religion is a very important part of life for CEE clients.

We have established working links with other faith groups in the city and we take part in voluntary and faith groups' forums.

We have successfully interviewed three Polish speaking volunteers, who will start working at the Niebo Project very soon and will help with running the project, translation, accompanying clients to appointments, cooking, helping to design our own website and possibly a newsletter.

The project will be managed by a steering group consisting of agency and community representatives and service users.

By using a holistic approach and establishing good working relationships with other agencies, we were able to produce the following outcomes:

- Reducing number of eastern European rough sleepers to zero
- 20 clients moved into hostels
- 2 into social housing
- 1 into privately rented accommodation
- 3 supporting positive reconnection

Other outcomes:

- 21 people engaged in ESOL classes
- 4 people applied for apprenticeships with LCC
- 7 people attended a presentation delivered by National Career Service, 8 people have been booked on CV workshops
- 6 people attended mental health one-to-one sessions with a CPN
- 9 people attended HIV awareness sessions and 5 people had a rapid HIV test
- 2 people attended alcohol awareness sessions
- 6 people attended interviews at embassies