

## Framework

## Street Outreach

## Lincolnshire and Rutland

A county-wide outreach service for people sleeping rough

### Key facts

**Location**

Lincolnshire and Rutland, East Midlands

**Grant**

£247,111

**Duration**

3 years

**Start Date**

1/1/12

**Client group**

People at risk of or already sleeping rough

**Supported during the period of the grant**

1,293 people

**Contact details**

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## Overview

**Framework established Lincolnshire and Rutland's first street outreach service, helping people to find routes off the street, including local supported and private rented housing and reconnections within the UK and to other EU countries.**

The service has its roots in the strong partnership ethos of the Lincolnshire Housing Strategy Group, as well as good links between district authorities and the City Council in Lincoln.

“Framework Outreach Service team have worked extraordinarily hard. They have provided the outreach service across Lincolnshire and Rutland reaching people who otherwise would continue to sleep rough and potentially become entrenched. The district councils could not address this in isolation and so Framework were commissioned to undertake this work across the counties and responded to the challenge very positively, professionally and working with partners to achieve successful outcomes, which is key to it all. The legacy is that Lincolnshire County Council see the need to continue the street outreach service by funding through Public Health.”

Principle Housing Officer, Boston Borough Council

## Identifying need

Lincolnshire had ongoing issues with rough sleeping, often focused in the areas of Boston, East Lindsay, Lincoln City and South Holland. In addition there were lower numbers of rough sleepers dispersed across the very large county area. Rough sleeping groups include European migrants and people who were entrenched in a street homeless lifestyle. An official 2011 rough sleeper estimate figure of 42 (on a specific night) as well as on-going concern about antisocial behaviour, demonstrated a clear gap in provision.

“In Lincolnshire there was no outreach at all and a lack of understanding of the rough sleeping issue ... There were 42 rough sleepers (estimated) and some hotspots like Boston and East Lindsay.”

Street Outreach Service Manager, Framework

A highly effective Housing Strategy Group in Lincolnshire, provided a strong basis for creating an efficient and effective countywide outreach service.

## The funding

In early 2011 the sub-region of Lincolnshire and Rutland was awarded a grant of £70,000 from the Department for Communities and Local Government to tackle rough sleeping in the hotspots of Boston and South Holland and to begin to develop a countywide approach. This initial funding formed the basis of a successful application to the Homelessness Transition Fund for £247,000 to provide a countywide outreach service for three years. The HTF funding was match funded by contributions from the eight local authority areas involved.

“The Homelessness Transition Fund enabled us to develop the service for the whole of Lincolnshire as part of one project. Without it we may have been able to pilot it but it would have then stopped due to funding considerations.”

Principle Housing Officer, Boston Borough Council

In December 2011 Framework was commissioned to deliver the Lincolnshire and Rutland Outreach Service, working to the principles of No Second Night Out. The service consisted initially of six and more recently of four outreach workers, including a team leader. It aimed to:

- Encourage members of the public to play an active role by reporting and referring people sleeping rough.
- Help people sleeping rough to access a place of safety where their needs could be quickly assessed and they could receive advice on their options.
- Assist people sleeping rough to access emergency accommodation and other services, such as healthcare, if needed.
- Reconnect people sleeping rough back to their local communities, unless there was a good reason why they cannot return.

## Outcomes

### A joined up approach to helping rough sleepers

Framework's Street Outreach Service created a joined up approach to helping people sleeping rough in Lincolnshire, reaching over 1,200 people already or at immediate risk of sleeping rough.

The Lincolnshire and Rutland Housing Strategy Group and subgroups provided a wide network of statutory and voluntary agencies which formed the basis of extensive work to build partnerships across the county. The street outreach team attended meetings and visited services forming excellent relationships, easing referral routes and influencing local approaches to better fit with the No Second Night Out approach. For example, local district councils provided some additional funding to enable reconnections to other EU countries, and short-term accommodation was sometimes provided in Lincoln City subject to the relevant local authority committing to move the person back to their home area within six months.

The previous lack of a coherent response to rough sleeping across the county had resulted in Lincoln acting as a hub, which attracted people sleeping rough due to the basic services available, such as the night shelter. However, moving to the city area without planning accommodation increased the risk of individuals becoming more entrenched in a street lifestyle. The countywide approach helped to ensure that people stayed where they were most likely to access services rather than migrating to Lincoln in search of services.

“Services did used to direct people to Lincoln without a local connection thinking they could access more help there. We took examples to the Housing Strategy Group to show people what had happened to people who do come to Lincoln with no local connection. We only offer a space in temporary accommodation in Lincoln if the persons own local authority area will get them resettled in the next six months – in the future this will be within three months.”

Street Outreach Manager, Framework

### Engaging the public

In a large geographical area, it is essential to ensure that the public and as many services and businesses as possible identify people sleeping rough.

Framework launched a freephone number and fundraised for an on-call rota system, with a member of staff responsible for answering the phone 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The number received nearly 1,000 calls outside office hours in 2014/15. It has proved an effective communication tool, both for those identifying people sleeping rough, and people who need help themselves. The number is advertised on cards, posters and on local radio.





## Reducing rough sleeping

The Outreach Team worked to the principles of No Second Night Out to reduce rough sleeping in Lincolnshire. The rough sleeping estimate for a single night was halved in the first year the service operated, from 42 to 21. This figure has remained stable despite increases nationally.

With any service user, the team undertakes an assessment, and works towards making an offer to individuals about their best route off the streets. The assessment is central to the team's approach and is carried out thoroughly but informally, in a location flexible to the person being assessed in order to speed the process up. These locations have included fast food outlets and a tent.

“We work towards making a realistic offer through our assessment. We use a persistent and consistent approach – ensuring that we are clear and avoid mixed messages. There might be paperwork and phone calls behind the scenes but externally (to the service user) it's a clear message.”

Street Outreach Manager, Framework

For people new to sleeping rough, a rapid response is essential to avoid the risks of longer term rough sleeping and, in some cases, to achieve a rapid outcome. An example of this is where someone has accommodation or is in priority need and can access temporary accommodation via a Housing Options team. The team has a target to try and find people sleeping rough within 72 hours of a referral being made.

For people who have been sleeping rough long term, the team operates a persistent approach, not removing anyone from the caseload unless they are in accommodation or known to have moved out of the area. Given the small size of the team it is important that cases can be handed over to accommodation providers at an appropriate point. In some cases the team retain some contact with people who are in accommodation but who are at risk of returning to sleeping rough.

To ensure that moves off the street are sustainable the team ensure that offers are linked with support if appropriate. Those

with on-going support needs will be linked in to Supported Housing or into the Private Rented Sector with Floating Support.

Because there had previously been minimal 'on street' support for those sleeping rough, a number of long term entrenched rough sleepers already needed outreach support. The team have a flexible approach with people who have slept rough long term, drawing on personalised models of support.

“There were three cases in particular. Between them they had been rough sleeping for 60 years. We were told they were almost un-housable. One of these people had severe mental health problems and we supported him to get a tenancy. I always say the best £50 we ever spent was the TV. A £50 telly that kept him in that property in the early days ... We linked in with a Framework floating support service. The first time we took him to a GP they said in front of him: 'I am not clogging up the system with needless referrals.' We went to another GP and they referred on straight away; advocacy was needed in that case.”

Street Outreach Team Leader, Framework

In the case of reconnections measures are always taken by the Outreach Service to ensure someone is well prepared for reconnection and has a plan for accommodation on arrival in their destination whether this is in the UK or overseas. The team seek to organise very short-term accommodation in Lincolnshire to ensure people are prepared and ready to travel.

In total in 2014/15 the team supported 123 people into accommodation, including moves into supported housing (82), the private rented sector (18) and local authority housing (12 into long term accommodation and 11 temporary accommodation outcomes). 47 people were reconnected within the UK and 42 to other countries during the same period.

## A legacy of an ongoing outreach service in Lincolnshire

The legacy of the Framework Outreach Service is that a dedicated outreach service will continue across the county for at least three years, with likely extension to five years, under a new commissioning model which sees public health being prepared to take a share of responsibility for homelessness services.

Rutland will work with Leicestershire to address rough sleeping in the future so the area is not part of the remodeled service which will come into effect in summer 2015.

Initially dedicated outreach was not included in the tender for countywide floating support but the local authorities that

benefitted from the Framework Outreach service lobbied for its inclusion. The service will be delivered by P3 under the new contract as a distinct element of a wider contract including countywide floating support.

## Learning from Lincolnshire and Rutland Outreach Service

The Lincolnshire Outreach Service is a prime example of how outreach can be established across multiple local authorities in a large and diverse area. It highlights useful principles in delivering the best routes off the streets to a wide-ranging client group.

### A strategic community and partnership working

The origins of the Framework Outreach Service are in the Lincolnshire Housing Strategy Group. The ongoing partnerships between the seven districts as well as their effective working with Lincoln City provided a basis for developing a strong and credible bid for HTF funding, including a commitment of match funding with contributions from each area. The existing networks also ensured that relevant services quickly knew about the new team and eased the process of establishing data sharing agreements.

The Outreach Service built on this foundation meeting with Heads of Housing Options at each local authority area, attending forums and discussions with local services. A clear message was given that the team would always seek to find an appropriate and lasting solution to benefit the individual.

“We ‘got out there’; we did lots of partnership work and meetings and made ourselves very accessible right from the start which is very important. We respond and get back to people and build up relationships. We make sure we are fresh in peoples’ minds and relevant to them. We deliver – supporting people and getting results.”

Street Outreach Manager, Framework

Creating a targeted and accessible service across a large area, the Outreach Service takes an intelligence-led approach to outreach, attending known sleep sites and quickly following up referrals from the freephone number and any StreetLink referrals passed on to the local authorities. The principle of reaching people as quickly as possible is central to the approach. Handing cases over to other services as soon as possible ensures a focus on those currently rough sleeping.

Working in an area with many migrant workers, having Polish and Russian speaking team members from the outset was important to ensure the service accessible.

The freephone number has been invaluable in making the team accessible to service users who are spread out across a large area. This service means people can stay in touch without needing their own phone or credit on their phone. The availability of the team communicates to individuals that their welfare is important and that there is someone there to help them and check they are safe.

“It’s very rare to get our voicemail. It’s extremely important to us as if you get up at four in the morning you can get in touch, we tell people ‘stay in touch at any time; it doesn’t necessarily mean we will be able to house you immediately but we will work with you to identify the best route out of street homelessness.’”

Street Outreach Manager, Framework

### Rapid, effective assessment and persistent follow up

The team make rapid assessments and provide clear messages about what is on offer to individuals to ensure a swift move off the streets wherever possible. For more complex cases persistent follow up helps to ensure sustainable outcomes.

“Often we can help people immediately – sometimes they actually have a tenancy or they are in priority need. We work with someone until they are housed. At team meetings we are pushing for what is happening, tight recording of information, keeping track.”

Street Outreach Manager, Framework

Where people are reconnected, the Outreach Service ensures that this is a planned process with accommodation at the destination, and where appropriate links have been made with services.

“Reconnection is about ending, not just moving someone’s homelessness. We ensure that someone has got support and accommodation and there are good services for them to go to.”

Street Outreach Manager, Framework



## Katie and Marcus

### Helping an entrenched street homeless couple towards a stable, family home

Katie and Marcus had been homeless, usually sleeping rough, for around seven years before meeting the Outreach Service in 2012. The couple had recently been excluded from a hostel and were 'back to rough sleeping, using every day, injecting amphetamines and walking around begging, maybe going to the church for lunch.'

As long-term rough sleepers Katie and Marcus were targeted for regular contact with the Street Outreach team during outreach shifts:

“(The worker) started to build a relationship with us, treat us like a person, not like a scumbag.”

The Outreach Service was able to provide a timely intervention when things reached a low-point, which increased the couple’s motivation to accept help and reduce drug use. Katie was pregnant and they wanted to move away from a street lifestyle and live as a family with the baby, having had previous children taken into care and adopted. However they felt that there was unlikely to be an acceptable accommodation option for them having been excluded from Supported Housing and having arrears with the council.

“With Katie being pregnant, we knew this was the last chance; this or be on the streets. At this time we wanted to change and turn life around, we saw others on the street who had run out of options.”

Due to Marcus’ criminal record the couple had previously had a referral to an accommodation service for families rejected.

However, knowing the very limited options open to the couple, a member of the outreach team took the couple to a meeting at the service. This advocacy helped the couple secure a place to stay together where they could reduce their drug use.

The Outreach Service handed the case over to the accommodation provider but given the couples long rough sleeping history and vulnerability they stayed in regular touch with them, attending meetings and supporting them through the drawn out process to determine custody of their baby.

“We knew (the Outreach Service Worker) did want us to succeed but he wanted to be honest. If he was not quite ‘on our side’ he was closer to us than others were. It was comforting, someone to talk to.

“We know that (the Outreach Service Worker) told Social Services about the pregnancy but we respect that he told us - honesty was much lacking, people say one thing but do another, we know he did it for the right reasons.”

The couple attended all arranged contact sessions with their baby after it was taken into care following the birth, attended assessments and parenting classes, took drug tests and went to court twice where they were finally granted full custody. After a period living in a ‘step down’ flat they have secured a council house on agreement that they pay back their outstanding arrears. As well as looking after their youngest child they have renewed contact with family members including another of their children.

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