VIEWS FROM THE FRONTLINE

The 2017/18 Winter Initiative
Acknowledgements

With thanks to Dougie Paterson, Consultant in Social Development and Lorraine McGrath, Simon Community Scotland.

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It is with great pride that we present this brief report from our frontline staff on what has been achieved through the 2017/18 Winter Initiative. The impact is a clear testament to the commitment and expertise of our frontline Street Teams and staff at Simon Community Scotland, Streetwork, Aberdeen Cyrenians and the many local agencies that we each work with across the three cities – Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen.

We had no more than days and weeks to move from planning to action and rapid delivery. Whilst the additional resources were limited they offered an important catalyst for that action, as did the mandate that came from the Scottish Government and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) agenda.

No wheels were reinvented. We simply amplified and extended existing effective models of practice, strengthened collaborations, focused our attentions and actions on the most vulnerable and, most vitally, gave the power to act and direct resources to those that know best and have the greatest opportunity; the staff that know, meet and work to engage people sleeping rough every day.

Much of what we did over the winter was already in practice, but in much smaller ways, this initiative gave approaches greater life and formality and in some cases increased capacity to act. It also provided a way to properly evidence the value and impact of both existing and new ways of working.

The positive impact over the winter, particularly with the harsh weather conditions and our ‘Beast from the East’ experience, cannot be overestimated. Literally hundreds of people did not spend the night sleeping on the streets of our three main cities. Many received much needed health inputs and found sustainable resolution as a direct result.

Many of those reached, engaged and enabled off the streets during this period had long histories of experiencing rough sleeping, extremely poor health and a consistent struggle with engaging with support and treatment.

This report continues the theme of a focus on our frontline staff as it captures what they feel were the vital elements of the Winter Initiative and what they see as the key learning points.

Thanks to everyone who pushed their organisational and professional boundaries, moved beyond their comfort zone, saw more opportunity than risk and barriers, and worked tirelessly (as always) to just make things happen for those we are most concerned about. You have without doubt saved and changed lives through your actions.

Thanks must also go to the Minister for Local Government and Housing, Kevin Stewart, our colleagues on the HARSAG and our statutory local government and HSCP partners in Glasgow, Aberdeen and Edinburgh. Without the drive, national mandate and local willingness, we have not have achieved so much for so many.

Final thanks and recognition must go to our own Street Teams and Outreach Workers who continue to lead the way in enabling people to find a life off the streets.

Lorraine McGrath
CEO Simon Community Scotland and Streetwork
Aberdeen Cyrenians could not have achieved the speed of response and the extent of our outcomes for those rough sleeping here on the streets of Aberdeen over the worst winter we have had in ten years without our dedicated staff and the positive partnership with Aberdeen City Council’s (ACC) Housing Support teams. In addition, the work with the community safety partnership, A&E and police custody service ensured high awareness of the service and improved positive outcomes for those rough sleeping. The establishment of assertive outreach rough sleeping has made a difference this year. Key discussions around ‘what happens next’ for individuals that outreach workers engage with in terms of securing settled accommodation and appropriate support is ongoing. We are exploring a range of options to allow rapid rehousing, Housing First, for those with multiple complex needs.

Developing the by ‘name lists approach’ and the flexible fund also allowed Aberdeen Cyrenians and ACC to do positive work looking at the alternative paths out of rough sleeping and into temporary accommodation.

The efforts of our staff at Aberdeen Cyrenians to move to developing and implementing an assertive outreach rough sleeping programme rapidly, deserves to be acknowledged. The staff team pushed the organisational boundaries beyond what could reasonably have been expected of them.

Their continuing efforts will be crucial to identifying positive long-term outcomes for the people we worked with over the winter.

The multiple complex needs expressed by the majority of people we worked with over the programme highlighted the need for continuing support and alternative roots out of rough sleeping and homelessness, which recognise and engage the multiple contributing factors which pushed people towards rough sleeping initially. I would like to thank our partners and my staff - without them, we could not have successfully supported so many people from the street to safe, secure and warm accommodation.

Mike Burns
CEO Aberdeen Cyrenians
What has become known as the 'Winter Initiative' developed from the priority placed on ending homelessness in the Programme for Government, published late in 2017. This led to the formation of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) in November 2017 who were tasked with framing recommendations to inform the programmes work. The first question the group were required to respond to was: **what can be done to reduce rough sleeping this winter (2017/18)?** Hence a process or rapid action and resource allocation commenced and this report captures the enhanced activities of Simon Community Scotland, Streetwork and Aberdeen Cyrenians frontline services and the many partners they worked with in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen that resulted.

This independent report was commissioned by Simon Community Scotland, Streetwork and Aberdeen Cyrenians to describe the impact of the 2017/18 Winter Initiative by frontline staff. The report is based mainly on narratives from semi-structured interviews with 30 key staff involved in the delivery of actions in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen. Almost all interviews were conducted face-to-face and undertaken in May 2018 in all three cities. Notes from HARSAG Winter Action progress reports were consulted. Preliminary analysis of the 168 occasions when Personalised Budgets/Flexible Emergency Funds were used is presented, alongside a small sample of case studies to illustrate the purpose and outcomes from the use of Personalised Budgets.

This report would not have been possible without the knowledge, wisdom and cooperation of those staff who so willingly shared their insights. Their words have been quoted as much as possible.

Thank you to staff from:

- Simon Community Scotland (Glasgow);
- Streetwork (Edinburgh);
- Aberdeen Cyrenians;
- Marie Trust (Glasgow);
- The Glasgow City Mission (Glasgow);
- Edinburgh Cyrenians;
- Bethany Christian Trust (Edinburgh);
- The Access Point (Edinburgh).

Particular thanks go to Megan Thompson (Simon Community Scotland RSVP, Glasgow), Glasgow) and Jan Williamson (Streetwork, Edinburgh) for their help in connecting researcher Dougie Paterson with so many wonderful frontline staff.

An Executive Summary is provided (p7). The main body of the report presents a Big Picture overview of the Winter Initiative - what happened, the impact and implications (p8-15). The report concludes with additional information on the specific actions taken in each of the three cities, as well as more information about the Personalised Budgets.

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1Please note: These terms are used interchangeably in this report. Frontline workers in Glasgow and Edinburgh typically referred to ‘Personalised Budgets’, while those in Aberdeen used the term ‘Flexible Emergency Funds’ or ‘Flexible Funds’. More detail is contained throughout the report, including the Executive Summary overleaf.
Executive Summary

The 2017/18 Winter Initiative was delivered as part of a national drive and shared commitment to eradicate rough sleeping in Scotland. Led by the Scottish Government via HARSAG, the initiative was a set of immediate and rapid actions rolled out for the winter months and delivered by a range of frontline organisations. Key findings in this report are:

- The momentum and national ambition to end rough sleeping is shared and owned at local level. Actions from the Winter Initiative have directly supported frontline staff to better connect and persistently engage people who sleep rough and enable life off the streets;
- The introduction of Personalised Budgets/Flexible Emergency Funds has been a trail blazing innovation, empowering frontline staff to make timely on-the-spot decisions to end rough sleeping. Used as a last resort, these funds were viewed as the deciding factor in encouraging people who sleep rough off the streets and into accommodation with wraparound support services;
- Expenditure on Personalised Budgets/Flexible Emergency Funds has been modest but has produced remarkable results in immediately preventing rough sleeping, increasing repatriation, enabling employment and access to wraparound support services. There were universal calls to have this fund available all year round;
- Strategic partnerships, particularly with Local Authorities, have driven a system change by increased collaboration and proactive working to seek joint solutions. The Winter Initiative is only one part of a convergence of long term strategic efforts to end rough sleeping for good;
- Stronger inter-agency working has driven local implementation of the Winter Initiative. The Inter-Agency Street Networks (ISN) in Glasgow and Edinburgh brought a consistent focus on people who sleep rough, increased coordination, collaboration and cohesive networking;
- Rapid deployment of the first Assertive Outreach Service (AORS) for people who sleep rough in Aberdeen was described as a ‘game changer’. The AORS prevented 76 people from rough sleeping from December 2017 - May 2018, supported by direct access to accommodation. The AORS is temporarily funded until 30th June 2018 and there is rationale for it to be sustained into at least next winter;
- Increased capacity and co-location of partner services within night/care shelters and outreach hubs has increased the speed and flow of referrals for follow-on support in both Edinburgh and Glasgow. Additional funding to increase staffing and capacity for winter night shelter provision enhanced the ability of staff to engage at night whilst providing a place of safety during the winter months;
- The model of direct and rapid access accommodation in Edinburgh was valued for its ability to work with multiple complex needs of those likely to be excluded from other types of accommodation. Critically access was managed via the Streetwork Street Team, enabling them to assertively target the most vulnerable and immediately offer a place without further recourse to other parties. This type of provision was consistently regarded as gap in Glasgow and still required for Edinburgh.
The 2017/18 Winter Initiative amplified, formalised and added some new capacity to much of the excellent work already underway to reduce and prevent rough sleeping in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen. The actions from the Winter Initiative have built on these foundations. Key actions included:

- Increasing the capacity of night shelter provision in Edinburgh during the winter months, including additional staffing to engage with more people during the night and linkage into follow-on services;
- Expanding occasional use of small budgets for personal and exceptional items into a legitimate process via Personalised Budgets - reaching more people as a result. This includes people with no recourse to public funds;
- Promoting greater flow between services by more co-location of staff and increasing the chance of engagement with follow-on services – fewer barriers to access may now exist;
- Rapid deployment of the first Assertive Outreach Service by Aberdeen Cyrenians to identify and engage people who sleep rough, most of whom did not present to drop-in services before;
- Routine sharing of intelligence and cooperation via the ISN led to fewer instances where people are lost by the network of services;
- More intense targeting of the most vulnerable and of most concern through ‘by name list’ prioritisation.

A key feature of the Winter Initiative was the rapid deployment of resources to extend the capacity and reach of existing services and set up new ones, such as the Assertive Outreach Service in Aberdeen. Activities already underway, such as Inter-Agency Street Networks (ISN), did not receive specific additional funding but played a key role in a network response to rough sleepers over the winter. Further funding was allocated for other purposes such as staffing, coordination and extreme weather provision. The majority of funds for the 2017/18 Winter Initiative was allocated to:

- Hopetoun Crescent direct and rapid access facility (Edinburgh, £90k additional Scottish Government (SG) funding);
- Winter Care Shelter (Edinburgh, £52k additional funding) (£27k from SG, £25k from Social Bite);
- The Assertive Outreach Service (AORS) (Aberdeen, £80k additional SG funding) also includes funding for the extreme weather provision in Aberdeen;
- Personalised Budgets / Flexible Emergency Funds (Glasgow £50k, Edinburgh £50k and Aberdeen £5k additional funding). Severe Weather response funds £15k each for Glasgow and Edinburgh. (In Aberdeen - part of the £80k);
- Increased targeted outreach in to Glasgow Winter Night Shelter and Edinburgh Winter Care Shelter (£26k SG funding with an additional £11k from Simon Community Scotland and £5k from Govan Law Centre);
- Total additional financial resources approximately £399k.
The focus on improving coordination, increasing capacity and empowering staff were key principles of the Winter Initiative. These have resonated with staff who have owned and driven these actions at the frontline.

Productive inter-agency working and coordination was strengthened and drove implementation at local level. Formal coordination structures like Inter Agency Street Network (ISN and equivalent in Aberdeen) helped bring together a focus on individuals of most concern and empower cohesive networking. They are likely to remain as a mutual delivery structure for future initiatives, alongside strong local strategic partnerships to drive the shared ambition to end rough sleeping.

The introduction of Personalised Budgets/Flexible Emergency Funds has significantly empowered frontline staff and produced very promising early results, especially in providing scope to immediately prevent rough sleeping on the spot. This empowered staff to use their discretion in finding creative ways to end rough sleeping and engaged people in wraparound support services. There were universal calls to make the funds available all year round. If this is not possible, Personalised Budgets should be strongly considered for use again next winter.

Additional funding and investment to increase staffing and capacity for winter night/care shelter provision enhanced the ability of staff to engage at night whilst providing a place of safety during severe winter weather. Increased co-location of partner services within night shelters and outreach hubs has increased the speed and flow of referrals for follow-on support in both Edinburgh and Glasgow. Future opportunities for co-location could be maximised wherever possible to strengthen the safely net of support services.

The model of direct and rapid access accommodation in Edinburgh was valued for its ability to work with multiple complex needs of those likely to be excluded from other types of accommodation. The outcomes achieved were directly influenced by the ability to directly and immediately access the accommodation by Streetwork Street Team and by an ability to accept both pets and couples. This type of provision was consistently seen as a gap in Glasgow and still required for Edinburgh. It may be this type of facility is a necessary temporary measure as other housing with support models become available. The direct access to housing model being applied in Aberdeen may provide useful insight to inform these developments.

Why was it different and more effective?

These additional resources, whilst modest, proved important in driving decisions, enabling rapid implementation and acting as a catalyst for action.
What should have happened anyway? (in the absence of the initiative)

Some of the actions and funding for the 2017/18 Winter Initiative bolstered existing services and initiatives set up during previous winter periods and delivered via charitable donations throughout the year. These include winter night/care shelters and existing outreach teams in Glasgow and Edinburgh, purchasing emergency access to hotel accommodation, repatriation funding/support and the provision of limited personal budgets. These would have continued in the absence of the Winter Initiative, albeit with more limited capacity and narrower scope to immediately end rough sleeping before the introduction of Personalised Budgets/Flexible funds. The drive towards persistent engagement and provision of wraparound care was an existing approach for all services.

Greater cooperation and partnership working was already growing in all three cities, especially with locals authorities and the Street Teams and partner agencies. For example the ISN in Glasgow, introduced a year earlier, coordinated through the Simon Community Scotland Street Team, was already proving to be an effective structure in regular coordination of inter-agency interventions (see p12). The lack of direct and rapid access accommodation that can be accessed directly by the Street Team, whilst partly ameliorated through the Hopetoun facility in Edinburgh, has remained a significant gap in Glasgow.

In Aberdeen, engagement of people who sleep rough may not have been as extensive in the absence of the Assertive Outreach approach, although close working with Aberdeen City Council (ACC) was already underway to provide direct access to housing.
What was the system change?

Glasgow

There was strong consensus from all those consulted that shared understanding, joint working and inter-agency cooperation have increased considerably in Glasgow in recent times. Whilst underway before, the Winter Initiative has amplified the impact and empowered the frontline staff involved.

System and culture changes reported include:

- Continued persistent engagement and relationships with people who sleep rough, strengthened by coordinated outreach, rapid assessment and access to Personalised Budgets;
- Extended outreach to enable access to temporary and long term accommodation, with wraparound care as a key condition;
- Marked increase in shared understanding and closer working with Glasgow City Council (GCC) commissioning and housing teams;
- Continued inter-agency working via the ISN - especially via regular weekly meetings and shared knowledge of people of concern through a ‘by name list’ approach;
- Changes in emphasis by Glasgow City Council staff with less focus on measurement by numbers and more on ‘people of concern’ with a willingness to seek joint solutions;
- Instances where housing and support options have been proactively set up in anticipation of uptake, especially for vulnerable people with multiple complex needs;
- Strong links and day-to-day working between services with co-location and close proximity of some services;
- Strong evidence that a cooperative culture between services is now becoming routine in Glasgow.

‘We’d still be doing what we do (without the Winter Initiative) but it would not be as widespread as it is now.’

Edinburgh

Similar to Glasgow, there was strong consensus that shared understanding, joint working and inter-agency cooperation have increased considerably in Edinburgh. System and culture changes reported over this winter include:

- Introduction of the Inter-agency Street Network, led by Streetwork’s Street Team, as a positive and functioning structure to facilitate inter-agency working and focus on individuals;
- Growing cooperation and co-working between services to increase linkage, referral and assessment;
- Routine co-location of staff, including outreach to the Winter Care Shelter and linkage to the Streetwork Hub;
- Strong focus on people who present with most concern, via a ‘by name list’;
- Extensive use of Direct Access Accommodation at Hopetoun Crescent - universally regarded as a good model for direct and rapid access;
- Expansion in capacity and staffing for the Edinburgh Winter Care Shelter to accommodate higher numbers and engage more people to link into follow-on support services.
Aberdeen

In Aberdeen, the rapid deployment of the city’s first Assertive Outreach Service for people who sleep rough and direct access to temporary accommodation were prime developments of the Winter Initiative. This is part of a shared ambition between Aberdeen Cyrenians, Aberdeen City Council (ACC) and other stakeholders to end rough sleeping in the city. Increased joint working at strategic and practitioner levels has driven productive inter-agency cooperation and system change in Aberdeen, namely;

• A dynamic and dedicated focus on locating and engaging people who sleep rough by assertive outreach - with encouraging results from over the winter period;

• Excellent partnership with Aberdeen City Council in providing direct access to temporary accommodation and housing options, obviating the need for winter night shelter provision;

• Strong connections and partnerships with other street services including referrals and joint work with Police, custody suites, A&E, Street Pastors and other frontline services;

• Increasing shared understanding of the needs of people who sleep rough, including provision of wraparound services and move on support;

• Recognition that a Housing First model is achievable for the city.
Staff consistently expressed that increased cooperation and targeted co-working between frontline staff, who felt more empowered to act, led to closer professional relationships and strengthening of partnership working that was already underway in each area. This included co-location of staff at night/care shelters (for the first time in Edinburgh and increased in Glasgow) that improved linkage to follow-on services. In the culture of services, it is clear that staff regard partnership working as both valued and routine. The establishment and strengthening of the remit of the ISN and other structures has been fundamental to this growing partnership working.

Empowerment and devolved decision making to outreach teams was a dominant theme expressed by all staff. This was enhanced by access Personalised/Flexible Budgets that up-scaled the ability of outreach staff to intervene immediately. Whilst planned access to small funds already existed in Glasgow, an approach where frontline staff held budgets and had the power to make on the spot decisions was new and introduced with limited lead-in time.

Staff expressed the value of using their initiative to select a range of interventions not available to them before. Some expressed uncertainly in using this approach, with dilemmas about what constituted appropriate expenditure of funds, but this uncertainty is likely to recede should use of Personalised Budgets become established.

The focus on individuals who sleep rough and the persistence of outreach teams to engage them by cultivating trusting relationships was a universal theme. Staff identified several striking examples where this engagement led to ending rough sleeping and setting up of wraparound support. The actions and approaches of the Winter Initiative has amplified this, particularly in legitimising the use of Personalised Budgets as an appropriate intervention. Staff were clearly empowered and inspired by this approach, with many expressing that ending rough sleeping is an achievable goal.
What are the opportunities to do more of this?

The 2017/18 Winter Initiative came at a time when improving coordination, increasing partnership working and empowering staff were already showing positive results. The specific and targeted actions driven by the Winter Initiative built on these foundations by meeting gaps in provision, including anticipated increased demand for night/care shelter provision. A similar approach may prove as effective in future years, recognising the housing and service landscape are rapidly evolving in each local area.

However, several developments were clearly viewed by staff as key elements of preventing rough sleeping all year round, namely;

- Establishing use of Personalised/Flexible budgets to empower staff to immediately prevent rough sleeping all year round;
- Continued co-location of staff at outreach hubs, day centres and other venues to increase continuity of joined up working and provision of wraparound care;
- Widening accommodation and housing options as much as possible, especially the type of rapid and direct access via Street Team staff demonstrated by the Hopetoun model in Edinburgh;
- Retention of the assertive outreach model in Aberdeen to consistently engage people who sleep rough and provide direct access to housing with wraparound care.

Whilst the above will require a shift in resource allocation, it is notable that, up until early April, Personalised Budgets were underspent from the original allocation. It is not yet known what the full year round cost might be, especially over the summer months when demand for urgent accommodation may be reduced. The remarkable impact of Personalised Budgets this winter strongly suggest a year round pilot, with analysis of expenditure and outcomes, may be one way to evaluate the efficacy of this type of fund. Other areas of expenditure, including the assertive outreach service in Aberdeen, may be ripe for mainstreaming as an interim measure toward eradicating rough sleeping in the city.

How can the local context take this partnership forward?

It is assumed the actions delivered by the 2017/18 Winter Initiative and the impact of other activities will not yet end rough sleeping in time for next winter. This is in recognition that a range of pioneering housing and support options for rough sleepers are underway and are/will be on-stream in the very near future. As such, it may be too early to tell what impact these will have on rough sleeping over the summer months. Therefore, local partnerships, including strategic and inter-agency are well placed to consider the data and impact on initiatives funded this year and what will be needed this winter (2018/19) and beyond. A local implementation plan, based on the principles of coordination, partnerships and empowerment of staff, may be one way to prepare for this coming winter and allow sufficient lead-in time for new initiatives to be actioned.
The network of services was generally viewed as being well coordinated and responsive to complex needs with good access to multi-agency provision. Access to housing casework and linkage to wraparound care was a consistent priority for all to end rough sleeping. The introduction of Personalised/Flexible Budgets was viewed as highly empowering for outreach teams, particularly those hardest to engage. This included successful engagement just prior to periods of severe winter weather, as highlighted by staff from the Marie Trust.

Inter-agency Street Network (ISN)

The ISN was already an established structure in Glasgow since April 2017 and is coordinated through the Street Team of Simon Community Scotland with partners from day centres, addictions, criminal justice, health, Police Scotland and housing. However, actions from the Winter Initiative empowered this multi-agency group to jointly take rapid action based on shared knowledge about people of most concern.

Regular weekly meetings bring a consistent focus on people, most of whom are well known to the Street Team and constituent agencies. Good access to wraparound care services, including addictions interventions, such as the Glasgow Drugs Crisis Centre, were highlighted. Close working relationships and high levels of cooperation with Local Authority housing caseworkers are routine, although it was suggested that a central team within the Council that deals specially with people who sleep rough would be helpful as they have a greater understanding of the specific issues presented.

Co-location and close proximity between services was reported as helping engage people before they could disappear off the radar, including those using the Winter Night Shelter.

The ISN facilitates a greater sharing of information and intelligence between services on a daily basis and this was deployed in an even more targeted fashion during the winter with the establishment of a ‘by name approach’ for those of most concern. This has generated more assertive and proactive work within the network. It is also reported that ISN discussions have led to some barriers to accommodation being resolved where an individual has been excluded from some accommodation. The ISN has initiated an open dialogue to identify where constructive challenge would change some of these decisions. The network in Glasgow was described as ‘a true network’ and ‘second to none’ with consistent sharing of intelligence and information, including about those not seen rough sleeping before.

The use of ‘by name lists’ is well established within Glasgow via the Street Team, combined with consistent focus on the needs of the individual. As a Street Team worker described: ‘…we know the people we work with’. Agencies closely cooperate by engaging whichever agency and worker who has the closest and trusting relationship to then link that person to accommodation and other support services.

People often hit barriers and then return to the street. But the network to support people is there.

Daily co-ordination across agencies, matching and connecting the most vulnerable with resource and accommodation is well established, including notifying the Street Team of beds that become available.
Some members of ISN are also part of the collaboration known as City Ambition Network (CAN) which focuses on a highly targeted group of people of most concern who have multiple-complex needs and are hardest to engage. The CAN differs from ISN as it focuses on persistent engagement over a longer period of time compared to the ISN, which focuses on immediate impact and resolution.

**Winter Night Shelter (WNS)**

The Winter Night Shelter, run by the Glasgow City Mission, offers overnight shelter and food during the winter months and therefore offers a significant opportunity for direct engagement and action for people at risk of rough sleeping, offering around 40 places a night. The Glasgow WNS reported a substantial increase in partnership working and cooperation, building on last year’s increased in-reach with additional Street Team capacity, increased access to legal advice and closer working with co-located GCC housing officers, and the dedicated health and homelessness team close by. This was seen as a step-change that helped move people away from the shelter and into other housing options. Outreach teams from Simon Community Scotland RSVP centre provide a dedicated worker on site at the WNS and saw a higher rate of transition away from the WNS as a result of this extended outreach. Personalised Budgets were used by WNS to support in some instances, along with funding for rental costs and starter packs for new tenancies.

Glasgow City Mission publish an extensive review and report on the Glasgow Winter Night Shelter:


**Engagement and Access to Temporary Accommodation**

It was consistently reported that people who sleep rough are well known to the Street Team in Glasgow. Most present with multiple complex needs with a widely reported increase in poor and declining mental health conditions. The ability to engage and build trusting relationships was cited as fundamental to the process, ensuring that people are ‘not set up to fail’ by placing them in accommodation they may not be able to sustain (e.g. through alcohol and drug use).

Staff were careful in matching people to the type of accommodation, together with wraparound support that will work for them at the right time. However, alongside a reported shortage of temporary accommodation, there are limited places available to accommodate and manage people with multiple complex needs, including those excluded from previous housing options. While efforts to improve options are in process, the need for flexible accommodation to manage and work with complex needs was widely reported as a gap in Glasgow. Expanding options for direct and rapid access accommodation would enable people to be off the streets whilst longer term accommodation with wraparound support could be sourced.

**Being homeless is not the reason why people are on the street – it’s the underlying addiction and mental health factors that keep them there.**

That said, the use of Personalised/Flexible Budgets on hotel accommodation, applied as a last resort, has helped in the short term to move people off the streets and into other services. Expenditure on rental deposits and initial rent was highest in Glasgow, with some extraordinary results.
Inter-agency Street Network (ISN)

The ISN was introduced in Edinburgh on 19th December 2017. This new structure and actions from the Winter Initiative empowered this multi-agency group to jointly take rapid action based on shared knowledge about people of most concern.

Similar to Glasgow, this group meets weekly, is coordinated by Streetwork’s Street Team and was reported to have brought a welcome frontline presence and collaboration, namely:

- Helped build good inter-agency relations and shared responsibility as a network;
- Joined up the system with a frequent and regular structure;
- Enabled excellent information and intelligence sharing;
- Focussed on named individuals and shared attempts at outreach;
- Helped promote joint efforts to engage rough sleepers at an early stage before they become entrenched in rough sleeping.

The ISN remains a relatively new structure for Edinburgh: ‘...it has taken time for us to find our feet with ISN, especially the small numbers of people involved’. There was slight concern attendance to the ISN may wane over the summer months and that people may be talked about once and not again. However, this evolving structure is clearly focussed on people the network of services is most concerned about.

It is less clear how the ‘Escalating Concerns’ procedure is being consistently applied in Edinburgh. This is a statutory multi-agency response aimed at vulnerable people who do not (yet) meet threshold for Adult Support and Protection. This process does not appear to be consistently applied in the city; however, Adult Support and Protection concerns are now being picked up and referred to statutory services via the ISN.

Winter Care Shelter (£52k additional funding)

The Emergency Shelter for People who Sleep Rough is run by Bethany Christian Trust each year from 9th October 2017 to 22nd April 2018 usually at different church hall venues in the city centre. Additional funding enabled the Winter Care Shelter to operate from a fixed venue at Meadowbank for an extended 15-week period with an expanded capacity from 60 up to 75 per night. Increased funding also enabled staffing levels to rise from 3 to 4 per night, giving more opportunity for staff engagement with those using the shelter and provided for a dedicated in-reach from the Streetwork Street Team to ensure closer coordination and immediate action.

Strong multi-disciplinary partnerships have been formed with co-location of staff into the shelter including health care, housing, legal advice, the team from the Streetwork Hub and other third sector agencies. Staff from the City of Edinburgh Council’s Access Point were also co-located to engage and complete housing assessments with those with multiple complex needs.

A detailed report on the activities of the Winter Care Shelter is produced by Bethany Christian Trust and can be found here:

Direct Access - Hopetoun Crescent

(£90k additional funding)

Hopetoun Crescent is a 12-room direct and rapid access facility that can accommodate up to 14 people (including pets and one room for couples). Direct access is via the Streetwork team, enabling frontline staff to act immediately. Crucially, it can be accessed at any time of night or day, does not operate a curfew and has a 24-hour staff team that are experienced in managing behaviours that may not be accepted in other types of facility. A Housing Officer from the Access Point is also attached and, since opening on 11th December, around 34 people have moved on to longer term accommodation – viewed as a result of positive partnership working. Funding for Hopetoun Crescent has been extended to mid-June 2018. It was reported that, due to Housing Benefit rules, Hopetoun Crescent appears less of an option for EU nationals who have no recourse to public funds.

This model of direct and rapid access accommodation for people with multiple and complex needs was widely regarded as filling a gap in provision, particularly the ability to provide for those likely to be excluded from other types of accommodation.

There was strong support to retain and expand this type of provision, especially as stepping stone of the Housing First landscape. There may be potential to replicate this direct and rapid access model in other Scottish cities. Whilst Hopetoun Crescent was a highly valued resource, there were consistent calls to further expand the range of temporary and other accommodation in Edinburgh.

City of Edinburgh Council has published a detailed report on the Rapid Access Accommodation which is available online at:

http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/4413/housing_and_economy_committee
The rationale for the new AORS service was that of the 60-70 people who sleep rough in Aberdeen, most did not use drop-in services but did regularly present at custody suites, A&E and other emergency services. Almost all have multiple complex needs with 1-2 new people presenting on the street each week.

The Assertive Outreach Service has been a game changer.

This AORS service ‘hit the ground running’ with a set up time of just two weeks on 11th December 2017. Aberdeen Cyrenians had sound understanding of an assertive outreach model from delivery of a street begging service in 2016, enabling quick implementation of this approach. Direct funding from the Scottish Government will enable the AORS to operate until 30th June 2018.

Four staff including an experienced manager were quickly sourced internally and, whilst there are other services, Aberdeen Cyrenians are the only service that focusses specifically on people who sleep rough.

...the Assertive Outreach team will seek out people who sleep rough and engage them as opposed to expecting them to turn up at services – which they rarely did.

The organisation works closely with other organisations (e.g. Aberdeen Foyer, Shelter) and operates a range of other services, including a busy drop-in service where demand has increased sharply in recent times.

Other Cyrenian services utilised by the AORS include residential, legal and specialist staff who deal with no recourse to public funds and refugee/EU National legal advice services.

The Partnership working is incredible.

Crucially, the AORS received significant high level support and cooperation with Aberdeen City Council as part of a longer term drive to end rough sleeping in the city. Due to Aberdeen Cyrenians being the sole provider, there is no equivalent ISN group in Aberdeen but there is a Housing Support Operational Group that has evolved from a strategic to a mostly information sharing network for frontline staff.

There is a really good practical and responsive relationship with Aberdeen.

This partnership and close working with housing teams mean that direct access to temporary and long term housing is routine. This obviated the need for night shelter provision during the winter period. Furthermore, whilst housing assessments are conducted as normal, Aberdeen City Council granted an amnesty (for rent arrears, bans, etc.) to allow some people to be rehoused where this would not have been possible before. As a result of this partnership and approach taken, Aberdeen City is already a step closer towards a Housing First model.
The AORS was allocated £5k to be used as a Personalised Budget but, as this was only recently operationalised (April 2018), the full impact of this is not yet known. However, encouraging results in using Personalised Budgets to engage people who sleep rough were reported.

Impact of the Assertive Outreach Service

As of 23rd May 2018, 73 referrals have been made to the AORS, with 9 new referrals in the last 7 days. Of these, 30 people have been allocated temporary accommodation with Aberdeen City Council, with 18 still residing in this accommodation and 4 people now in permanent accommodation. The remainder have either left the city, regained family contact or are in custody.

A significant number of those placed into temporary accommodation had no recourse to public funds but are receiving wraparound support including for substance misuse, mental health and other conditions.

For example, one person had been sleeping rough for 7 years was engaged by the team and is now in accommodation with a range of wraparound support. The AORS continues to engage a further 6 people who are unable to access ACC accommodation due to multiple complex needs. In short, the Assertive Outreach Service has prevented 76 people from rough sleeping in Aberdeen between December 2017 and May 2018. There is good evidence to show the assertive outreach model has proven its worth in a short space of time and, together with the rate of direct access to accommodation, will avoid the re-introduction of night shelter provision.
Personalised Budgets were quickly introduced on 22nd December 2017. They directly empowered frontline staff with delegated authority to take wide ranging, on-the-spot actions to immediately prevent people from sleeping on the streets. Personalised Budgets were used on 168 occasions over a 15-week period at a below budget cost of £17,247 for Glasgow and Edinburgh combined. Early results from this cost-effective innovation are remarkable, demonstrating an immediate and life changing impact on many recipients of this fund.

Personalised Budgets were regarded as the trail blazing innovation of the Winter Initiative across all three cities. Whilst small funds had been available previously, they had to be applied for and be part of a longer term plan for the person. The key difference was the immediate availability of Personalised budgets funds and discretionary use by frontline (mostly outreach) staff and this was cited as making a critical difference in helping engage people into accommodation and support services. A budget of £25k each was earmarked for Glasgow and Edinburgh with £5k for Aberdeen – although funds were only made available in Aberdeen from April 2018. The case studies illustrate the immediate and lasting impact these funds.

The fund was viewed by the Street Teams and other staff as the deciding factor in successful engagement with those not connecting with services and people with no recourse to public funds.

Modest expenditure on sundries or essential clothing for those who had previously refused to even talk to outreach staff was the first step in connecting, trusting and accepting the help offered:

### Case Study 1

R&G - a couple with dog from North Ayrshire fleeing violence from dealers. Simon Community RSVP (Street Team) supported as sleeping in tents initially on main shopping street before police moved on so they moved their tents to Clyde. They had no local connection to Glasgow so lots of work done around applying for transfer. In December a well-wisher paid for accommodation over Christmas with the dog in a hotel for a few days. We then used winter monies (Personalised Budgets) to continue this hotel placement while we sourced a private let. Through our partnership with Homes for Good (social letting agency) we sourced a private let and paid one month deposit and month upfront. At the same time, through our street pharmacy, both were stabilised on methadone. They moved into flat at beginning of January and are both thriving.

The ability to draw upon these funds gave a strong sense of empowerment to frontline staff in ways not experienced before.
In particular, it has allowed frontline staff the scope and latitude to use a small sum of money (not cash) to immediately engage people to encourage them into services, accommodation and employment, as well as helping some with travel back to their family or place of origin.

The ability to use Personalised Budgets as required at the most opportune time to help engage was reported as crucial.

Outreach teams were very clear that Personalised Budgets were only used as a last resort when all other options had been exhausted. Staff cited several examples where a process of exploring all options was undertaken, only referring to the use of Personalised Budgets when all options had been ruled out. Similarly, outreach teams were acutely aware and took action to ensure that Personalised Budgets were not used as a substitute for statutory funds.

Case Study 2

BM - Had become homeless following separation and had gambling debts. He had a job but couldn’t afford the rent deposit so was sleeping in a car for several weeks. Using Personalised Budgets and support through budgeting, a private let was sourced and first month paid. BM has now settled in his flat and instead of waiting on a council house is thriving and continuing to work away. He went out and bought himself a name/number plate for his house. He had been unable to access accommodation/emergency accommodation due to working and the cost being too expensive. He is now also having regular contact with his little girl who comes to visit and stay with him.

We ensure that we don’t use this fund to substitute something that is the responsibility of the local authority i.e. it is only used to prevent and reduce rough sleeping, not re-housing in general.

It was consistently reported that attending housing casework and linking with wraparound support services was mostly achieved following overnights in hotel accommodation. For some, a few nights in a hotel, with showers, TV and breakfast, was an incentive to end rough sleeping. For others, especially after weekends, outreach teams had to work harder to get them to casework and wraparound support – reflective of the entrenched nature of long term rough sleeping. The determination and persistence of outreach teams to overcome this ambivalence was evident throughout.

It gives us more options to make decision.

Is another tool in our toolkit.

Really welcomed... empowered the frontline.

Timing is one of the most important things.

Crucial that we use our own judgement with Personal Budgets.
Staff were reliably clear that Personalised Budgets should be focussed only on preventing rough sleeping. There were few dilemmas where the aim of preventing rough sleeping crossed into general housing matters but these were quickly resolved in-house and the option of escalating to the ISN remained. That said, it was strongly felt that introducing stricter criteria would unhelpfully limit the options available to frontline staff.

Personalised Budgets are... fabulous as they came in quickly with very little criteria, enabling us to be able to widen options for people.

The fund was particularly helpful in purchasing items, documents or travel tickets where no other fund was available, and where it was it was reliant on availability of charitable donations or would take some considerable time, persistence and effort to secure. Once all options were exhausted, staff were able to use the fund to offer on-the-spot help and this made the difference to making a successful intervention. This was particularly useful for those EU Nationals and others who had no recourse to public funds and when modest funds were needed to obtain essential documents.

...has a made a huge difference as we don’t normally have these type of funds.

Case Study 3
Long term male rough sleeper who rarely engaged was put in hotel for night during cold winter months. Would not accept support or much needed health intervention. Following night in hotel and a break from rough sleeping, accepted staff support to hospital where he was admitted for minimum 6 week period. Is thriving and engaging with addiction services and hospital liaison staff for when he is ready to be discharged.

Case Study 4
RJ was rough sleeping for several months in the City Centre and would not link in for support or present at casework due to previous experiences. He was in poor physical health and getting worse. Accessed Personalised Budgets money to book him into a hotel for a couple of nights during cold winter months with the agreement that he would go to hospital. This didn’t happen straight away but after a couple of weeks, working with the casework team we took a homeless application to him and completed a risk assessment meaning he could be referred for accommodation. He was accommodated and later admitted to hospital then residential rehab. He links in regularly with staff through the street pharmacy.

Case Study 5
Male who became homeless, lost his job and subsequently had his car broken into and tools stolen. Was rough sleeping in car with dog. Also recently had cancer diagnosis but not linking in with health services. Had no ID, benefits or even knowledge of NI Number. We accommodated him with dog for a few nights while supporting to get NI number, new ID, benefits applied for and ultimately a homeless application taken - he was thereafter accommodated in temporary accommodation.
Importantly, staff demonstrated **universal understanding of the delegated authority and process** to be followed in using Personalised Budgets, such as the upper limits for on-the-spot purchases with authorisation required on amounts above this by team managers and ultimately the ISN. Whilst delegated authority limits were understood and consistently applied, some staff expressed they felt cautious about how to use the new fund, especially at first:

> It was suggested that **sharing case studies** from other cities where Personalised Budgets are being used would be a helpful way to **increase confidence** and affirm the **creative ways** the funds have been used:

**Case Study 6**

We met ST at a Social Bite Supper Club event. ST told us he had a flat but he is not able to return there as the door had been permanently fixed shut by the local authority. We arranged to meet ST again the next day to investigate his case more thoroughly and linked in with his Housing Officer.

ST was advised to attend the neighbourhood Housing Office to close his tenancy. ST and the Cyrenians Outreach staff duly attended and closed the tenancy appropriately. ST was then advised to return to the city centre in order to access temporary accommodation.

ST and his case worker returned to the centre and presented at the Access Point to be told there was no accommodation left. The case worker then suggested that the personal budget could be utilised to access a space in a hotel. The case worker called Streetwork to seek approval for the spend and it was duly granted. ST was able to stay in the hotel until there was temporary accommodation available.

> It was extremely useful to have access to the personal budget in this situation as it meant ST could avoid an episode of rough sleeping and the consequent adverse effects it brings.
Outreach teams were able to identify many instances where the fund has made the crucial difference to connecting and engaging with people. They relayed some remarkable results that made the key difference to some of the most difficult to engage and entrenched in street living. Consequently, when asked, there was universal agreement this fund should be available all year round and not just during the winter months:

Sums of around £10 would have used before on sundry items bought directly by staff. However, Personalised Budgets have significantly up-scaled the amount given and expanded the scope for how they can be used.

Problems arise throughout the year – it’s not just a winter problem.

Why does it need to only be in winter when it’s good all year round – it’s not just for Christmas?

The difference with Personal Budgets is availability, immediacy and with delegated authority...

Streetwork in Edinburgh have encountered some administrative issues and stigma associated with paying by credit card for short term B&B accommodation. An agreed system to pay by invoice with sympathetic B&Bs / hotels may be useful to avoid these issues, including having to present an actual credit card on arrival to some accommodation. Similar issues were reported in booking some travel for repatriation – on-line booking with office printing of tickets could resolve this.

Case Study 7

GT - Long term rough sleeper (several years) who accesses Winter Night Shelter every year. Has no local connection and has lots of rent arrears. Not entitled to benefits but works through agency when shifts available. He was given a flat which had basic provisions. We used the money to get a starter pack for him and helped with rent shortfall until agency work picked up and he could self-support.

It was acknowledged that prior to the introduction of Personalised Budgets, teams had access to small sums of money that could be used in a limited number of ways.

Personalised Budgets / Flexible Funds
## Analysis of Expenditure on Personalised Budgets

Up to 5th April 2018 expenditure on the Personalised Budgets for Edinburgh was £6,446; with Glasgow at £10,761. Total expenditure for Edinburgh and Glasgow was £17,247. Whilst significantly below the £25k earmarked for each city, use of Personalised Budgets has continued so expenditure will have increased since early April. However, given the above total covered all winter months, expenditure on Personalised Budgets appears modest compared to the original allocated budget.

### Expenditure Edinburgh and Glasgow combined (up to 5th April) was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>£</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deposit*</td>
<td>1,286.60</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent*</td>
<td>2,235.20</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel /Accommodation*</td>
<td>10,126.41</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>1,352.74</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>192.19</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documents / Passport</td>
<td>200.70</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sundries</td>
<td>679.01</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsistence</td>
<td>36.88</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starter pack</td>
<td>550.00</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other +</td>
<td>587.63</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>£17,247.36</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**% of total spend**

| *Accommodation (all)         | £13,648.21| 79% |

The above categories are preliminary and based solely on interpretation of recording by outreach teams. Further adjustment may be required. For example, expenditure for travel to a job interview may only be recorded as ‘travel’.

*‘Other’ includes service charges, vehicle hire, laundry, etc.*
A preliminary analysis of the recorded purpose of allocations (which may be one or more per person) was undertaken to illustrate the intended outcome of each allocation. Whilst these are many and varied (and will require refinement) it demonstrates a clear purpose of each allocation as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Outcome</th>
<th>Occurrences</th>
<th>&amp; % of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prevention of Rough Sleeping</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return home / Repatriation</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to essential documents</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for tenancy*</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehab / Longer term accommodation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blank / not known</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>168</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unsurprisingly, prevention of rough sleeping (including hotel, deposit and rental costs) is the highest recorded the intended outcome. Significantly, 16% of all occurrences were to help rough sleepers return home / repatriation – including back to home areas in Scotland/UK and other countries in several cases. Accessing essential documents included obtaining copies of birth certificates, passports and other ID to be able to claim benefits, register for employment, etc. **There are no recorded incidences that suggest expenditure was used inappropriately or outwith the purpose of the fund.**

Whilst the above is preliminary data only, it is suggested that further work is done to refine this information, alongside intended purpose of each allocation, to enable on-going monitoring and analysis.

This could include recording each item of expenditure per person (to prevent double counting and record actual numbers, including male/female), expanding categories for prevention of rough sleeping and, where possible, noting the long term outcomes generated by the funding.

*Includes expenditure on one off items that support long term rough sleepers to access or maintain their tenancy.
In summary, the introduction of Personalised Budgets has:

- Empowered frontline (mainly outreach) staff to make on-the-spot decisions and expanded the range of options available as part of a wider package of wraparound care;

- Enhanced the chance of positive engagement with people by building confidence and trust in the relationship with outreach teams by offering immediate help at the right time;

- Allowed outreach teams to be creative in type of help given, especially when other routes of funding are not usually available;

- Been used in-line with their intended purpose and as a last resort when all options have been exhausted;

- Followed a delegated authority process that is universally understood and consistently applied;

- Led to a remarkable range of outcomes that directly prevented rough sleeping by immediate access to temporary and long term accommodation, repatriation, employment and other support;

- Demonstrated that a small amount of resources used in this way is cost effective and could be considered for availability all year round.
Simon Community Scotland
We work to combat the causes and effects of homelessness across the West of Scotland, delivering street outreach, drop-in information and advice, 24/7 helpline and a range of emergency and supported accommodation options.

24/7 Helpline 08000277466

Streetwork
We reach out to people through our work on the streets and in people’s homes and communities, to offer an integrated response to people who are at risk of homelessness and those who don’t have a safe and stable place to stay in Edinburgh.

Call 0808 178 23 23

Aberdeen Cyrenians
We have been providing support to vulnerable people for the past 50 years. We meet the needs of individuals who are rough sleeping, homeless, at the risk of homelessness or affected by homelessness in any way.

Call 07870230692 or 01224 625732

VIEWS FROM THE FRONTLINE
The 2017/18 Winter Initiative