

SWEP and Roma Rough Sleepers

Key points from Pan London Roma Operational Group

Background

The need to provide culturally appropriate, access to SWEP provision to individuals from the Roma Community was discussed at the Pan London Roma Operational Group. In particular it was noted that, based on learning from winter 20/21:

- Appropriate access is an essential lifesaving intervention, particularly as many members of the Roma community rough sleeping in London are clinically vulnerable or otherwise at risk
- SWEP provides an opportunity to also deliver wrap around interventions to understand individual needs, link to services and avoid a return to rough sleeping

The recommendations outlined below represent a summary of discussion and learning

Meeting the Needs of the Roma Community during SWEP

1. Planning

- The needs of the Roma community should be considered during Local Authority SWEP planning meetings. Commissioned and non-commissioned partners may be able to provide additional resources but would need to be involved in these conversations at an early stage

2. Accommodation Type

- SWEP accommodation should be able to cater for couples and larger family groups who would like to stay in the same unit.
- As with all SWEP provision, there should be adequate supported provision to safely accommodate individuals with support needs and where there is risk of domestic abuse
- Individuals are much more likely to accept SWEP accommodation if it is the borough in which they are rough sleeping
- Individuals are much more likely to accept SWEP accommodation if it is part of an 'In for Good' offer with support around Move on and to link to services to support their recovery. Individuals are less likely to accept if it is for a short number of nights after which they will be asked to leave

3. Communication

- Many members of the Roma community are distrustful of services. Therefore it is essential to be honest about what can be offered. Offering something that you are unable to deliver contributes to distrust and is very likely to reduce future engagement with services.

4. Meeting Clients Needs on site and Maximising opportunities

- It is important to prepare staff to welcome Roma clients during SWEP including:
 - Clients are likely to arrive in a larger group and booking in will need to be managed in a Covid secure way
 - Clients may struggle to read (including in Romani or other language) therefore the booking process including explaining expectations, health and safety and how to access support should be explained verbally in the appropriate language
 - Health assessments on site should be one of the priorities as many clients have high health needs and are not registered at a GP.
- Assessments should be carried out at the earliest opportunity and in a trauma informed way to identify needs and risk and allow for a plan to be put in place so the individual does not need to return to rough sleeping