

A review into St Mungo's  
approach to working with  
Home Office enforcement teams  
2010 to December 2017

# I. Introduction

- I.1.** St Mungo's mission is to end homelessness and rebuild lives. The safety and wellbeing of our clients is our absolute priority. Over 50 years, our work with homeless people sleeping rough has shown us how damaging and dangerous living on the streets can be. Our outreach workers see the impact of this every night when they go out to work with people who are often facing very complex challenges and for whom the options away from the streets can be very limited. Many of our staff know people whose lives have ended on the streets or very soon after coming inside. Saving lives is always our main concern.
- I.2.** This focus on the safety and wellbeing of often very vulnerable people means that good practice in street outreach has long recommended a close working relationship between outreach teams and other partners including local councils, safeguarding teams, mental health teams and the police. In some situations joint work has included an enforcement element, for example, working with the police to address large encampments where there are vulnerable people. In carefully considered situations, and with the health and wellbeing of the individual at the forefront, joint work along with enforcement has been effective in helping many vulnerable people to leave the streets.
- I.3.** From 2010 onwards, a number of outreach teams across London, including teams run by St Mungo's, worked with local councils and Home Office Immigration Compliance and Enforcement (HO-ICE) teams to try to help the growing number of EU citizens\* sleeping rough in London.
- I.4.** Between 2016 and 2018, St Mungo's was subject to criticism by migrant organisations and in the media concerning the way our outreach teams worked with the Home Office in relation to this group. This culminated in May 2018 in a complaint to the Charity Commission and the Information Commissioners Office. While both regulators were satisfied with our response to these complaints, St Mungo's Board decided to undertake a review of our retrospective working practices in this area. This report provides a summary of the background and the key findings from that review.
- I.5.** The review was conducted by the Executive Director of Strategy and Policy, Dominic Williamson, whose role was outside the line management of any St Mungo's outreach teams. The review involved analysis of the complaints and associated documentation, a review of email archives and other internal documentation, interviews with relevant staff and an open invitation to staff at St Mungo's to come forward with any information they had that might be relevant.
- I.6.** It is important to note that all operations involving HO-ICE teams targeting people sleeping rough stopped in December 2017 when a judicial review ruled that the Government's policy treating rough sleeping as a breach of EU treaty rights was unlawful. The review therefore considered the period from 2010 to December 2017.

\*EU citizens is used here to include EU, other EEA and Swiss nationals

## 2. Background

- 2.1.** The period covered by the review was marked by significant change both internally (the merger between Broadway and St Mungo's in 2014, restructuring, changes of staff in relevant roles etc.) and externally in the operating environment and the wider policy landscape.
- 2.2.** Over the last two decades, and often in response to charity campaigning, central and local government has become more involved in strategy and service delivery related to 'single' homeless people, including those who are rough sleeping. In 2002, the Government amended the homelessness legislation to ensure local authorities took a more strategic approach to tackling and preventing homelessness, requiring every housing authority district to produce a homelessness strategy. This in turn led to some local authorities, particularly those with high levels of rough sleeping, to introduce the role of a rough sleeping coordinator. Coordinators were employed to implement local strategies and coordinate efforts by local agencies including charities. As these coordinators led on tackling rough sleeping locally, approaches could vary significantly between boroughs.
- 2.3.** Earlier Government strategies and rough sleeping initiatives had funded local authorities in central London to provide accommodation and also outreach teams, often delivered by charities. In other areas there might be little or no local authority involvement in the delivery of services to this group. These initiatives and the introduction of the Supporting People programme in 2003 meant that local authorities began to more systematically fund services for single homeless people through commissioning. Commissioning is often complex and involves detailed specifications produced by the local authority following consultation and engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, often including clients. The process is covered by the legal requirements of local authority procurement. All outreach teams run by St Mungo's are commissioned by local authorities and operate under contracts issued by the local authority that set out expectations on how the services will work.
- 2.4.** By 2007, after a decade of concerted Government investment and action, the number of people sleeping rough across England had fallen significantly. However the Government, charities and councils, particularly in central London, were becoming increasingly concerned about the rapidly growing numbers of people from the newly expanded European Economic Area (EEA) that were sleeping rough. Restrictions on entitlement to benefits, including housing benefit, meant that normal routes off the streets were closed to many migrants. As a consequence, outreach workers were finding growing numbers of people from Eastern Europe becoming stuck on the street, often facing deteriorating health problems. The Labour Government's new rough sleeping strategy in 2008 recognised this issue and said that the Home Office would work with councils to help find solutions.
- 2.5.** A part of this picture was a new phenomenon of migrants who were working or begging, living on the streets, in parks or on waste land often in informal encampments. Large groups, particularly of Roma from Romania in places like Park Lane in Westminster, attracted newspaper headlines and created pressure on local and national politicians to find solutions.

## 3. Home Office involvement in rough sleeping

- 3.1.** Starting in Westminster in early 2010, Home Office Immigration Compliance and Enforcement (HO-ICE) teams undertook operations with local councils often working alongside outreach workers, including teams from St Mungo's.
- 3.2.** These joint operations were seen by many in the homelessness sector as a useful tool to encourage people to take up an offer of accommodation or supported reconnection, particularly those who outreach teams were finding it difficult to engage. The HO-ICE teams issued "minded to remove" warning letters explaining to the individual that if they continued to sleep rough, not exercise their EU treaty rights nor engage with realistic options off the streets they could be detained and removed back to their home country in the EU.
- 3.3.** For the homelessness charities involved, including St Mungo's, CGL, Broadway and Thames Reach, this approach was an extension of the "assertive outreach" model that had become established good practice over the previous decade. This recognised that carefully coordinated care and enforcement interventions by local authorities and charities, working together with, for example, the police, were sometimes necessary given the vulnerability of some individuals, especially when in large groups or encampments, and given the dangers associated with sleeping rough. This outreach intervention was considered to be a proactive tool as there was time to engage and support a change in behaviour before the threat of any enforcement action became a reality.

## 4. How St Mungo's worked with the HO-ICE

- 4.1.** The review found a complex and changing picture of how different St Mungo's teams worked with HO-ICE over the period 2010 to 2017. This complexity was reflected in the different understanding of colleagues whose perspective was often limited to particular parts of our operation and/or specific periods of time.
- 4.2.** Late on in the review, a St Mungo's policy dated December 2013 entitled *Working With The Home Office – Immigration* was found. This document was marked as Issue 6 and watermarked as draft. It presumably was an update of an existing policy. No earlier or later versions of it were found and it is unclear how widely it was distributed. This document said:

*"Where a client is not engaging on the streets and all efforts have been made to ascertain information about their case,*

*basic information maybe [sic] conveyed to Home Office contacts (Name, date of birth, nationality). This will be done as part of an overall engagement/action plan, agreed by manager/s within the team....*

*...For EU citizens this will also include a discussion re clients exercising their treaty rights.... Where a decision has been made to share information re a client without their explicit consent – either at the request of the Home Office or initiated by St Mungo's, this will be covered in St Mungo's Data protection policy and will be to prevent harm to the client and/or to others. Managers will take the lead on devolving [sic] this information and all correspondence with the Home Office will be noted in a client's record."*

- 4.3.** Prior to the merger with St Mungo's, Broadway had also worked closely with enforcement agencies and championed the "assertive outreach" approach, working

closely with councils, the police and the Home Office to encourage people to engage with services that could help them move off the streets.

- 4.4.** In 2015, the GLA published a “Pan-London protocol for rough sleeping outreach services” developed by the Mayor’s Rough Sleeping Group and supported by Homeless Link and London Councils. The protocol was drawn up during the previous year with significant input from senior service managers from St Mungo’s, along with other representatives from the Mayor’s Rough Sleeping Group. This said that outreach workers should:

*“... consistently make clear that sleeping rough is unsafe and therefore unacceptable and explain that, if a rough sleeper does not voluntarily work with them, enforcement may be used. Where necessary, they [i.e. outreach teams] should use enforcement options, working in conjunction with Community Safety departments, the Police, Home Office or judicial system..... Although reconnection is, wherever possible, a preferable option for non-UK nationals, in a number of cases... may need to leave the country, either voluntarily or through a removal arranged by immigration enforcement.”*

- 4.5.** Despite these activities, the restriction to benefits which made it difficult to provide accommodation for people led to the number of EU citizens sleeping rough in London continuing to rise. While the number of UK rough sleepers was also rising rapidly, it was usually possible to provide accommodation for UK rough sleepers. These factors contributed to East Europeans becoming the largest group sleeping rough in London by 2016. The significant harm caused by prolonged rough sleeping became a cause for concern for those working with this client group. This led to calls for more to be done.
- 4.6.** It is understood that pressure from the GLA, local authorities experiencing high levels of rough sleeping and others led to the Government considering whether it

could go further to reduce the number of EU citizens living on the streets. Starting in November 2015, a HO-ICE pilot (Operation Adoze) tested a new policy approach whereby sleeping rough was itself considered an “abuse of treaty rights”. Following this, in May 2016, the Government amended its policy and guidance to regard rough sleeping in itself as an abuse of treaty rights, which meant those sleeping rough could be detained and removed more quickly.

- 4.7.** The wider background to this change included the Brexit referendum and the ramping up of the Government’s rhetoric on immigration, including the intention to create what the then Home Secretary, Theresa May, dubbed a “hostile environment” for illegal migrants. This shift began to be put into effect through the Immigration Act 2014, which introduced the “right to rent” duties on landlords among other provisions. In response to these changes, and the Home Office’s “Go Home Or Face Arrest” advertising vans, campaigners in the migrant sector began to regard the engagement – or collaboration as they put it – between homeless charities and the Home Office as an example of the Government co-opting other public servants as border agents.

- 4.8.** St Mungo’s outreach workers continued to operate in a situation where options for people moving away from the street were becoming more restricted while many of their clients were experiencing severe destitution, deteriorating health and in some cases dying. The conditions described by one outreach worker during the review were backed up by photos of some of the sites where people were sleeping rough. The outreach team had to pick their way through human faeces to get to where people were sleeping in makeshift camps in woods at the edge of a park. Outreach managers reported situations where those people rough sleeping were living in horrific circumstances, including reports of people eating vermin to survive and drinking alcohol based antibacterial hand gel from hospitals.

## 5. Variations in practice and our response to Home Office policy change in 2016

- 5.1.** The change in Government policy toward EU citizens sleeping rough in May 2016 raised concerns among some St Mungo's outreach workers. Prior to this, joint operations had been regarded by many outreach workers to have been effective in encouraging people to take up offers of support, in part because the issuing of "minded to remove" warning letters meant there was ample time for workers to support people to demonstrate how they were exercising their treaty rights. This was evidenced by emails found in the review that showed outreach workers sending evidence such as pay slips or tenancy agreements to HO-ICE on behalf of their clients to prevent further immigration enforcement activity against them. However, the 2016 policy change meant that the window of opportunity to positively engage became shorter and the rapid use of detention and removal became more likely. This continued to be an area of concern for outreach teams.
- 5.2.** There were some outreach workers who believed that working with HO-ICE was leading to migrants seeking to avoid contact with our outreach teams and becoming distrustful or even hostile to outreach workers. Notwithstanding these concerns, outreach managers and staff working with the highest numbers of EU citizens sleeping rough thought that it remained important for St Mungo's teams to continue to work with HO-ICE to best safeguard the wellbeing of people on the streets, especially vulnerable individuals whose needs might otherwise be missed. They also felt that any poor practice by HO-ICE could be more easily challenged through such engagement. The approach of some outreach teams was to be present during the local authority coordinated operations involving HO-ICE. This presence gave outreach workers an opportunity to advocate for rough sleepers and to challenge lack of understanding or poor practice by HO-ICE teams.
- 5.3.** The minutes of St Mungo's Street Homeless & Outreach Managers Meeting on 29 July 2016 show that outreach managers discussed these issues:
- Home Office Guidance – [NAME REDACTED] to circulate link with minutes. Under s19(3)(c) Rough sleeping is considered to be an abuse of free movement rights. Managers should urge staff to read the Guidance (in full). Westminster Hot Spot's experience is to be used to design guidance / best practice on how we work with Home Office's Guidance. Information-sharing role with Home Office – information would be provided to the Home Office by local authorities (not St Mungo's & thus self-safeguarding). The local authority would provide the lead in information-sharing. A worst-case scenario to be tested with lawyers to see what our liability would be. Working with the Home Office – should be a last resort.*
- 5.4.** The minutes of the July 2016 meeting also show that managers in outreach services had agreed to update guidance on the organisational approach to assertive outreach. This was in light of the shift in government policy in May 2016 but was also part of the ongoing efforts to ensure consistency of practice across outreach teams following the merger and establish a clear articulation of what was now meant by 'assertive outreach'. One outreach manager was tasked with pulling this together (The minute says:
- "St Mungo's Assertive Outreach Approach – managers sent feedback to [NAME REDACTED], who is working on the draft for August. Mixed feedback on draft presented agreed the document needs to focus on principles.")*
- 5.5.** Despite what was discussed at this meeting, the review found evidence that in one local authority the St Mungo's outreach team continued to share information

about people sleeping rough with HO-ICE until February 2017 without always clearly evidencing that this was being done as a last resort to prevent harm to self or others. This exception appears to have been driven by a differing expectation and operating practice from the local authority, different line management, and the lack of a single, clear and updated organisational policy and procedure.

- 5.6.** Although this was contrary to the instructions given at the managers meeting in July, this did remain in line with public interest provision in the Data Protection legislation in force at the time and in accord with the GLA's Pan London outreach protocol.
- 5.7.** During this period a document with St Mungo's logo was released under an FOI request to Hammersmith Council. Technical analysis by our IT team showed that this document had been authored by staff in the local outreach team on 19 January 2017 in response to the FOI request, then passed via the then Regional Head to the Council. When this document came to the attention of senior managers following its release into the public domain, it was clear that it did not reflect how teams had been instructed to operate since the July 2016 meeting. Despite the content of the document the search of the email archive during the review did not find any evidence that this team shared information with the Home Office without consent after July 2016.
- 5.8.** There are also documents that show work was underway by outreach managers to review and clarify the approach in some teams. A process diagram entitled *Westminster Joint Street Outreach and Immigration Shift Process* which is believed to be from July 2016, shows how some St Mungo's outreach teams were working with HO-ICE along with local authorities and the police to tackle "hotspots". An incomplete and draft document entitled *Good Practice Guidance for Rough Sleeping Services working with the Home Office Immigration,*

*Compliance and Enforcement Teams* dated October 2016 shows that work to develop a clearer approach was still incomplete.

- 5.9.** St Mungo's organisational strategy launched in April 2016 made a commitment to improve services and widen access for migrants. By late summer 2016, efforts across St Mungo's to establish a coherent approach for all migrant groups were already underway and work had begun on developing a Migrants Strategy to guide this work. In October 2016, an expert consultant with good links to the migrant sector, was engaged to help us to consult on and write the new strategy. Part of her remit was to open a dialogue with colleagues in migrant organisations to explore different perspectives and find joint solutions. Reaching out to the migrant sector was seen as important as the negative publicity about our approach was, by then, threatening relationships with some of the partners involved in our other services for migrants such as Street Legal and Routes Home (Praxis, etc.).
- 5.10.** As we developed our Migrant Strategy we also reviewed and clarified our position in regards to working and sharing information with the Home Office. The strategy and a position statement were approved by the St Mungo's Board in March 2017 and became operational from May 2017. Our position statement from 2017 said:
- "St Mungo's always seeks informed written consent from our clients about the information that we record. However, there are some situations where gaining consent may not be possible but recording and, in some cases, sharing information is necessary. For example, where an individual is at significant risk of harm to themselves or others."*
- 5.11.** In December 2017, a judicial review ruled that the Government's policy treating rough sleeping as a breach of treaty rights was unlawful. All HO-ICE activity targeting rough sleepers stopped from that date.



## 6. Findings on specific elements of the complaints

### Complaint 1: St Mungo's shared personal and sensitive data about clients with the Home Office ICE teams since 2010

- 6.1.** Prior to the clarification in our policy agreed by the Board in May 2017, practice across our different outreach teams varied. St Mungo's policy, established prior to 2014 and reflecting what was considered to be good practice in the sector at that time, was that outreach teams could share basic information about EU citizens with the Home Office without consent, when other efforts to engage the individual to find routes off the streets had failed and/or there was a risk of significant harm. It is always the intention of outreach teams to prevent the damage caused by rough sleeping and this approach was felt to be justified given the known dangers of rough sleeping. It was also in accord with established good practice, the GLA's Pan London Protocol from 2015, the Public Interest justification in Data Protection legislation and St Mungo's policy referenced above in 4.2. Information including names, nationalities, dates of birth and locations were shared by some teams.
- 6.2.** Emails sent between 2014 up to July 2016 show that for a number of our outreach teams sharing basic information about EU citizens sleeping rough with the Home Office was routine. A sample of these cases showed that in some, considerable efforts had been made to engage the individuals to help them off the streets and that in many cases there were clear risk factors e.g. trafficking, extreme destitution, etc. However, in other cases written evidence of such efforts or factors could not be found. This does not mean that such efforts or factors were not made, but simply that no records of this activity could be found through the review.
- 6.3.** While some outreach teams at St Mungo's were line managed by the matrix lead for outreach services, including the Westminster hotspot team, other teams reported to regional heads who managed a range of different services in a single locality. It seems that practice in different teams varied depending to some extent on the guidance and experience of regional heads, the practices and expectations of the local authority and the interpretation of guidance such as the 2013 St Mungo's policy and the Pan London Protocol.
- 6.4.** The minutes of St Mungo's Street Homeless and Outreach Managers Meeting on 29 July 2016 show that following the Government's change of policy in May 2016 the question of sharing information with the Home Office was discussed and an updated instruction was issued, to the effect that if information needed to be shared about an individual sleeping rough where there was no consent, this would be provided to the Home Office by local authorities, not St Mungo's.
- 6.5.** After May 2017 the position statement approved by the Board limited information sharing to cases where an individual was "at significant risk of harm to themselves or others." No evidence was found that information was shared with the Home Office without consent after the Board agreed the new position statement in May 2017.



**Complaint 2: That some clients were detained and others removed from the UK as a result.**

**6.6.** The review found evidence that some EU rough sleepers, whose details had been shared with the Home Office by some St Mungo's teams, were later detained by HO-ICE and removed to their home country in the EU. Many others were detained and removed through HO-ICE acting without outreach input. The email archive also shows that action by outreach workers prevented many people from being removed by helping them to exercise and prove their use of treaty rights and to move into work and accommodation.

**Complaint 3: There has been serious harm to beneficiaries and, in particular, vulnerable beneficiaries.**

**6.7.** The review found no evidence to show that any specific individuals suffered harm as a result of being detained or removed to their home country in the EU. While being detained and removed against your will is, of course, distressing in itself, and migrant organisations have highlighted conditions and abuses in migrant detention centres, none of the material in the complaints provided evidence that any St Mungo's client suffered mental or physical harm as a result of HO-ICE action.

**6.8.** We do not have evidence of what happened to people after they were removed to their home countries in the EU, although there are some cases where people are known to have returned to London within a short time frame. However, given the known dangers of rough sleeping and the lack of accommodation options available given their ineligibility to benefits, there is strong evidence from across the homelessness sector that those who continue to rough sleep for long periods experience deteriorating physical health and at times poor mental wellbeing. Ultimately, as we have too often seen, people are at risk of severe illness and very premature death.

**Complaint 4: That by sharing information St Mungo's was in breach of data protection law.**

**6.9.** The sharing of information by St Mungo's with the Home Office has at all times been lawful under the terms of the Data Protection Act given that the outreach teams were commissioned by local authorities and were acting in a public interest function. This was confirmed by the ICO after the complaint in 2018.

**Complaint 5: That by working in this way St Mungo's was not acting with the independence that it should as a charity.**

**6.10.** Given the known dangers of rough sleeping, established good practice recommended that outreach teams work with a wide range of agencies in order to help people who are sleeping rough, including enforcement agencies. St Mungo's outreach teams have always operated under contracts with local authorities and work closely with a number of statutory agencies, sharing information where necessary and within the legal responsibilities set out in data protection legislation. There is no evidence that at any time St Mungo's independence or charitable status has been compromised. The Charity Commission did not have concerns that we were acting outside of proper charitable functions.

## 7. Conclusion

- 7.1.** This review found that throughout the period between 2014 and 2017, St Mungo's outreach workers were operating in extremely difficult and fast-changing circumstances and doing their best to find practical solutions to help people from the EU who were destitute and sleeping rough to come off the streets.
- 7.2.** St Mungo's policy, established prior to 2014, was that outreach teams could share basic information about EU citizens with the Home Office without consent, when other efforts to engage the individual to find routes off the streets had failed and/or there was a risk of significant harm. This was in accord with the data protection legislation at the time, established good practice and, from 2015, the GLA's Pan London Protocol.
- 7.3.** However, the review found an inconsistent picture of how St Mungo's teams were operating throughout the period, with different approaches led by commissioning local authorities or taken by local managers. Between 2014 up to July 2016 some outreach teams were routinely sharing basic information about EU citizens sleeping rough with the Home Office. A sample of these cases were accompanied by evidence of efforts to engage the individuals to help them off the streets and of clear risk factors. However, the review could not find written evidence of such efforts or factors in all cases. This does not mean that in these cases such efforts were not made, but simply that no records could be found.
- 7.4.** When Government policy changed in May 2016, this was followed by instructions issued at the Outreach managers meeting in July 2016 setting the expectation that information would not be shared with the Home Office, except in circumstances when we were working with consent. However our efforts to develop and communicate a clear, unified approach took longer than they should have and the review found evidence that one team out of 18 continued to share information in a way that went beyond this expectation and with inadequate records justifying why this information was shared until February 2017.
- 7.5.** The review found that the sharing of information by St Mungo's with the Home Office was lawful under the terms of the Data Protection Act, given that the outreach teams were commissioned by local authorities and were acting in a public interest function, or were operating with consent. This was confirmed by the ICO after the complaint in 2018.
- 7.6.** The Executive Team accepts responsibility for it taking longer than it should have done to provide clear guidance and an updated procedure after July 2016. The consequence of this was that one outreach team operated differently to the expectations of senior managers up to February 2017.
- 7.7.** This also meant that our communication about the issue between July 2016 and March 2017 reflected the understanding or expectations of senior managers and did not take into account the ongoing practice in the team that had not adjusted its approach.

# 8. Key lessons

**8.1.** The Leadership Team has identified a number of lessons arising from the review. These include:

**i. Making the case for our approach**

**8.2.** The decision taken originally in 2010 by some homelessness organisations including St Mungo’s to start working alongside the Home Office ICE teams, was based on an assessment that given the dangers – including the risk to life – involved in rough sleeping, it was morally right to work alongside a threat of removal to home countries in the EU to encourage EU citizens to move off the streets and into safe accommodation or to take up the offer of a supported reconnection.

**8.3.** The review found that many people who received a warning from the Home Office that they were at risk of administrative removal did, with the help of outreach workers, take steps to prevent this and found accommodation and work.

**8.4.** With the Government’s shift towards the “hostile environment”, followed in 2016 by the change in policy treating rough sleeping in itself as a breach of EU treaty rights (a policy which was ruled unlawful by the judicial review in December 2017), outreach managers at St Mungo’s agreed at a meeting in July 2016 a changed approach that information should not be shared with the Home Office. Unfortunately, this shift in approach was not properly enshrined in our own internal policies until the Board signed off our new migrant strategy and position statement in March 2017.

**8.5.** This 2017 position statement clarified that, in very limited circumstances, where someone is a serious risk to themselves or others, we would share information without consent with the Home Office.

**8.6.** The Executive Team accepts that not enough was done to explain and justify the stance that St Mungo’s had taken prior to July 2016, which regarded joint work with the Home Office as necessary in efforts to help people away from the dangers of rough sleeping.

**ii. Delivering high risk and controversial services**

**8.7.** In fulfilling our mission St Mungo’s often chooses to work with people or in situations that others refuse. This is reflected in our organisational risk appetite regarding service delivery as signed off by the Board. In future however, when we identify activity on any subject where there may be conflicting external views on the justification of our chosen approach, a risk assessment should be undertaken that considers reputational risks alongside an assessment of the need for the approach on the basis of our purpose, values and strategic objectives. The assessment of risks and agreed actions should be reviewed on a regular basis but especially when there is a change in the context in which we are operating. If the reputational risk is high, then the policy and the risk management plan should be reviewed by the Board.

**Action**

- We will identify other areas where our approach could be controversial, but where we believe it is justified in terms of the benefit to clients. We will ensure that we have identified and taken all reasonable steps to mitigate the risk of damage to our reputation.
- We will develop an approach for situations when we need to urgently update our operational procedures due to, for example, changes in Government policy that have immediate effect. Our normal policy review and development processes need to be abridged in these situations and we also need to work with all available mechanisms to ensure that staff are aware of changed requirements.

- We will also review how changes to policies or to the risk management plans are communicated across relevant teams and how any expected changes in practice are embedded through training and subsequently monitored.
- Changes to reflect this approach will be made to our policy A03 – *Policy and Procedure Review and Development Guidelines*.

### iii. Responses to challenging media interest

- 8.8.** Starting in September 2016, a series of critical articles in the media and campaigns by some migrant rights organisations focused on the “collaboration” of homeless charities, including St Mungo’s, with the Home Office. It is clear from discussions during this review that senior managers involved at the time had different understandings of how St Mungo’s teams were operating in this period (i.e. between July 2016 and March 2017). This had an impact on what we communicated about the issue.
- 8.9.** The Executive Team recognises that the absence of a clear, up-to-date policy and procedure, the complex, rapidly changing external environment, the different approach being taken by teams and the lack of common understanding at a senior level meant that our external statements did not accurately reflect our approach at all times due to the different ways that teams were operating. While our statements after July 2016 reflected the expectations communicated with outreach managers at the meeting that month, the review found that one team out of 18 did not change its practice until March 2017. During this period we had not yet established a clear organisational policy and procedure that would have provided an overarching rationale and prevented this divergence in practice.

### Action

- We will review our approach to challenging attention from the media or any stakeholders. One of St Mungo’s core values is to be accountable. In order to be held to account for our actions there will be times when we may need to delay a full response until we can be completely clear about all the facts of a situation based on the evidence available to us. This may mean there is more negative attention on social media in the short term. We should also seek to separate the substance of the issue from the way it is being communicated. We should try to understand if there is substance to what is being raised. Where we cannot be confident that we have all the facts, we should be open about this.
- When practical, all relevant internal staff who may have knowledge about the situation should be involved in informing or checking our response. This means that initial statements may need to be holding positions while we undertake further investigations.

### iii. Outreach practice

- 8.10.** We have reviewed the training provided to outreach workers and are focusing on ensuring a unified and high quality approach, based on best practice, across all our outreach teams. Furthermore, we have recently reviewed and strengthened the matrix lead responsibilities in this area.

### Action

- Updated policies and procedures will be supported by clear and transparent guidance across all outreach teams.
- Compliance with the relevant policies will be checked through our service audit process.
- Policies will be communicated clearly across teams and implementation plans will be developed to ensure that practice is amended as required.
- Service audits will check compliance with operational policies and procedures.
- Training of all staff involved in working with non-UK nationals will be monitored.

## 9. Next steps

Based on these findings, the Leadership team will:

- Communicate the findings of the review to St Mungo's staff and external audiences.
- Undertake a review of existing policies to identify any which require a reputational risk assessment.
- Build in further steps to clarify practice when responding to critical media interest.
- Complete the review of our outreach policies and procedures and roll out the training.
- Put in place a timeline for the development of new or amended policies and procedures particularly when the change is in response to something happening externally e.g. legislative change. This should be linked to clear 'interim arrangements' which cover what is happening when a procedure is being amended or updated.

## 10. Current position on sharing information with the Home Office

St Mungo's does not share any information about clients with the Home Office without the client's full and informed consent unless it is legally obliged to do so. If the request for information from the Home Office is related to safeguarding concerns, the senior safeguarding lead will assess whether releasing any information is necessary and proportionate. If they find data sharing is justified, the information will be shared with the local authority safeguarding team only, not directly with the Home Office.

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**St Mungo's**  
Ending homelessness  
Rebuilding lives