

Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission 14th December 2020 Item 4 – Winter Night Shelter Provision in Hackney	Item No 4
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Outline

Winter night shelter provisions would normally open in November as the weather starts to become colder. These are usually in church halls and communal provisions. The global pandemic has impacted on the provisions of night shelters.

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan called for the Government to give the same protections afforded to the rest of society and urged for guidance to be issued about how winter shelters can be made COVID-secure, alongside urgent funding to ensure alternative safe accommodation. While there is an exception to the rule of six for 'work, and voluntary or charitable services', allowing the opening of winter night shelters with communal sleeping spaces would expose staff and vulnerable clients to a substantial known infection risk. This would also be contrary to health and safety advice issued to hotels and hostels serving the public.

Government guidance does not endorse the opening of communal night shelter facilities. The Government suggested night shelter projects should consider whether they can provide self-contained accommodation options. For clear safety reasons individual rooms and individual washing facilities should be the default to appropriately protect individuals from communicable diseases such as COVID-19. The Government has advised rotating night shelter models – where a different venue is used each night and people/belongings move each day – carry a higher risk of infection and should not be used. Providers should ensure that staff, volunteers, and guests are supported to adhere to this advice, and other legislation and guidance on social distancing, shielding, self-isolation, and working safely during COVID-19.

The Commission asked for an update on:

- 1) The opening, provision and operations of winter shelters in the borough and the impact of Covid-19.
- 2) Hackney Council's decision making and support in relation to the local winter shelter service provision in the borough.

Reports in the agenda:

- Report on Hackney Winter Night Shelter Provision in Hackney from Hackney Doorways

Invited Attendees:**Hackney Doorways**

Trustee, Kathy Meade

London Borough of Hackney

- **Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing Needs and Supply**, Cllr Rebecca Rennison
- **Head of Benefits and Housing Needs**, Jennifer Wynter.

Action

Members are asked to consider the reports, presentations and ask questions.