

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee: Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Sub-Committee	Dated: 10/07/2025
Subject: Co-production Project Progress Report	Public report: For Information
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes	Diverse Engagement Communities Proving Excellent Services
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N/A
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	Yes
Report of:	Judith Finlay, Executive Director of Community and Children's Services
Report author:	Kirsty Lowe, Rough Sleeping Services Manager

Summary

This progress report follows on from the previous co-production paper submitted to the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Sub-Committee in December 2024. The report provides a summary of the achievements of the co-production service over the last financial year, April 2024–March 2025, and the workplan for the current delivery year.

Overall, the co-production service has achieved well against its aims, and the service has a clear 2025–2026 workplan to build on its current successes.

The Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant (RSPRG) funds the co-production service until 31 March 2026. Once the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) notifies authorities of possible 2026–2027 grant funding, a decision will be made regarding future service delivery.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. In 2019, the Healthier City and Hackney Fund funded Groundswell, a leading homelessness advocacy organisation, to provide health assistance to City residents. The service was not able to fully deliver the work as intended, which resulted in an opportunity to repurpose an underspend of the budget elsewhere.
2. In 2020–2021 the Rough Sleeping Team repurposed the underspend and worked with Groundswell and an independent researcher, Becky Rice, to carry out interviews with those who had slept rough in the City and who had recently been accommodated in the temporary City Assessment Service (CAS). CAS was commissioned in response to the Government's 'Everyone In' approach to protect and preserve life due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All people who were met rough sleeping in the City were offered accommodation, predominately at CAS, which was the first emergency off the streets, rough sleeping accommodation within the Square Mile. In 2024, the permanent rough sleeping assessment service, Snow Hill Court opened.
3. The aim of this piece of work was to hear from those with lived experience about why they had decided (many for the first time) to come in off the streets and engage with services such as CAS. Groundswell and Becky Rice produced the *City Voices* report, which sets out recommendations based on the wants and needs of the service user. The report went on to shape and guide decisions to commission the permanent assessment service, Snow Hill Court.
4. In 2021, the findings of *City Voices* was shared with senior City officers and Members from the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Sub-Committee through a series of workshops facilitated by Groundswell. Members confirmed ongoing support of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Team's ambition to work and commission services in a more co-produced way.
5. Co-production is a way of working together to create positive change. Co-production seeks to maximise the involvement of people who have experienced a problem or challenge in identifying and solving that problem. This might include designing, commissioning, delivering, improving, or evaluating services.
6. 2022 marked the first year of the multi-year Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) grant funding. RSI funds enabled the City to commission a multi-year advocacy/co-production service. Groundswell was awarded phase 1 of the three-year plan in

2022. This involved consultation of a broader group of services users, including those currently sleeping rough and those across the accommodation pathway.

7. By 2023 the phase 1 consultation report was complete. It recommended that the City directly commission a co-production service. The contract was awarded to Mayday Trust and Groundswell. Mayday Trust later merged with Platform who the lead commissioned provider of the City of London (CoL) Co-production Service are now.
8. The co-production service delivered by Mayday Trust and Groundswell began in November 2023. The focus for the first six months was to recruit the team. The team was initially made up of four staff, which later increased to five staff members who deliver on three main areas:
 - a) **Advisory Group:** Members are made up of diverse individuals with lived experience of homelessness and/or rough sleeping. Members are working with, or have previously worked with, City rough sleeping/homelessness services.
 - b) **Champions:** Each rough sleeping and accommodation support service has a nominated champion. Professionals meet every month to discuss the importance of co-production, the ways in which their services deliver co-production, and to highlight potential barriers to delivering co-production.
 - c) **Workshops/promotion:** This group sets up and facilitates four co-production workshops attended by leaders and decision-makers from across the CoL and all homelessness commissioned organisations. The workshops are an opportunity to share good practice but also to agree next steps for how the City will commission and deliver co-produced homelessness services.

Current Position

9. The three-year RSI funding came to an end on 31 March 2025. CoL was notified by MHCLG of the one-year RSPRG in late December 2025 for this financial year (1 April 2025–31 March 2026). CoL confirmed continuation of funds for the co-production service for a further year.
10. The co-production service's quarter four (Q4) contract monitoring meeting took place in May 2025 where annual achievements were discussed:
 - a) **Advisory Panel Members**
 - (i) A key performance indicator (KPI) was to recruit and maintain between five and eight panel members each quarter. The project was able to achieve an average of six members across the year.

The members have all received one-to-one co-production and participation training and ongoing support and guidance from the Engagement and Support Coordinator (ESC). The ESC works in a

very person-centred way, focusing on the members' individual needs and strengths. A recent example of this support is that one panel member is being supported by the Groundswell progression team to find employment opportunities.

The group is diverse, with women and those from LGBTQ+ communities represented more recently. The women who joined the group have already helped the panel update the group agreement to better reflect the group's diversity.

- (ii) A KPI was to host one Advisory Panel meeting a month. The project was able to exceed this, hosting 15 meetings in total with an average attendance of three members at each meeting. It has been steady progress for the project and the group, seeing attendance numbers peak in Q4, where the average attendance was six.

In the later quarters the Advisory meetings focused on the Rough Sleeping Outreach Service as part of an Appreciative Inquiry approach. The group would get together to review progress made in the last Appreciative Inquiry and prepare for the next.

Appreciative Inquiry is a positive approach to organisational change that focuses on emphasising positive idea generation, encouraging discussion, focusing on strengths and untapped potential. Appreciative Inquiry approaches typically undergo four stages, which is known as the 4D cycle of Discover, Dream, Design and Deliver.

Further to this, the group is developing areas of interest and investigation of their own choice, including what 'move on' accommodation is available to clients after the supported accommodation pathway, and mapping street count and housing stock figures across the CoL. In March 2025, the group did a 'deep dive' into the process of contract tendering and planned service visits to help the group's understanding of services, monitor their efficiency and develop useful knowledge for future employment.

b) Champions

- (i) A KPI was to host one Champions meeting a month. The project slightly underachieved, however, delivering 10 meetings over the year, with an average attendance of five champions each meeting.

Over the year, the Community Partner has worked hard to recruit champions through regular visits to services and team meetings. They have facilitated workshops attended by various presenters from across the partnership to present models of co-production, and to impart knowledge and skills in how best to deliver client participation, with varying success.

Future planning meetings are currently taking place with champions, managers and City officers, with the aim to structure future meetings in a way that enables particulate to fully engage and motivate champions to prioritise the work.

- (ii) A KPI to deliver one Learning Group or Appreciative Inquiry session a month. The service delivered eight sessions in total in 2024–2025 and delivered a further two sessions this financial year to complete the Appreciative Inquiry. In this group, Advisory Panel members, City officers, champions and City Outreach workers came together as a wider working group to: share thoughts and ideas on what homeless provision worked well in the authority area; and set out what the future Rough Sleeping Outreach Team should look like for the second half of the year through the Appreciative Inquiry. All work from the Appreciative Inquiry will be written up in the coming months and will go on to shape the future tendering process for the new City Outreach Service.

Engagement with the City Outreach Team has been a particularly valuable aspect of the Appreciative Inquiry approach. The service has commented that the Outreach Team's contribution has deepened the co-production services' understanding of existing operational realities and constraints. Their involvement has helped provide evidence of the impact of co-production, and in turn has supported stronger relationships across the two services.

Feedback from the Advisory Panel:

'I really like seeing how our voices carry and are listened to, particularly meeting the decision-makers is impressive.'

'Despite feeling apprehensive and anxious about joining the group and navigating the space, I always come away feeling relaxed, included and heard.'

'I will take away an understanding of the dynamics and restraints behind commissioning services.'

'I enjoy speaking to people who have empathy and knowledge.'

'My highlight was hearing from the City officer who explained the commissioning cycle. In the future I want to go visit City officers and outreach in their place of work (Guildhall).'

c) Workshops/promotions

- (i) A KPI to host and facilitate four leadership events, which the service delivered by the end of the financial year. All sessions were well attended by senior figures from service providers, public health, CoL officers, CoL members and representatives from London Borough of Tower Hamlets and London Borough of Hackney.

The workshops were a mix of presentations from Platform, focusing on the theme of power-sharing, but also the sessions explored practical steps to putting co-production into action.

The service gathered feedback from participants, who reported how much attendees valued the opportunity to connect across roles and organisations, and particularly emphasised the importance of involving people with lived experience. The open discussions and range of perspectives were also appreciated, with many noting the strong commitment and engagement of those involved.

The workshops have been a meaningful and energising part of the wider co-production journey – helping to build shared understanding, strengthen relationships, and inspire collaborative action.

11. The table below sets out the outputs the co-production service will deliver this year.

Outputs	Learning that has led to this
Advisory Panel	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 10 Advisory Panel members ○ 12 monthly Advisory Panel meetings to gather and present feedback and insights, set priority areas, prepare for Appreciative Inquiries, and plan events ○ Training sessions and visits to services to develop knowledge and skills ○ Panel members receive one-to-one mentoring, progression support, reflective practice and attend extra participatory/team-building activities 	<p>Ongoing recruitment through gradual relationship-building is time-consuming but more effective than recruitment drives. The Advisory Panel is engaged and confident, and monthly meetings are working well.</p> <p>The Advisory Panel has strong relationships within the co-production project and desire to further develop skills and knowledge. We want to review how we can 'give back' and ensure that we are giving people opportunities to progress.</p>
Champions programme	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Q1: Monthly meetings between champions, managers and City officers to understand barriers and challenges and explore remuneration, proposed solutions and agree on activities for Q2-4 ○ Q2–4: Monthly Champion Forums focused on practice-sharing and reflective learning ○ Agreed investment from CoL to support champion participation 	<p>Champions haven't yet had the chance to build relationships with City officers. We are proposing three joint meetings with champions, managers, and City officers to build trust and collaboration.</p> <p>It takes time for strong relationships to form between the project team, City officers, services, and the Advisory Panel. The service wants to create similar conditions for champions, recognising the time and care needed to build safety and shared understanding.</p>
Learning Groups (until May 2025)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Final Appreciative Inquiry Learning Groups in April and May ○ Co-produced set of recommendations for future commissioning of outreach service and a reflection 	<p>This space has been valuable and has helped build strong relationships, but now the service is to shift focus into rough sleeping services, for the reasons outlined above.</p>

<p>document evaluating the Appreciative Inquiry process in practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Agreement on how to stay in touch in future, and on who will take forward actions 	
Appreciative Inquiry in services	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appreciative Inquiry delivered in one or two frontline services (topics selected collaboratively by champions, Advisory Panel, and people using the service, co-facilitated by champions and Advisory Panel members) ○ Training for champions on how to deliver Appreciative Inquiry in their service and sharing of system change resources ○ Facilitation training for champions and Advisory Panel members and project team ○ Write-up findings, key themes, and recommendations for next steps 	<p>Groundwork needs to happen before any session can take place – building relationships, helping people feel safe, building trust and confidence. This includes individual preparation and support for Advisory Panel members.</p> <p>The service has tested some small community listening approaches and worked with individual services, but intends to formalise how they reach people with lived experience outside of the Advisory Panel (who are currently rough sleeping and/or can't attend monthly meetings).</p>
Co-production events	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Two events bringing together Advisory Panel, City officers, champions and local leaders – to be overseen by the Advisory Panel. Events to be held in September and February. 	<p>The service wants to create opportunities for everyone to come together. The Advisory Panel is keen to meet, influence and learn from more stakeholders.</p>
Commissioner & Leader Working Groups	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Two to four Commissioner & Leader Working Groups focused on reflection, learning, and action planning to embed co-production more deeply into commissioning practices and service design. These sessions will build on previous learning, offering space to revisit reflections and potentially co-create a Team Agreement. Two of these sessions will be held in person, with a focus on practical action planning. In addition, we can offer up to two online sessions to explore themes such as power and relationships, reflective practice, and strengths-based leadership – depending on interest from the group. The two action-focused sessions to be held in June and November to alternate with the co-production events to maintain momentum. ○ A cross-borough co-production meeting to agree approach moving forward. 	<p>The service wants to build on the momentum from last year's workshops with a focus on practical action planning.</p> <p>Attendees in the cross-borough meeting have said it is useful to meet colleagues. The service intends to meet with City officers and other attendees to agree next steps for the group.</p>
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Corporate & Strategic Implications

- 12. Strategic implications – none
- 13. Financial implications – none
- 14. Resource implications – none
- 15. Legal implications – none
- 16. Risk implications – none
- 17. Equalities implications – none
- 18. Climate implications – none
- 19. Security implications – none

Conclusion

- 20. The co-production service has delivered well on most of its KPIs in 2025–2026 and has set out a clear vision of what is achievable for the service this year.
- 21. To date the project has: recruited and support an Advisory Group of people with lived experience; developed a Champions group of professionals working to deliver homelessness services; provided Learning Group and Appreciative Inquiry sessions for panel members, City officers, champions and outreach workers; facilitated four workshops, bringing together leaders in the City and the sector to commit to commission and deliver services in a more co-produced way.
- 22. The ambition of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Team is to continue to develop services in this area through continued commissioning of the current service.

Appendices

- None

Background Papers

- Homelessness Rough Sleeping Co-production Programme – Introduction Report 09/12/2024

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