

29 April 2021

Senior Coroner Andrew Harris  
London Inner South Coroner's Court  
1 Tennis Street  
London  
SE1 1YD

By email only - [REDACTED]

Dear Sir

**Inquest arising from the death of Joseph Agnew**

I write on behalf of the Mayor of London (the Mayor) with regard to the Senior Coroner's Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths (PFD) dated 26 February 2020 following the inquest arising from the death of Joseph Agnew.

**Mr Agnew's inquest and the Prevention of Future Deaths (PFD) report**

The Senior Coroner's PFD report raises the following matter of concern for the attention of the Mayor:

*'Evidence was heard that whilst the police can refer chronic rough sleepers to charities, there is no facility to which police can refer acutely intoxicated homeless people found on buses. It was reported that such facilities do exist elsewhere and that they create a place of safe refuge where monitoring can be effectively conducted. The potential of such a facility to save lives is drawn to the attention of the Mayor'.*

Mr Agnew died on 15 December 2016 and the inquest into his death concluded on 17 November 2020. The Mayor was not an Interested Person in the inquest and was first made aware of this inquest upon receipt of the Senior Coroner's PFD report. The Senior Coroner has kindly provided a copy of the IOPC's report into the investigation into police contact with Mr Agnew prior to his death and the following extracts of evidence from the City of London Police officers at the inquest:

PC [REDACTED] – *'It was a common practice in 2016 to have to leave intoxicated people in bus shelters or at a station. He never received any guidance or instruction otherwise'.*

PC [REDACTED] – *'To avoid instances of vulnerable people being left on the street, we need a way to deal with folk on buses – outreach services tend not to count these people. No solution has been found yet. They don't attend – they may fall outside their LA. What would be helpful is a place to take drunk people. There is an SOS bus in the City. The*

*time slot is critical – there is a narrow window. Such a facility needs to be more widely available. He has been involved in trying to secure facility for Christmas period’.*

I am the Executive Director for Housing and Land at the Greater London Authority (GLA) and one of the teams within my department is the rough sleeping team, so I am responding to the Senior Coroner’s report on the Mayor’s behalf.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer our sincere condolences to the family and friends of Mr Agnew and outlined below is a response to the area of concern raised by the Senior Coroner.

## **The Mayor’s responsibilities for rough sleeping**

The Mayor’s Life Off the Streets programme provides a range of services and initiatives to help people sleeping rough to leave the streets and rebuild their lives. These complement those provided by London’s boroughs.

The Mayor does not have a statutory duty to provide these services but works alongside London’s boroughs who also provide services to those who sleep rough. The Mayor commissions services that are pan-London or multi-borough in their remit. Local Authorities have a duty under the Housing Act 1996 to secure accommodation for unintentionally homeless households who fall into a ‘priority need’ category. There is no duty to secure accommodation for all homeless people.

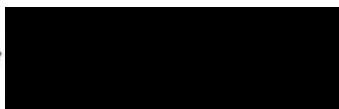
## **Services available for rough sleeping**

The Mayor provides a range of services to assist people to rebuild their lives. These include street outreach which involves teams of outreach workers locating people sleeping rough and supporting them to leave the streets. There are also services to provide immediate options for someone to leave the streets or prevent them from sleeping rough. This includes emergency accommodation services and assessment centres which provide safe shelter and support for people to find longer term accommodation.

Services also include longer term accommodation solutions and access to appropriate support including mental and physical health, training and employment to enable people to move on with their lives.

The priorities underpinning all the Life Off the Streets rough sleeping services, projects and initiatives funded by the Mayor are set out in the pan-London Rough Sleeping Commissioning Framework.

The overarching priorities of the Commissioning Framework are to work with boroughs and partners to: (i) minimise the flow of new rough sleepers onto the streets, (ii) ensure that no-one new to the streets sleeps rough for a second night, (iii) ensure that no-one lives on the streets of London; and (iv) ensure that no-one returns to sleep on the streets of London.



There are also various cross-cutting priorities that are critical to tackling rough sleeping and will underpin the nature and shape of the GLA's commissioned services over the coming period. This includes working with boroughs and partners to: (v) tackle rough sleeping by non-UK nationals, (vi) improve partnership working around enforcement, (vii) tackle hidden or mobile rough sleeping, (viii) meet the physical and mental health needs of rough sleepers, (ix) help ensure the availability of appropriate accommodation, including emergency accommodation, (x) enhance the service offer from smaller organisations, including faith and community based organisations, (xi) maintain and improve the collection and use of data about sleeping rough; and (xii) promote employment, training and volunteering among rough sleepers.

All services for rough sleepers commissioned by the GLA are tested against the four overarching priorities and the relevant cross-cutting aims to ensure that they are making an appropriate and demonstrable contribution to tackling rough sleeping in the capital.

More information on all of these services, including funding and the provider organisations, can be found in the [Mayor's Life Off the Streets rough sleeping services briefing](#). I enclose a copy with this letter.

### **Policies on rough sleepers sleeping on buses**

In August 2017, the Mayor announced the creation of a new team dedicated to helping the rising number of homeless people who use Night Buses and Tubes as a place to sleep. I enclose a copy of the Mayoral Decision (MD2166) which approved this policy.

As set out in MD2166, the Mayor wanted to ensure there was an offer for every rough sleeper in London and that services were in place to help them access available support. One gap in provision was the coverage of outreach on London's night buses and the tube network. The ongoing extensions of the night tube, in particular, created additional 'spaces' where people who were homeless may sleep to stay warm and safe.

It was therefore proposed that the GLA-commissioned London Street Rescue (LSR) service be enhanced to provide a new 'night transport outreach team' to run for 18 months (starting in October 2017) to work on the night bus and tube network in London. The team would work closely with Transport for London ('TfL'), with whom LSR already had good links. This would enable intelligence-led shifts based on TfL staff reports which would feed into shift delivery patterns. The service would also develop the skills of TfL staff to improve the quality of referrals.

The team help find accommodation, provide access to support services and reconnect people with family and friends to prevent them from ending up sleeping on the streets.

This announcement followed data from TfL which revealed that the number of homeless people sleeping on night buses in winter 2015/16 was 121% greater than the same period

in 2012/13. This reflected a trend of rising homelessness seen more widely across the capital in recent years. The Mayor's aim for the night outreach team was to help prevent people using transport as a bed for the night and to ensure they receive immediate help to access the accommodation and range of services they need.

The night-time transport team focuses on transport routes which homeless people are known to frequent or that bus and Tube drivers have referred the team to. The emergency services and members of the public can alert the outreach team to anyone needing their help by using the online Streetlink London service ([www.streetlink.london](http://www.streetlink.london)).

Prior to the establishment of the team, support for individuals rough sleeping on buses was, in the main, the responsibility of borough commissioned outreach teams. With the introduction of this team, bus drivers, tube workers and the emergency services were able to refer individuals to the service regardless of borough boundaries so that support can be given. The Mayor has recently agreed funding for this service to continue within the London Street Rescue service for 2021/22. I enclose a copy of the relevant Mayoral Decision (MD2789).

However, this team is not a blue light service and whilst it will aim to respond to all referrals in a timely manner, this service aims to get help those who regularly rough sleep on buses in order to help the most vulnerable.

Therefore, since Mr Agnew's tragic death in December 2016, a dedicated outreach service to assist individuals who are rough sleeping on buses has been established by the Mayor.

## **Facilities for intoxicated persons**

There are several alcohol intoxication management services (AIMS) that have been commissioned by local borough public health teams, the London Ambulance Service (LAS) and the NHS, such as the SOS bus in the City of London and Alcohol Recovery Centres that run in several London boroughs. These services are not run by the Mayor. These services are designed to receive, treat and monitor intoxicated patients who would normally attend Emergency Departments and to lessen the burden that alcohol-misuse places on A&E services. These mainly operate at Christmas and other busy times of the year when demand for the London Ambulance and A&E services is high.

These services are not generally designed to assist and support rough sleepers, as they are generally set up to help people sober up and reduce the strain on A&E departments rather than provide interventions and ongoing support for vulnerable clients.

## **Conclusion**

As detailed above, the main development since Mr Agnew's death in December 2016 has been the establishment of the night transport outreach team to assist anyone rough sleeping on the transport network at night, enabling drivers and others to refer those of

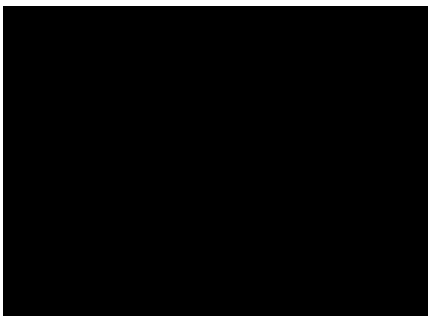
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concern to this service. Since the creation of this service, the team has helped over 1,020 clients.

The National Institute for Health Research has recently published an evaluation into alcohol intoxication management services and made several recommendations around future work on the management of alcohol intoxication in night-time environments which I hope will be taken forward at national and borough level to provide a more comprehensive safety net for those intoxicated and vulnerable.

I trust this response is helpful. Please contact us if we can be of any further assistance.

Yours faithfully



Executive Director, Housing and Land

