

Suite 2, Whichford House  
1400 John Smith Drive,  
Oxford Business Park South,  
Oxford, OX4 2JY  
Tel: 01865 520520

[hello@healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk](mailto:hello@healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk)  
[www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk)

Oxford City Council Inequality Scrutiny Panel  
Oxford City Council  
St Aldate's  
Oxford  
OX1 1BX

30<sup>th</sup> January 2015

Dear Oxford City Council Inequality Scrutiny Panel,

This submission to your current consultation is from the board of Healthwatch Oxfordshire, one of over 140 local Healthwatch organisations across the country. Whether it's improving them today or helping to shape them for tomorrow, Healthwatch Oxfordshire is all about local voices being able to influence the delivery and design of local health and social care services. One of our board directors, Richard Lohman, has brought this matter to our attention and on behalf of the board I am pleased to forward his recommendations to you. I would be most grateful if the Inequality Scrutiny Panel would review this submission and assist local health, housing and social care commissioners and providers with considering the implementation of its five recommendations. This submission feels particularly timely due to the recent county council budget cuts agreed for homeless services.

I note from the record of your December meeting that the current commissioning model and consequent delivery of the 'No Second Night Out' (NSNO) service prioritises the visibility of homeless people over their needs and we are concerned that this might be having a negative impact on the appropriate discharge of people experiencing homelessness from hospital. The board is aware of the excellent work carried out by the NSNO staff on the ground in the city however there is concern that they could be constrained in their efforts by the priority dictated by the current policy, as could many dedicated local hospital NHS staff. There is concern that maintaining this priority of visibility over need together with the current model of 'strict verification' is causing both inappropriate discharge and delays in discharge as well as unnecessary re-admission to hospital of people experiencing homelessness. We understand that the 'best practice' that No Second Night Out is quoted as stemming from is not compatible with Oxford or the rest of the county. This is because it stems from a pilot in London which has significant differences between its health, housing and social care systems and those of Oxford and Oxfordshire.

**Recommendation one:** That the Inequality Scrutiny Panel assist in bringing about negotiations with local health, housing and social care commissioners and providers so that the current NSNO policy priority is changed to one of need over visibility and the verification process is amended

to enable speedier hospital discharge and ease of hostel access for the most needy homeless cases.

**Recommendation two:** That the Inequality Scrutiny Panel assist in bringing about negotiations with local health, housing and social care commissioners and providers so that a number of bed spaces within each of the city's hostels is allocated for the specific discharge from hospital of the most needy people experiencing homelessness.

Both these recommendations will require further co-operative work with the Oxford University Hospitals Trust as they will need to update their electronic admissions process so that more information is gathered than at present. We understand that the electronic admissions system currently only registers homeless people as being NFA, rather than as recommended within current good practice guidelines i.e. if sofa surfing then at which address and if rough sleeping then in which location. These guidelines are attached and have previously been provided to each of the OUHT, OCCG, the County Council Health and Wellbeing Board and to Stuart Bell, the chief executive of Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust.

The board is also concerned that the current commissioning model and delivery of the 'No Second Night Out' service appears to create inequality of access to Local Authority assessment of people presenting as homeless. The consequence of this appears to be that people experiencing homelessness are being hindered in their right to a written decision from the local authority on their application as a person experiencing homelessness.

**Recommendation three:** That the Inequality Scrutiny Panel bring this matter to the attention of the local authority so that they may undertake a review and seek the views of homelessness stakeholders to enable a more rights based approach to be adopted.

It has also come to the board's attention that despite the severe lack of hostel bed space availability people sleeping rough are being forcefully evicted from their camps.

**Recommendation four:** That the Inequality Scrutiny Panel consider strongly suggesting that this practice is stopped until bed spaces are available within the current hostel stock.

**Recommendation five:** That the Inequality Scrutiny Panel assist in bringing about negotiations with local health, housing and social care commissioners and providers so that a county wide discharge policy for people experiencing homelessness can be adopted as per best practice guidelines.

Healthwatch Oxfordshire looks forward to the Inequality Scrutiny Panel's review of this submission and if the Panel requires any further information or clarification please do not hesitate to contact its office at the address above.

Yours faithfully

Jean Nunn-Price



Chair  
Healthwatch Oxfordshire Board of Directors