

ENDING STREET HOMELESSNESS IN CITIES AROUND THE WORLD?

An Overarching Evaluation of the “A Place to
Call Home” Initiative by the Institute of Global
Homelessness

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PROJECT AIMS

- To monitor progress towards the achievement of statistical goals set by 13 Vanguard Cities participating in the Institute of Global Homelessness (IGH) *A Place to Call Home* initiative to end or reduce street homelessness by 31st December 2020
- To evaluate what works to end street homelessness – and in particular what are the core components of success that may be transferable to other cities/contexts?
- What lessons can we learn from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Funded by the Oak Foundation



THE VANGUARD CITIES

- Three cities in **North America** - Chicago and Little Rock in the US, and Edmonton in Canada
- Four cities in **Europe** - Greater Manchester and Glasgow in the UK, Brussels in Belgium, and Rijeka in Croatia
- Two cities in **Australia** - Adelaide and Sydney
- Two cities in **South America** – Montevideo in Uruguay, and Santiago in Chile
- One city in **Africa** - Tshwane in South Africa
- One city in **India** - Bengaluru



METHODS

- ▶ Standardised research instruments developed to maximise comparability across highly varied cities, tailored as necessary for context
- ▶ Local research teams commissioned to conduct two waves of fieldwork: key informant interviews + focus group(s) with frontline workers (in 2020; in early 2021)
- ▶ Analysis of all transcripts; quantitative data; local research reports/strategies
- ▶ Extract overarching findings/lessons, but mindful of pitfalls of naïve policy transfer



PROGRESS TOWARDS TARGETS

- Some cities making progress in right direction pre-COVID (Sydney, Manchester, Chicago, Bengaluru)
- Some cities making progress post-COVID (Glasgow, Adelaide)
- Endpoint data will also be available for two others (Edmonton, Little Rock) but still to be analysed
- No endpoint data available for the other five cities for various reasons



'WHAT WORKS'

- **Raising ambition/shifting narrative to reduction** - not just managing
- **Resources/political will** – sustainable and adequate resources (e.g. Greater Manchester v Chicago)
- **Segmentation of population** - more specialized responses
- **Individual case management** - coordinated entry/'By-name-lists', sufficiently low case loads to enable effective level of support (e.g. Glasgow)
- **Assertive, effective outreach** - including at nighttime, and combined with realistic offers of support to end homelessness
- **A decent accommodation 'offer'** - safe, well-managed and dignified; smaller or self-contained where possible; culturally-sensitive; at scale; and without prohibitive access barriers (e.g. Greater Manchester, Sydney)
- **Substance misuse and other specialist support** - without high conditionality barriers
- **Facilitating access to employment/income** – especially in contexts where little welfare protection
- **Effective co-ordination with other relevant agencies** (e.g. health, housing)



CHALLENGES/BARRIERS COMMON ACROSS CITIES

- **Reliance on shelters as main/significant response** – often large, mixed, dormitory-style with little privacy and no security, limited services, sometimes poorly managed, dangerous environments, split families up, sometimes people locked in during Covid
- **Documentation/legal status** – a key barrier for migrants everywhere (but more variable for citizens, e.g. less of an issue in UK)
- **Difficulties in accessing suitable, affordable housing** – barrier in rich as well as poor cities, albeit for different reasons
- **Lack of access to mental health services**
- **Lack of prevention** – in most cities there is very little emphasis on halting the inflow onto the streets, even from highly predictable pathways like prisons; hospital/care settings also key in some places (e.g. Montevideo, Edmonton)



LACK OF PREVENTION

“The main problem continues to be the number of people who end up in the street after coming out of prison” (Montevideo)

“Currently, we have not done anything to directly prevent street homelessness. What we do is bring people to shelters for their care and protection.” (Bengaluru)

“[we need] more capacity to be able to support people more quickly so that you're intervening and preventing rather than reacting once the crisis hits. We deal with so much crisis, and it's draining on that person, it's draining on the worker, it drains our resources when you're dealing with people in crisis mode all the time” (Edmonton)

“We've been trying to do more diversion activities; I think that's tough though because it... happens at the shelter door... someone would have to come to shelter and say, 'I am experiencing homelessness,' and working through them and see if there's other alternatives like going back to their family or friends, or do you need a bus ticket somewhere, or do you need just some help financially to make your rent, or whatever” (Chicago)



RESOURCE RICH V RESOURCE POOR

“We have hundreds of thousands of homeless people with no money, literally no money. So, the disparity ...you cannot enter into a conversation if North America talks about federal funding, assisted housing programmes... how do we reconcile those things?.” (Tshwane)

‘In India we do not have a structured and effective way for social security. It is very minimum. The interventions right now are not enough. The government have their own priorities. The NGOs are trying to do their best. There are many NGOs trying’ (Bengaluru)

“...we're an under-resourced community and an under-resourced state.... we have a huge problem on our hands. We can't just collaborate our way out of it without some extra money. I want the city to spend some money on it, but the board members have been like, no, there's no money in the budget.” (Little Rock)

“this is done on with nickels and dimes and what the system needs is real, deep investment that's committed over the long term... these smaller bits are added and the city pats itself on the back for doing that and tries to act as though that's a replacement for a real long-term investment” (Chicago)



OTHER VARIABLE BARRIERS/CHALLENGES

- **Political commitment** – mayors and governors key (Sydney, Manchester); but how sustainable (Montevideo, Little Rock, Tshwane)? Less progress without meaningful political backing (Brussels, Chicago)
- **Lead/coordinating agency** – present in some (Glasgow, Manchester, Chicago, Edmonton, Adelaide, Sydney); absent in many others (Tshwane, Little Rock, Brussels, Rijeka, Bengaluru)
- **Enforcement** – can be harsh, especially on encampments (e.g. Edmonton); but positive developments in some places (e.g. police training on human rights in Tshwane; changed approach in Chicago and recent/nascent change in Edmonton)
- **Reliance on committed individuals, charities and faith groups** – vital but need harnessed and supported
- **Term “Housing First” wide spread, but on closer inspection, varied understanding of what it means.** E.g. shared housing in Montevideo and Santiago, and with many requirements



HALTING WHAT DOESN'T WORK

“We are not a Housing First city. We're a programme-first [city]...We look at housing last after you're sober; after your soul's been saved - you've been washed in the blood; and all this bullshit. We do all this to people when really their presenting reason for homelessness is poverty... providers would have to switch their mindset from programming to housing.” (Little Rock)

“Churches give food, especially suburban churches...They...do some evangelical outreach and pray for people, they give out food. All they do is they come in our neighbourhoods, they litter the place and then they move out and they think they did good. It's a lot of the charity thing and it's the idea of 'not in my back yard'. We will rather address homelessness in the inner city, as long as the people are not in our neighbourhood...Churches quickly, when you speak to them and ask can they participate in addressing homelessness, the first thing they do is open up a soup kitchen.” (Tshwane)



IMPACT OF COVID-19 – POSITIVE IMPACTS

- **Change of narrative in several cities/countries (but not in all)** – more sympathetic, some national Governments took responsibility, including specific funding streams targeting street homelessness
- **Significant use of hotels or more self-contained accommodation across wide range of contexts** – demonstrating the positive influence of private, dignified spaces in contrast to communal shelters (e.g. Greater Manchester, Adelaide). Focus on rapid rehousing in some cities (e.g. Chicago)
- **Shelters ‘de-densified and increased safety protocols** (e.g. Chicago); **use of shelters ‘designed out’ altogether** (in Glasgow)
- **Moratoriums on evictions** (e.g. UK, US, Edmonton), though not always sustained (Edmonton) **and some increase of benefits** (e.g. UK, Santiago)
- **More inclusive and less conditional approaches** – including to migrants (e.g. UK)
- **Brought about local coordination on a scale not seen before** – e.g. in Tshwane and Edmonton

IMPACT OF COVID-19 – NEGATIVE IMPACTS AND CONCERNS

- **Vast number of rural migrants stranded in Bengaluru as a result of sudden lockdown, some without food or shelter**
- **Large-scale congregate shelters expanded in some cities (e.g. Montevideo); while de-densification limited shelter capacity in others (e.g. Chicago and Edmonton); or hotels silted up because of lack of throughput (Glasgow)**
- **Face-to-face support was restricted by change of distribution of crisis food services and by closing low-threshold services (e.g. Little Rock, Bengaluru)**
- **Economic impacts will increase homelessness – especially for those in the informal economy (e.g. in Tshwane, Bengaluru, Santiago, Montevideo, Rijeka)**
- **Crisis focus crowded out intensive or preventative work (e.g. Edmonton)**



NEXT STEPS

- Report completed by end September
- Published and launched in November
- Main report and other outputs will be freely available for download
- Local webinars
- Feed into future IGH programme