



**NATIONAL  
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**FULFILLING LIVES**



## **Rough sleeping navigators: Learning from MEAM Approach and Fulfilling Lives areas**

### **About this briefing**

The government has made important commitments around rough sleeping navigators and local accountability structures as part of its strategy to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027.

“Navigation” or “coordination” is a vital part of helping individuals with the most complex needs move away from rough sleeping, and it is an approach that is distinct from outreach or other forms of engagement.

Across the country, 33 local areas are working on navigation – either as part of the Big Lottery Fund’s Fulfilling Lives programme, or as part of the national MEAM Approach network. This briefing explores learning from these areas and highlights six important considerations which can help ensure that navigation, rather than outreach, is promoted as part of the strategy’s implementation.

### **About the authors**

This briefing has been prepared by Fulfilling Lives and Making Every Adult Matter:

- **Fulfilling Lives** is a Big Lottery Fund programme supporting local voluntary and community sector partnerships in 12 areas of England. Big Lottery Fund is investing £112 million of National Lottery funding in these partnerships, which support adults with experience of substance misuse, homelessness, offending and mental ill-health. People with first-hand experience of these issues are at the heart of the partnerships, using their insight to design local services that are better connected and easier to access. This briefing has been shaped by the Systems Change Action Network (SCAN) group, which comprises the project managers from the twelve partnerships.
- **Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM)** is a coalition of the national charities Clinks, Homeless Link and Mind; with Collective Voice as an associate member. Working together, the MEAM coalition is supporting 21 local areas across England to develop effective, coordinated approaches to multiple needs that can increase wellbeing, reduce costs to public services and improve people’s lives. These local areas use a framework called the MEAM Approach to guide their work.

## Based on our learning, successful rough sleeping navigators must:

### 1. Report to a cross sector partnership and have the seniority and confidence to request flexible responses

Accountability for rough sleeping and the specific needs of people with multiple and complex needs must be shared across a local system. Navigators must have the authority to act in flexible ways for clients and be able to call on flexible responses from other statutory and voluntary services. The best way to achieve this is to ensure that navigators report to a local cross-sector partnership.

**In Fulfilling Lives areas** navigators operate as part of a wider partnership of statutory and voluntary sector agencies. This takes a number of forms across areas but can include multi agency review boards, multi-disciplinary operational groups and strategic forums. These partnerships provide the mandate for navigators to flex the system and by doing so highlight gaps in the current design and delivery of services.

**In MEAM Approach areas** coordinators sit within a structure of operational and strategic groups. Operational groups of frontline services meet regularly to discuss casework and develop flexible responses. This is fed directly into a strategic group of senior decision makers who explore and address any systemic barriers that are highlighted.

### 2. Have the time and flexibility to build trusting relationships and follow individuals throughout their journey

Navigators are more than outreach workers. Our work has shown that effective navigation starts with the ability and time to form a trusting relationship based on the needs of an individual, rather than the needs of services. The support provided builds on people's strengths and is shaped by an understanding of the impact of trauma on people's presenting behaviours. Over time navigators become a single, consistent and trusted point of contact for the individual they are supporting, enabling the individual to successfully engage, or re-engage with services from which they would otherwise be excluded.

**In Fulfilling Lives areas** navigators have the flexibility and freedom within their role to build relationships with people over time and work at the pace of the individual. Unrestricted by traditional time limits and targets, navigators advocate on behalf of beneficiaries and support them through a complex system of services, coordinating a specific package of support. The partnerships place a strong emphasis on ensuring that navigators are different to traditional support workers. This includes very low caseloads for each navigator, a focus on assertive advocacy, access to a personal budget, and no conditions being placed on support.

**In MEAM Approach areas** coordinators also work with people over an extended period of time. Caseloads are small, with a ratio of approximately 1:10. Support is ongoing and follows the individual across changes to their personal circumstances including rough sleeping/changes in accommodation, imprisonment or periods in hospital. Individuals are kept on the caseload as their circumstances improve to ensure that support is quickly available again if necessary. Many coordinators have access to a small budget to purchase services or items that are not otherwise readily available, but which can promote engagement and recovery. Coordinators operate across traditional organisational boundaries, and the support they provide is person-centred and led by the client. The focus for all coordinators is on better coordinating existing services, not developing a new one.

### 3. Have the right skills and values

The ability to draw on personal experiences and common ground can be an important first step in supporting people to access the services they need. When recruiting navigators, the right values such as compassion, resilience, aspiration and a belief in change is just as important as having the right skills and experience.

**In Fulfilling Lives areas** many navigators have had direct experience of homelessness, the criminal justice system, substance misuse and mental ill health. While not an essential criteria, this insight can help early on to build trusting and positive relationships with service users, and can also help in providing challenge and an impetus to change.

**In MEAM Approach areas** there is also a strong emphasis on ensuring that coordinators have the right skills and values. Particular attention is paid to recruitment, with MEAM Approach areas learning from others in the network about what has worked best in other areas. The best coordinators have a mix of skills and are equally comfortable working with individuals as they are advocating for change with senior partners.

### 4. Be diverse enough to engage 'hidden groups'

Our work has shown that women and BAME communities are 'hidden' within much of the available data on multiple needs. A combination of shame, stigma and risks to personal safety from rough sleeping can make women less visible to services. Equally for BAME communities a lack of trust, language difficulties and a lack of access to mainstream referral services can prevent coordinated support for multiple needs.

**In Fulfilling Lives areas** variations in gender, ethnicity and personal experience across navigator teams has allowed the partnerships to work in ways that are both gender informed and culturally aware. As a result greater numbers of women and people from BAME communities are accessing the coordinated support they need.

**In MEAM Approach areas** 30% of people supported are women. A number of areas are developing gender informed approaches and partnership responses to issues such as diverting women with multiple needs away from the criminal justice system.

### 5. Have the right training and supervision, including an understanding of the role of trauma

A significant number of people with the most complex needs have experienced trauma in childhood. For women in particular, this frequently continues into adulthood, where they experience domestic abuse and violence. In addition, learning disabilities, brain injury and digital literacy can all impact on an individual's ability to engage with services.

**Fulfilling Lives areas** have used a range of approaches to support navigators to take a trauma-informed approach and to support the wellbeing of staff working in this very challenging environment. This has included the use of clinical supervision from trained therapists, solution-focused practice, group reflective practice and training on specific issues such as attachment theory and managing aggressive behaviour. Psychologically Informed Environments have also been developed across a number of areas.

**In MEAM Approach areas** there is a focus on strengths-based practice and ensuring that coordinators understand the impact of trauma. Our recent learning hub brought together navigators and coordinators from across MEAM Approach and Fulfilling Lives areas to share learning on these approaches.

## 6. Have a focus on changing systems and not just providing support

The aim of navigation is to better coordinate existing services, not to provide a new one. Navigators play an important role in identifying blocks and barriers within existing systems and finding solutions.

**In Fulfilling Lives areas** there is a commitment to creating systems change as part of the programme. Each area has a set of system change priorities that it is working towards. Many of the navigators in Fulfilling Lives areas were drawn to the role because of its potential to change the current system.

**In MEAM Approach areas** there is a strong focus from strategic groups on exploring the systemic barriers arising from the work and taking collective action as a partnership to address these issues.

### The impact this is having in local areas

#### **Andy, West Yorkshire Finding Independence (WY-FI)**

At the time of the referral by West Yorkshire Police Andy was residing on the vulnerable person's unit at HMP Leeds serving a short sentence for breach of his Sexual Offences Protection Order. Over five years Andy had been sentenced for six different sexual offences and had breached his Sexual Offences Protection Order on five occasions. On release Andy was homeless, drank high levels of alcohol (120 units per week), had frequent visits to A&E and failed to meet the requirements of his Sexual Offences Protection Order which meant he was taken back to court and returned to HMP Leeds to await trial.

Andy was initially referred into WY-FI following a meeting between the WY-FI Navigator, Probation and the Positive Futures team at HMP Leeds. Andy was 68 years old at the time but when the Navigator first met him he was struck by Andy's childlike joke telling and constant need to repeat his history. The Navigator liaised with Adult Social Care to carry out a mental capacity assessment for Andy. The Navigator also met with the Court Liaison Officer and Andy's lawyer while the judge remanded Andy in custody to allow for a separate assessment of cognitive functioning to take place. The Navigator arranged for a Consultant Forensic and Clinical Psychologist to prepare a court report of the assessment to support Andy's case.

The mental capacity assessment found that Andy lacked capacity to retain and understand information, weigh up risks and communicate decisions. This meant Andy was not able to make informed decisions about accommodation or care arrangements. The cognitive functioning assessment concluded that Andy was suffering from Korsakoff's Syndrome which manifests in memory deficits, confabulation and lacking insight.

As a result of partnership working Andy was housed in an appropriate care home on release and allocated a social worker to fully assess his needs. A supportive Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLS) was put in place at the care home to prevent Andy from leaving without an escort while extra funding was secured for 1:1 support and a male carer. An Independent Mental Capacity Advocate was also arranged to represent Andy.

Andy is now housed appropriately, is abstinent, has not re-offended and has more stable mental health. Andy has also managed to reconnect with his brother who now visits him at the home and in general he feels contented and happy for the first time in a long period.

Without partnership working Andy's diagnosis of Korsakoff's Syndrome and lack of mental capacity may have been overlooked and he could have continued to be a frequent offender.

### **Anne and Marie, Counting Every Adult Service in Cambridgeshire**

Marie remembers the day she first met Anne. It was in the healthcare wing of a local prison. “The moment I walked in I knew she was in the wrong place. We talked about how we could help her, but mostly about what she wanted me to do to help.”

Anne had mental health problems and had been sleeping rough. “I found my life spiralling out of control,” says Anne. “The things that mattered to me had become finding enough food to eat and a roof over my head. I felt as though society had thrown me away. Whenever I went anywhere, people would glaze over and go ‘oh no, not her’.”

Anne was referred to Marie from the Counting Every Adult Service in Cambridgeshire, which was developed using the MEAM Approach. Anne says: “When I met Marie in prison, she smiled at me, she gave me a hug; she treated me like a human being. Marie said she would walk with me every step of the way, giving me the stability I needed to rebuild my life. Marie was a place of hope for me. I felt as if somebody was actually listening to my voice for the first time in a long time.”

The flexibility of Marie’s role means that she is able to develop relationships with the agencies that can deliver a coordinated response for people with multiple needs in the days before release from prison. Working closely with colleagues in the CRC, housing, mental health, substance misuse and others, she can prepare a transition to services within the community and prevent the ‘cliff edge’ caused by short sentences in which accommodation has been lost, access to GPs, mental health and other primary care has been severed, and the need to rebuild these connections can be overwhelming. In some cases, working with a coordinator like Marie to attend mental health, substance misuse and other services can become part of the individual’s rehabilitation requirements.

Marie sums up the change this kind of approach makes possible: “We’ve shown that we can work with people that otherwise would be thrown away by society. And we really are making a difference to people’s lives.”

### **A poem from a client in West Yorkshire (a Fulfilling Lives area) about their navigator, Roxanne.**

#### **Roxanne**

There’s no messing about, you get the job done  
It’s amazing you climbed the Three Peaks for charity I know you had fun  
You take on the world, sun, rain or fog  
Only one thing can distract you and that’s somebody’s dog  
People like you Roxanne are really hard to find  
Thoughtful and caring you are very kind  
All your work is done with maximum effect  
I’ve got so much appreciation for you with the utmost respect  
I have made you frustrated but never intended to  
You care about my life and the situations I go through  
If I can’t do it then I know you can  
Thankful for all you’ve done for me, I mean that Roxanne.