



# **Reducing harm from street activities – the Luton “Town Centre for All” initiative**

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**with thanks to Sally Cartwright, DPH and Corey Albone, Programme Manager for UK Shared Prosperity Fund Projects for some of the slides**



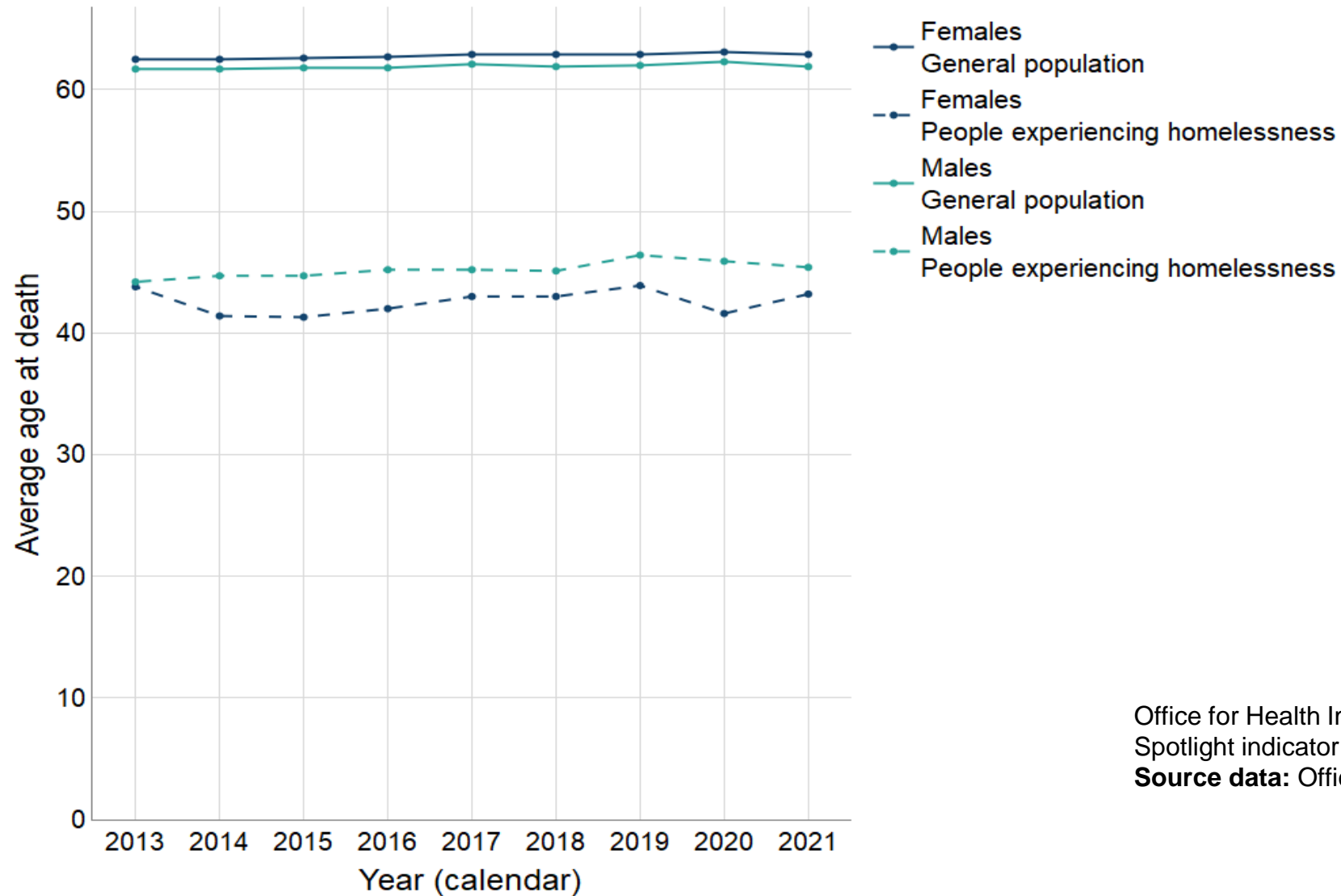
## The cohort of interest (from Street outreach team, snapshot from 1<sup>st</sup> June – 20<sup>th</sup> July 2022)

- 71 individuals within snapshot, known to a variety of services.
- Large proportion raising money, street drinking, or history of alcohol or drug use i.e. “street activities” .  
[In 2022, the University of Bedfordshire estimated 30 people regularly involved in street activities in Luton].
- Often complex picture of rough sleeping or in accommodation, raising money, street drinking, offending history
- Often mental health needs and/or diagnosed or suspected personality disorder/ PTSD/ suspected cognitive challenges
- Number of individuals also known to care system or children’s services

# Case Study

- 38 year old man, originally from Bedford but has been in Luton for many years, adverse childhood experiences and neglect, young offender, drug dependency from a very early age, uses two names
- Historic diagnosis of Paranoid Schizophrenia
- Raising money in Luton for 7 years
- Constant offer of accommodation - 6 different types of accommodation have been tried multiple times but he abandons, finding it too difficult to be inside
- No trust – took many years before he even spoke to Outreach workers
- No independent living skills, when he is in accommodation he hoards belongings and ‘rough sleeps’ inside.
- During COVID 19 he was placed in and evicted from 8 hotels
- Raises money daily for dominant drug dependency
- Subject to a Criminal Behaviour Order – papers submitted for breach

# Average age at death of people experiencing homelessness compared to the general population, by sex, 2013-2021



Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (2022)  
Spotlight indicator SP22  
**Source data:** Office for National Statistics (ONS)

# Access to services

- People who are socially excluded underuse some services, such as primary and preventative care, and often rely on emergency services such as A&E when their health needs become acute.
- This results in:
  - missed opportunities for preventive interventions
  - serious illness
  - further exacerbates existing health inequalities
- But can provide window of opportunity for services and care
- Poor access to services is often a result of multiple barriers e.g:
  - difficulty understanding and navigating the system
  - Traditional services not being right for lifestyle
  - past experiences of being turned away from services or being badly treated
  - not speaking the language or be able to read or write
  - being afraid of punitive action after accessing services
- Can send message to others that services aren't there or not right – exacerbate situation further
- Loneliness also issue and barrier to moving out of situation



# Town Centre Transformation – At the heart of Luton 2040 and Levelling Up

Luton 2040 ambition:  
a healthy, fair, and  
sustainable town  
where everyone can  
thrive, and no one has  
to live in poverty.





# Partnerships for People and Place (PfPP)

- PfPP is a programme delivered in partnership between the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and local partners piloted across 13 local authority areas from April 2022-March 2023.
- Designed to develop new ways of working and policy-making to solve local problems at a national, local and person level.
- Luton obtained **£238,000** of funding in 2022 to deliver a project which aims to improve safety and perceptions of the town centre while reducing harms among the town centre street population.
- The project is funding the following outputs:
  - A new **Town Centre Strategic Board** to oversee a new town centre plan.
  - **Research by University of Bedfordshire** to better understand the drivers of street activities and proposals for a harm reduction approach.
  - **Interventions** designed to improve safety and reduce harms.
  - **A new town centre engagement plan** to help improve perceptions of the town centre.

# What else have we done in Luton so far?

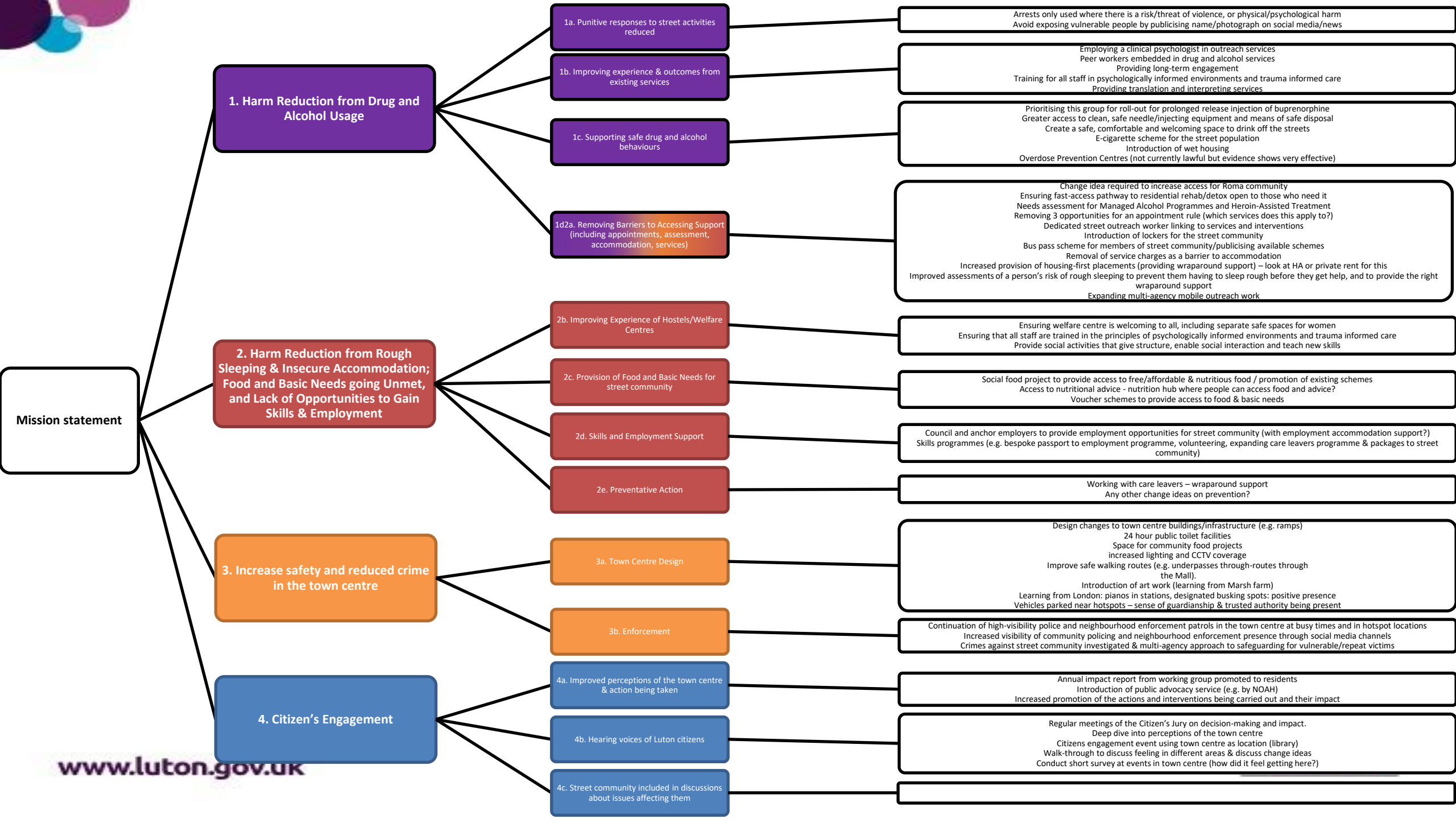
- The University of Bedfordshire (UoB) was commissioned by the Council to evaluate the town's response to street activities. The research team interviewed 24 people involved in street activities, they also interviewed 15 professionals from support and enforcement services and carried out a literature review.
- Held a workshop in Feb 2023 – wide range of stakeholders attended. The above research was presented.
- Formed a town centre partnership working group – met in June and Aug 2023.
- Quality improvement methodology is being employed to identify, develop and test change ideas that can be implemented in short, medium and longer term.
- We developed a draft mission statement, 4 key drivers and generated a long list of change ideas based on 3 part data review (views of people with lived experience, literature review and views of professionals).
- Participants of the working group split into breakout rooms in August for each primary driver and scored the change ideas using nominal group techniques (scored by effectiveness, acceptability, viability / affordability and effort to implement). [supported by QI Advisor for Inequalities from East London Foundation Trust].





# Mission Statement (draft)

Working together in partnership to reduce harm from street activities (such as drinking alcohol, drug taking and raising funds on the street) for those with lived experience and for the wider community. This will create a healthy, fair and sustainable town centre where everyone feels safe and can thrive; and no-one has to live in poverty.



**Mission statement**

**1. Harm Reduction from Drug and Alcohol Usage**

- 1a. Punitive responses to street activities reduced
- 1b. Improving experience & outcomes from existing services
- 1c. Supporting safe drug and alcohol behaviours
- 1d2a. Removing Barriers to Accessing Support (including appointments, assessment, accommodation, services)

Arrests only used where there is a risk/threat of violence, or physical/psychological harm  
Avoid exposing vulnerable people by publicising name/photograph on social media/news

Employing a clinical psychologist in outreach services  
Peer workers embedded in drug and alcohol services  
Providing long-term engagement  
Training for all staff in psychologically informed environments and trauma informed care  
Providing translation and interpreting services

Prioritising this group for roll-out for prolonged release injection of buprenorphine  
Greater access to clean, safe needle/injecting equipment and means of safe disposal  
Create a safe, comfortable and welcoming space to drink off the streets  
E-cigarette scheme for the street population  
Introduction of wet housing  
Overdose Prevention Centres (not currently lawful but evidence shows very effective)

Change idea required to increase access for Roma community  
Ensuring fast-access pathway to residential rehab/detox open to those who need it  
Needs assessment for Managed Alcohol Programmes and Heroin-Assisted Treatment  
Removing 3 opportunities for an appointment rule (which services does this apply to?)  
Dedicated street outreach worker linking to services and interventions  
Introduction of lockers for the street community  
Bus pass scheme for members of street community/publicising available schemes  
Removal of service charges as a barrier to accommodation  
Increased provision of housing-first placements (providing wraparound support) – look at HA or private rent for this  
Improved assessments of a person's risk of rough sleeping to prevent them having to sleep rough before they get help, and to provide the right wraparound support  
Expanding multi-agency mobile outreach work

**2. Harm Reduction from Rough Sleeping & Insecure Accommodation; Food and Basic Needs going Unmet, and Lack of Opportunities to Gain Skills & Employment**

- 2b. Improving Experience of Hostels/Welfare Centres
- 2c. Provision of Food and Basic Needs for street community
- 2d. Skills and Employment Support
- 2e. Preventative Action

Ensuring welfare centre is welcoming to all, including separate safe spaces for women  
Ensuring that all staff are trained in the principles of psychologically informed environments and trauma informed care  
Provide social activities that give structure, enable social interaction and teach new skills

Social food project to provide access to free/affordable & nutritious food / promotion of existing schemes  
Access to nutritional advice - nutrition hub where people can access food and advice?  
Voucher schemes to provide access to food & basic needs

Council and anchor employers to provide employment opportunities for street community (with employment accommodation support?)  
Skills programmes (e.g. bespoke passport to employment programme, volunteering, expanding care leavers programme & packages to street community)

Working with care leavers – wraparound support  
Any other change ideas on prevention?

**3. Increase safety and reduced crime in the town centre**

- 3a. Town Centre Design
- 3b. Enforcement

Design changes to town centre buildings/infrastructure (e.g. ramps)  
24 hour public toilet facilities  
Space for community food projects  
increased lighting and CCTV coverage  
Improve safe walking routes (e.g. underpasses through-routes through the Mall).  
Introduction of art work (learning from Marsh farm)  
Learning from London: pianos in stations, designated busking spots: positive presence  
Vehicles parked near hotspots – sense of guardianship & trusted authority being present

Continuation of high-visibility police and neighbourhood enforcement patrols in the town centre at busy times and in hotspot locations  
Increased visibility of community policing and neighbourhood enforcement presence through social media channels  
Crimes against street community investigated & multi-agency approach to safeguarding for vulnerable/repeat victims

**4. Citizen's Engagement**

- 4a. Improved perceptions of the town centre & action being taken
- 4b. Hearing voices of Luton citizens
- 4c. Street community included in discussions about issues affecting them

Annual impact report from working group promoted to residents  
Introduction of public advocacy service (e.g. by NOAH)  
Increased promotion of the actions and interventions being carried out and their impact

Regular meetings of the Citizen's Jury on decision-making and impact.  
Deep dive into perceptions of the town centre  
Citizens engagement event using town centre as location (library)  
Walk-through to discuss feeling in different areas & discuss change ideas  
Conduct short survey at events in town centre (how did it feel getting here?)

## Change ideas (1)

1. Have more people who have experienced life on the streets working in support services
2. Ensure that professionals are trained to better understand why people raise funds and reduce stigma [training in trauma informed approach – ensuring professionals are trained to support people who've lived through trauma]
3. Install vending machines that provide clean needles/syringes 24/7 or more pharmacies offering needles / syringes / more sharp bins in the town centre
4. Provide free vapes
5. Providing a safe, comfortable and welcoming place for people to drink together (in a controlled environment – e.g. a day centre)
6. Make it easier and quicker for people to get rehab/detox
7. Give measured, regular doses of alcohol throughout the day to people who are alcohol dependent
8. Ensure that crimes against the street community are prevented and treated as a high priority and ensure town is safer for street community.
9. Ensure that if people stop taking drugs or drinking they have ongoing support to help them maintain abstinence
10. Offer prescribed heroin as an alternative to methadone
11. Reward people with vouchers for things like attending drug and alcohol service



## Change ideas (2)

12. Stop services automatically discharging people from services if they miss appointments
13. Provide free bus passes
14. Introduce lockers for people rough sleeping to store their belongings
15. Remove service charges in hostels
16. Make hostels more welcoming and safer
17. Provide social activities

18. Provide a variety of ways for people to get free food and soft drinks and other basic essentials e.g. toiletries, sanitary products
19. Provide skills development, casual jobs or volunteering opportunities in the council and local businesses
20. Provide more flats with support
21. Employ a worker to help people get all the support they need and help them stand up for their rights
22. Provide 24 hour public toilets



# Involving people with lived experience

In addition to the initial research, UoB commissioned by public health to interview 8 people with lived experience for their thoughts on the change ideas.


Feedback:

How do you feel about that process [research then consultation]?  
Do you feel that your opinion is being taken into account? – “Yeah, I do. Actually coming back and seeing how things progress, yeah, it’s like someone’s actually trying to listen, trying to help... Thank you very much for coming back and speaking to us”.

## Next steps



- Next partnership meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> Oct 2023.
- Will be asking all partners to rank / remove the change ideas based on previous scoring in August and the feedback from people with lived experience. Will prioritise the change ideas in the order they are to be implemented (short, medium and long term). Will finalise the mission statement.
- Set timescales and assign leads for each idea.
- Have 140K PH budget from PH reserves to spend in 2023-2025. Will also look at other sources of funding.
- Plan to reassess priorities every 6 months.



Thank you for listening.  
Any Questions ?