

ENDING HOMELESSNESS: **FROM VISION TO ACTION**



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The people depicted in the images are not the same people highlighted in the case studies.

Details of sources used in this report, and further information, can be found at www.endhomelessness.org.uk

Cover photo 2: www.thirdavenue.co.uk

Cover photo 3: Richard Bailey (020 8450 4148)

'Rooftops' by Tony O'Brien, a homeless artist participating in Thames Reach's Vision Impossible Project in London.

A CHALLENGE FOR OUR TIME

Forty years ago, *Cathy Come Home*, Ken Loach's powerful film about a young family's descent into homelessness, shocked the nation and inspired a campaign for change. Since then different governments have acted to tackle homelessness and help people like Cathy. Nevertheless, tens of thousands of people still become homeless each year. Too many still fall through the safety net.

Our member organisations support the thousands of people whose lives have been marked by homelessness. Every day they help people to make the journey to their own home. But they believe much more is possible.

We have a unique opportunity. We can be the generation that looks back with pride, knowing we proved it was possible to end this enduring social ill.

That opportunity is ours. The moment to act is now. We invite you to join us in making homelessness history.

This ambition is not for the faint-hearted. It is challenging. It will provoke scepticism, cynicism and debate. It will need determination, intelligence and resources. This is not about sentiment; it is about seeking success in this most challenging area of social change.

We believe it is right to aim high. The UK is a prosperous country. It is already an international pace setter in tackling homelessness. The great progress already achieved must give us the confidence to be truly ambitious.

This pamphlet is for politicians of all parties and everyone involved in making change happen. Your leadership and your commitment can make the difference. Will you rise to the challenge?

Jenny Edwards

Chief Executive, Homeless Link

PS This pamphlet includes action lists as prompts. We would be pleased to hear about your views and the outcomes of any steps you take.



10 KEY AREAS FOR ACTION

PREVENTION

1. A universal safety net to guarantee the fundamental right to accommodation.
2. Prevent homelessness during transitions in people's lives.
3. A national plan to halve the number of evictions.

SUPPORT

4. A new national action plan to end rough sleeping by 2012.
5. Invest in Supporting People and develop services in areas where there are none.
6. A national network of 'Places of Change' for homeless people backed by
 - capital investment and
 - 'SP Plus' to fund holistic individualised support.
7. A new PSA for social inclusion.

ACCOMMODATION

8. Add move-on to the National Affordable Housing Programme.
9. Invest in more affordable homes and create incentives to improve use of existing housing stock.
10. Rent and benefit changes that will make work pay for homeless people.



WHY HOMELESSNESS MATTERS

Homelessness destroys lives and damages communities. It breeds despair, anger and desperation and leads to mental and physical illness.

It stands in the way of tackling health inequalities, raising education standards and getting more people into work. It undermines independence, freedom, choice and self-reliance. It is an affront to social justice and to us all.

FACTS

- The life expectancy of someone sleeping rough is estimated to be 42 years, half that of the average UK citizen and worse than Ethiopia or the Republic of Congo.
- Children in temporary accommodation miss out on a quarter of their schooling.
- Around 8 per cent of all households accepted as homeless by councils are in priority need on grounds of mental illness. Research has consistently shown that between 30 and 50 per cent of rough sleepers have mental health needs.



WHAT IS HOMELESSNESS?

The first challenge is to agree what homelessness is and just who should be counted as homeless. Right now, it is far from clear.

People who are homeless are part of a much wider group with acute housing needs, including those living in overcrowded, insecure or unfit homes.

The Government publishes figures for two groups of homeless people - households that apply to local councils as homeless and rough sleepers identified by local street headcounts. It also tracks the numbers of households placed by councils in temporary accommodation.

THE 'STATUTORY HOMELESS'

In the last year, of the 193,690 households that applied to councils in England, 139,760 were found to be homeless according to the statutory definition. The most recent quarterly figures continue a downward trend since these figures peaked in 2003.

- 86,100 of these were in 'priority need' and unintentionally homeless and local authorities had a statutory duty to house them. The term "statutory homeless" is often misleadingly restricted to this sub-group.
- Of these, many will spend time in temporary accommodation waiting for social housing, 93,910 at the last count. The Government has a target to halve this by 2010.
- 12,640 households were found to be in priority need but were considered to be homeless intentionally. They will have received very temporary accommodation and some assistance.

The 41,030 remaining homeless households were found not to be in priority need. They were entitled to receive only 'advice and assistance'. This can vary substantially from area to area. It can sometimes consist of little more than a list of local landlords. No record is kept of what happens to them next.

WHO IS LEGALLY CLASSED AS HOMELESS?

Under homelessness law the local authority has to look at any accommodation you can access. To decide if you are legally "homeless" it will see if:

- you have no home in the UK or anywhere else in the world where you can live together with your immediate family
- you can only stay where you are on a very temporary basis, or
- if it's not reasonable for you to stay in your home because of violence or because of the condition of the property.

The second decision is whether you are in 'priority need'. You fit this category if:

- you have children or if you or anyone in your household is pregnant
- you are vulnerable due to illness or disability
- you are 16 or 17 (or under 21 if you have been in care)
- you are vulnerable due to time spent in an institution.

If you do not have a 'local connection' the local authority can refer you to another where you do.

If your homelessness is considered intentional, the local authority has fewer obligations.

FEANTSA, the European federation of homelessness organisations, has developed a typology of homelessness and housing exclusion known as ETHOS. It identifies three overlapping 'domains' in the concept of a home, physical, social and legal, and suggests conceptual categories. They are:

Category		Example
Homeless	Rooflessness	rough sleeping, nightshelters
	Houselessness	hostels or other temporary accommodation
Housing exclusion	Insecure	staying temporarily with friends, squatting
	Inadequate	overcrowding, caravan, unfit housing



ROUGH SLEEPERS

Knowing precisely how many people sleep rough at any time is impossible: people move about, hide away or travel all night on buses. Others who claim they are sleeping rough may be begging but actually have somewhere to stay.

In the 1990s, the voluntary sector and the Government agreed a way to measure rough sleeping consistently, to show trends and patterns. This helped to allocate resources fairly and measure their impact. The methodology only counts people actually seen 'bedded down' by local teams during a short period at night. The methodology therefore reveals the absolute minimum level of rough sleeping rather than the full extent.

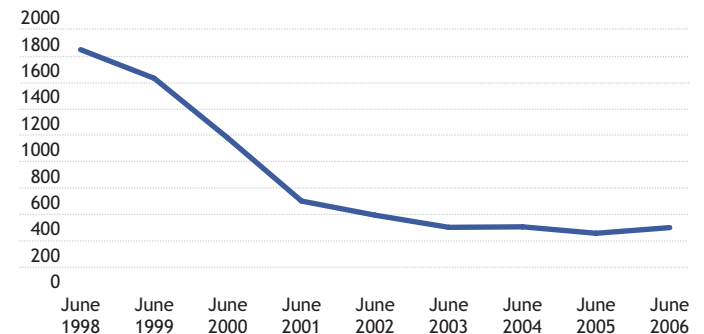
The most recent figure published by the Government for all the counts in England is 502, up 9 per cent on the previous year.

In some areas, counts are supplemented by other information that gives a fuller picture. In London, the CHAIN database records all contacts with rough sleepers by homelessness services. From these we know that, over the course of a year, approximately ten times as many people are identified as sleeping rough in London than those identified by the snapshot street counts.

CHAIN reported a 9 per cent increase in the number of people having slept rough in the capital in 2005/6, up to 2,807. Other approaches produce different figures but the trends over time are roughly the same.

NUMBERS OF ROUGH SLEEPERS

■ Total England





St Mungo's is one of the few homelessness charities to provide temporary accommodation for couples.

PEOPLE IN HOSTELS AND OTHER SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION

There are estimated to be between 40,000 and 50,000 people in hostels and other supported accommodation for homeless people. Some offer very temporary stays, for example night shelters provide beds on a night-by-night basis. In others, people may stay for six months to two years. Sometimes, unfortunately, a room may effectively be someone's home for many years. Most of these projects are funded by the Supporting People programme.

OTHER FORMS OF HOMELESSNESS

There are other people who are homeless who do not show up in any official figures. These include individuals and families who become homeless but find a temporary solution by staying with family members or friends. These are often referred to as 'sofa-surfing' or concealed households. Others live in squats. There have been attempts to quantify the level of this 'hidden homelessness'. The New Policy Institute, in their research for Crisis in 2003, estimated that there are between 310,000 and 380,000 hidden homeless people. However, this figure does include people in hostels.

Local authorities have a duty to produce homelessness strategies for their area covering all forms of homelessness. Good strategies will start by drawing together a full picture of the levels and nature of homelessness in their area.

CHECKLIST

- Visit my local housing options service.
- Take part in the local street count.
- Read my local council's homelessness strategy.
- What does my casework tell me about homelessness?
- What are the trends in my area?

OF ROUGH SLEEPERS IN LONDON:

- 12 per cent have been in care.
- 6 per cent have been in the armed forces.
- 42 per cent have been in prison.
- Between 30 and 50 per cent of rough sleepers have mental health needs, and most had these needs before they became homeless.
- 15 per cent of people using homelessness services in London are A8 nationals.

OF STATUTORY HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS:

- 8 per cent are vulnerable due to mental illness.
- 21 per cent of statutory homeless households are from black and other minority communities compared with 7 per cent of the overall population.



WHO IS HOMELESS?

“Imagine my surprise,” the former policewoman turned hostel manager said to me, “when I walked into the room to find my former police chief among the clients.”

Jenny Edwards, Homeless Link

Homelessness can affect anyone - doctors, chief executives, builders, architects, teachers or artists. Every walk of life includes people who have been homeless in the past and have gone on to success and happiness.

The truth is that any of us could become homeless. But you are more likely to become homeless if you:

- were in care as a child or had a disturbed childhood
- have a mental illness or addiction
- have been in the armed forces
- have spent time in prison
- are black or from another minority ethnic community
- have migrated to this country from Eastern or Central Europe or arrived as an asylum seeker.

CHECKLIST

- Add homelessness prevention to the agenda for my discussions with my local council, PCT and Children’s Trust.
- Find out what we are doing to prevent the next generation becoming homeless.
- Check if people are getting the right advice, help and support at the right time.
- what does my casework tell me?

On top of ‘personal’ factors there are ‘structural’ factors, wider problems in society, that increase the risk of homelessness:

- shortage of affordable accommodation
- unemployment
- low incomes
- debt
- the welfare benefits system
- trends in residential care and community care
- migration - e.g. economic migrants from accession states, refugees

Staff member with a client at Broadway's day centre in West London



CASE STUDY - JANE

'I've been through it all. I was a researcher, with a stable job, a nice home, everything. Then I started getting stressed out, drinking too much and got depressed. I could see it all slipping away but was too ashamed to ask for help. I lost my home and ended up sleeping in my car, until that was towed away. I remember one evening standing on London Bridge, with all the office workers walking past heading home, not knowing what to do. That's a hard feeling to describe. It took two weeks before someone sent me to the day centre. The wonderful people there have helped me get my life together. Now I want to help others going through what I went through. Believe me, if it can happen to me it can happen to anyone.'

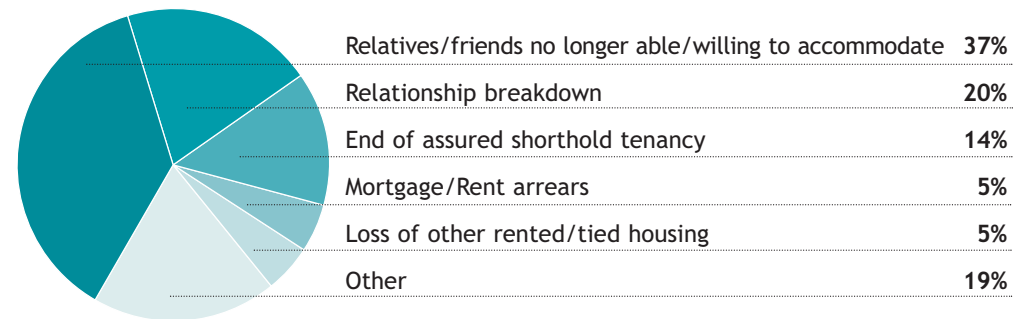
Photo: Broadway, photography Trevor Appleson.

WHAT LEADS PEOPLE INTO HOMELESSNESS?

As well as the personal and structural risk factors, we now understand the main routes into homelessness. Specific events can precipitate homelessness. These 'triggers' include:

- relationship breakdown
- domestic violence
- leaving home or care
- leaving institutions (hospital, armed forces, prison)
- death of a spouse or partner
- getting into debt, especially mortgage or rent arrears

Figures for households accepted as homeless by local authorities show that:



Many people are not just homeless. There are other complications in their lives that make them more vulnerable. Often these problems are mutually reinforcing and people end up in a downward spiral. Unless they get help at the right time this can leave someone sleeping rough.

It is said that someone who starts sleeping rough, maybe with no serious problems at the outset, has two weeks before they start acquiring the characteristics of a long term rough sleeper.



CASE STUDY - STEVE

'After his relationship broke down Steve says he "totally lost the plot" and spent five years sleeping rough or living in crack houses. He was in a terrible state when he arrived here - quite scary looking with half his teeth missing.

This place gave him the "head space" he needed. What bothered him most was never seeing his nine-year-old daughter. He used to save up money to buy her a present then would blow it all on drugs. When he told me that he was sobbing - he really hated himself. We got him on a drug programme and eventually resettled him.

Last week I bumped into him walking down the high street, hand in hand with his daughter. I didn't even recognise him until he said hello. He said he's working full time now in a project helping addicts, and sees his daughter every weekend. As we said goodbye he gave me a huge grin - he had all his teeth back!

Hostel manager, East London.

WHAT LEADS PEOPLE OUT OF HOMELESSNESS?

For many people, their experience of homelessness is mercifully short lived. Family or friends help most over this temporary blip in their lives. For others, something as straightforward as a rent deposit is all they require. However, for significant numbers, the road back to a settled home is long and risky.

Homeless people with more complex problems need longer term support to get their lives back on track. They need a place to stay that gives them stability and encouragement to begin the process of change. Working with a keyworker they can find confidence and motivation to tackle the issues that might be holding them back: addiction, mental or physical illness, perhaps deep loneliness. They can get back in touch with family and make new friends. They can rediscover old skills and learn new ones. They can make up for missed education or train for a job. Most can then move back towards independence, with confidence in themselves but also with people to turn to when they need it. All this depends, of course, on the right elements being in place at the right time.

Others, with higher needs, can make the move into long term care (see section on support). Many services help people escape homelessness entirely - even people whose problems have been intense.

PROGRESS SO FAR

1966

Cathy Come Home. Campaign groups form to press for change including Shelter and Campaign for the Homeless and Rootless (CHAR - Homeless Link's predecessor)

1977

Liberal MP Stephen Ross introduces the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act as a private members bill but supported by the Labour government and Conservatives opposition.

1990

John Major's government introduces the Rough Sleepers Initiative and the Homeless Mentally Ill Initiative, investing in services and accommodation.

1997

Tony Blair sets a target of getting rough sleeping to as close to zero as possible with a two-thirds cut within the next three years.

2001

Two-thirds target achieved and sustained since.

2002

Government sets a target to end the long-term use of B&Bs for homeless families with children, which was achieved in 2004.

2002

Homelessness Act says all local authorities must have a homelessness strategy and extends priority need categories to more groups.

2003

Supporting People programme launched, delivering housing related support for homeless people and other vulnerable groups.

2005

Government's new homelessness strategy sets a target to halve use of temporary accommodation by 2010, promises an increase in new homes and renewed focus on prevention.

2003

The Scottish Parliament passes the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 and sets target to include all homeless people under the legislation by 2012.

PROGRESS SO FAR

Over the past 40 years, hundreds of thousands of individuals, couples and children have been helped out of homelessness thanks to the legislation. Many thousands of others, including rough sleepers, have been supported to resettle and rebuild their lives by voluntary sector services and housing associations.

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO CATHY TODAY?

If Cathy and her family were homeless today they could go to their local authority and apply for help under the homelessness legislation. As they have children they would be accepted as having a "priority need" and would be accepted for permanent housing. But they still might face a long wait in temporary accommodation.

ROUGH SLEEPERS

In the late 1980s the numbers of people sleeping on the streets escalated. The Conservative Government established the Rough Sleepers Initiative in 1990 to tackle the problem, putting extra funding into hostels, outreach and other services to help people escape from the street. Housing associations were funded to offer permanent homes. At first this help was focused in London, where the problem was most acute. Later the programme was extended outside the capital to 26 other towns and cities such as Bristol, Brighton and Manchester where numbers sleeping rough were high.

When Labour came to power it renewed the focus on rough sleeping and set a target to reduce rough sleeping to as close to zero as possible by two thirds over the following three years. This level has been achieved and maintained. In most of the country numbers have fallen by three quarters.



Photo: Thames Reach, photography Zed Nelson

WHAT ENDING HOMELESSNESS WILL LOOK LIKE...

When we walk around our towns and cities the doorways are empty at night. No more huddled figures in streets and parks or derelict buildings.

In the countryside, people know they can find help in their area. They don't have to trek to the cities to find accommodation and support.

When people face losing their home because of economic or personal reasons they know that there will be a roof over their head until they get back on their feet. They know they will get access to courses or guidance to help them overcome any factors that contributed to them losing their home.

People who travel to this country to work know that, if things go wrong with their job, they won't be left without food or shelter. They will get a place to stay, food and guidance to help them get back into work or, if it's just not working out at all, to get home to their family and friends.

Inevitably some people still have a whole series of things weighing them down, such as mental health problems or addictions, which contribute to their housing insecurity. They can be confident that they can get the right support by living in small-scale attractive centres. Here they are helped by people trained and qualified to a high standard and recognised for the challenging work they do. The support and guidance that they offer is focused on the aims, circumstances and potential of each individual. Their trusted lead worker focuses on emotional development and relationship building as well as practical changes. They can access all the services and support that person needs to help them transform their lives. They move on quickly and positively through more independent settings until they settle securely in a home. If they continue to need it, they receive support to sustain this.

Homelessness will be history when everyone can find good quality, settled accommodation that's right for them for each stage of their lives.



Tyneside Cyrenians has developed the innovative Elliott House Self Build Project, which gives homeless people the opportunity to build their own homes.

FROM VISION TO ACTION

These headlines for action set out to meet three ambitions:

PREVENTION

Ambition: To tackle the root causes of homelessness.

Actions: To tackle the causes of homelessness systematically, reducing the inflow to homelessness year by year until it is eradicated.

SUPPORT

Ambition: To empower people to avoid or escape homelessness.

Actions: To solve the complex and challenging problems of vulnerable and marginalised people so they are never homeless and they can change their lives for the better.

ACCOMMODATION

Ambition: An affordable, accessible and decent home for everyone.

Actions: To increase the match between people's need for housing and the accommodation that is available to them at a price they can afford to rent or buy.

What is set out here is just a start, aimed to get the debate going. What's needed is a national action plan, with cross party support, which will unite everyone who needs to be a partner in this ambitious enterprise.

Its success will need joined up thinking, investment and action at every level of government, the third sector and business.

But it will need something more: putting people at the centre. This calls for no less than a paradigm shift: homeless people no longer viewed as a problem to be solved, but through their experience, insights, capabilities and potential, recognised as an essential part of the answer.



Photo: Richard Bailey (020 8450 4148)

PREVENTION

Ambition 1: To tackle the root causes of homelessness

This is the most challenging of our three ambitions. It will need:

- a shift in focus from symptoms to causes
- actions that address economic, social and personal issues
- forward investment to tackle causes early rather than managing symptoms later.

Most people who face losing their current home manage to find a way to avoid homelessness. What's the secret?

- It might be personal: financial resources; credit worthiness; secure employment; self-confidence and determination.
- It might be the people who they can turn to who are in a position to help out: a partner; parent; wider family; friends or good colleagues.
- It might be that our society offers them an adequate safety net: benefits; rights to a home under homelessness law.

Our first set of proposals aims to fill the gap where these don't exist or don't work.

Prevention must cover:

- transitions
- early interventions
- emergency interventions
- policy
- an effective safety net.

Our understanding and strategies have to start from the experience of people who are or have been homeless and those with similar histories who have avoided it.

CASE STUDY: FOYERS

Foyers are specialist hostels that work with young people. They focus on supporting residents to gain education, training and skills that will help them into work. Skilled staff provide support that helps the young people tackle other personal issues that may put them at risk of homelessness.

For more details see: www.foyer.net



TRANSITIONS

People are particularly vulnerable to homelessness when they move from one stage of their lives to another, for example, young people leaving home, people leaving the armed services or people who lose a partner or someone else they rely on in later life.

For vulnerable young people it is not good enough to offer services until they are 16 or 18 and then expect them to fend for themselves. The greatest challenges they face are during their late teens and early 20s, as they try to establish themselves as adults.

We therefore welcome the Government's recent Green Paper, Care Matters, which says 'We want to abandon a system where young people are forced to leave care as early as age 16. We want an approach which continues to support them as long as they need it, which ceases to talk about 'leaving care' and instead ensures that young people move on in a gradual, phased and above all prepared way.'

AREA FOR ACTION

- Create pathways to prevent homelessness during transitions, allocating clear lead responsibility for coordination and working across services.



CASE STUDY: NEWCASTLE

Newcastle City Council have put in place a partnership with local housing providers and voluntary sector services, which provides an early warning when a vulnerable person is getting into trouble with their tenancy. This triggers input from agencies that can help the person get back on track and keep their home.

EARLY INTERVENTION

The Government encourages councils to refocus their homelessness services towards prevention. Where this has been taken on with energy it can bring about very significant positive change. However, often help can only be offered when someone approaches the council in a crisis. The challenge is to move prevention to further upstream.

The Government's Social Exclusion Action Plan identifies the value of working as early as possible with children and families at risk of social exclusion, which is inevitably linked to risk of homelessness.

Early interventions need the involvement of a wide range of public and third sector services:

- housing teams working with social and private landlords, identifying people at risk of homelessness and offering support
- strong housing advice
- financial inclusion advice
- community mental health services
- better preparation of skills for adult life at school
- long term mentoring for young people at risk
- effective preparation for independent life for young people in care and longer term support.

'We can see a clear pattern that when a young person between 11 and 13 years old is having real difficulty in the family, perhaps their mum just isn't coping, he or she is much more likely to end up homeless at 16 or 17.'

Connexions manager

AREAS FOR ACTION

- Research the key causes and routes into homelessness using the direct experience of homeless people.
- Use this as the basis for deciding national and local early interventions within homelessness strategies.

EMERGENCY INTERVENTIONS

Many local authorities are developing effective emergency preventative approaches, often with the third sector, that can stop someone becoming homeless or give them breathing space for the move to a new home to be planned.

AREAS FOR ACTION

- Ensure that in every council area there is a range of interventions that are proven to be effective in preventing homelessness, including:
 - County court assistance schemes
 - family mediation services
 - rent deposit services
 - sanctuary schemes for people suffering domestic violence.
- Develop a national plan to halve evictions from all forms of housing.

GOVERNMENT POLICY

Government policy on preventing and tackling homelessness is developed in the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). Sometimes policies developed in other departments can inadvertently start to create homelessness or may block solutions to resolving it.

HOW POLICY MAY CREATE HOMELESSNESS

In 2004 the Government allowed people from the European Accession States to enter the UK to work. Hundreds of thousands have come and successfully found work, making a significant contribution to the economy. However, the Government restricted access to public funds for anyone out of work. This has meant that a small number who have found themselves out of work for whatever reason have ended up homeless and destitute. In London 15% of people using day centres and free night shelters are A8 nationals. Homeless Link is discussing with the Government how this problem can be solved.

AREAS FOR ACTION

- Establish a system to assess how policy changes might cause (or solve) homelessness
- Develop an early warning system to spot early signs of a problem and tackle these promptly.

KEY AREAS TO WATCH ARE:

- employment and labour market changes
- tax and benefits
- residents, including migrants, who do not have full welfare protection
- business failures
- personal finance and credit including increasing debt
- education changes
- health and care service changes
- trends in discharges from armed services, long stay hospitals or prisons.



CASE STUDY: LAKE DISTRICT

'We had a case last week that was typical. This guy had been to the council after he lost his flat but was told that he was non-priority. They gave him a list of B&Bs but they were all full. We had to tell him that there isn't a hostel around here and our only option is to stick him on a bus to Manchester where he has a better chance of getting in somewhere. What other choice is there? It's terrible.'

Day centre manager, Lake District.

AN EFFECTIVE AND UNIVERSAL SAFETY NET?

'The United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights establishes the right of every person to have an adequate standard of living, including adequate food, clothing and housing. It is our view that there should not be homeless people in the UK in 2004. A home is a fundamental right which should not be denied to anyone living in as affluent and ambitious a society as our own.'

ODPM Select Committee Report on Homelessness 2004

The homelessness legislation provides a safety net for those in 'priority need': families with children and some other households that are considered 'vulnerable'. The test for vulnerability is a tight one. Many people don't meet it, even when they feel they can't cope.

Many local authorities, especially in cities, have developed emergency accommodation, such as hostels or shelters, for homeless people. Other areas have little or no emergency accommodation. Originally it was planned that the law would provide a more universal safety net. Scotland has taken a decision to abolish the 'priority need' test by 2012. The shortage of social housing in many parts of England has discouraged a similar approach.

The outcome is that young people or people with mental illness who are accepted as homeless can end up in B&B or other temporary accommodation without support. On the other hand are people who have slept rough and ended up in hostels, who get support but find it difficult to get rehoused as they are not 'statutory homeless'.

To end homelessness we need to offer a menu of solutions suiting the individual circumstances of people who are homeless but who do not currently meet the 'priority need' test.

AREAS FOR ACTION

- Introduce an effective, universal safety net that prevents homelessness. Homelessness law should ensure everyone enjoys the fundamental human right of shelter, food, warmth and family life.
- Everyone should be offered at least temporary accommodation while they find a settled home.



Photo: Refugee Action, photography Andrew Lamb

AMBITION ACHIEVED – THE OUTCOMES

- All Government policy is tested to ensure that it does not inadvertently result in homelessness or destitution.
- Public institutions where people live have real incentives to invest in preventing homelessness for people when they leave (armed services, care, prison, hospitals, asylum services).
- Predictable transitions no longer lead to homelessness.
- Anyone facing the sort of crisis that would previously have led to homelessness can access a menu of effective services.
- No one has to move out of their home area if they become homeless.
- There is an effective legal safety net for everyone who is homeless.

CHECKLIST

- Check if any policy change that we are considering could impact on homelessness.
- See if my local homelessness strategy is doing enough on prevention.
- Find out what happens to 'non statutory' homeless people in my area.
- What are the eviction rates from different sorts of housing in my area?
- What happens to young people leaving care in my area?
- What are other public services doing to prepare people - schools, care services, NASS, armed services?
- What's my party's approach to preventing homelessness?



Photo: Cardboard Citizens, photography Black Ink Photographic

SUPPORT

'I realised that all the monies ... were going into EMERGENCY and COPING, with little money left over for CURE... Imagine what the rewards would be if homeless projects got their hands on some real cure money? The effects on homeless people would be great.'

John Bird, the Big Issue Manifesto 2006

Ambition 2: To empower people to avoid or escape homelessness.

The right support at the right time can prevent homelessness; it can sustain people once they have moved on out but most vitally it helps people who are homeless to rebuild their lives and get back on their feet.

Homeless people and families need support to:

- stabilise their lives after a period of chaos and uncertainty
- find settled accommodation and cope with the stress of moving
- develop the skills they need to become more independent.
- address emotional issues, build confidence
- reconnect to family and make new friends
- get ready to look for work, get into training or education.
- address their substance addictions
- learn to moderate behaviour that causes problems to themselves or others.

Support is delivered through:

- outreach and engagement services
- emergency accommodation such as hostels and night shelters
- day centres
- second stage supported accommodation
- specialist mental health services or substance misuse services
- resettlement and floating support
- other services focusing on education, training and employment programmes or other activities such as arts and sport.

CASE STUDY: DAVID

David had been in trouble many times during his comparatively short life. A drug user, he had become habituated to stealing to supply his habit. In the two years before he entered supported accommodation he was alleged to have committed 40 incidents of vandalism, 25 car thefts and one incidence of arson. He was arrested 12 times, in court three times, prosecuted twice and spent 8 months in prison.

Solas, a homelessness agency in Newport, found him a room in their hostel. He regularly attended their day centre, which offers an extensive programme of activities – ranging from ceramics and carpentry to cookery, bicycle repair, drama and music. After two years David left for his own flat.

He has given up drugs, has a new girlfriend and a job.

The two years before David entered services were estimated to have cost £416,953 in criminal justice costs alone. The next two years cost £30,000 for accommodation and £20,000 for day services.



SUPPORTING PEOPLE

Supporting People is the first national co-ordinated programme to deliver “housing related support” for vulnerable people. Local authorities administer the fund and commission services to meet local need.

Homeless people fall within the socially excluded groups that can receive support with accommodation. Almost all the services to these groups are provided by Third Sector organisations.

Introduced in 2003, Supporting People has been a great success, increasing the supply and quality of support. However, the costs were originally underestimated and, as a result, the national budget was subsequently reduced. This has put services under severe pressure in many areas. The budget strains place at risk the improvements made in quality of service and standards of staffing. There is no required minimum provision and there are parts of the country where there is no supported accommodation for people who become homeless.

Supporting People is a real “Invest to Save” budget. It needs:

- stability of funding regime and growth of the budget
- a national minimum level of provision and outcomes for socially excluded groups
- mechanisms to ensure effective cross boundary and cross sector working
- to retain a national strategic approach, guided in future by outcomes
- increased empowerment and choice for homeless people in determining the services they receive.

AREA FOR ACTION

Increase investment in Supporting People programme in CSR 2007 so it can sustain and enhance services for homeless people and develop services in areas where there are none.

OTHER SORTS OF SUPPORT

'The feelings of elation and accomplishment which I felt standing on the stage are something I'll never forget and played a large part in overcoming my difficulties and starting to put my life back together'

Participant in Streetwise Opera

Supporting People funds 'housing related support'. There are other sorts of support and activity that can really help people get back on their feet. For example, most homeless people want to work. More services are now helping people overcome any personal barriers to getting work, including building self-confidence and skills. Social enterprise can offer real opportunities, also supported employment schemes. Arts, cultural activities and sports can all help build skills, confidence and new social networks. Many homeless services are now including these activities to help people get back on their feet.

CASE STUDY: JOHN

John had been coming to Shekinah Mission in Plymouth for a year before he felt able to talk to anyone. When he did, a staff member tried to find out what motivated him. He asked, "What did you want to be when you were little?" John's face lit up, "I always dreamt of being a mechanic for Ferrari!".

Rather than pouring cold water on this dream, the key worker sat down with him to work out what skills and qualifications he would need to achieve his goal, step by step. John realized his aspiration was very high but that there were steps he might be able to achieve that would take him closer. He started small, working as a volunteer at a local garage. After taking basic skills and a mechanic's course, John started to work part time. Now he's working full time as a qualified motor mechanic.

He's not working for Ferrari - yet. Nevertheless, his story shows that, by not giving up on people, working with their aspirations and treating them as individuals, it is possible for people to achieve real and lasting change in their lives.

CREATING CHANGE IN SERVICES

Ending homelessness will require policy changes. It will also need fundamental changes in the ways many voluntary and statutory services for homeless people work.

Homeless Link's regional team works with services to identify issues, introduce new ideas and solutions and to build new partnerships. The 'Creating Change' strategy sets out an agenda for rising to the challenge of change. The headlines for action are:

- Placing service users at the heart of service development and delivery
- Leadership and vision - having it and communicating it
- Influence and having a positive impact on the local community
- Effective and strategic partnership working
- Systematic and innovative working practice
- Funding and resources
- Investing effectively in staff

Homeless Link will publish its manifesto for change in homelessness services in 2007

www.homeless.org.uk/developyourservice



Ear acupuncture being delivered at Broadway's day centre

THE FACTS:

- 90 per cent of Homeless Link members work with people with multiple needs.
- 57 per cent of rough sleepers have multiple needs.

MULTIPLE NEEDS

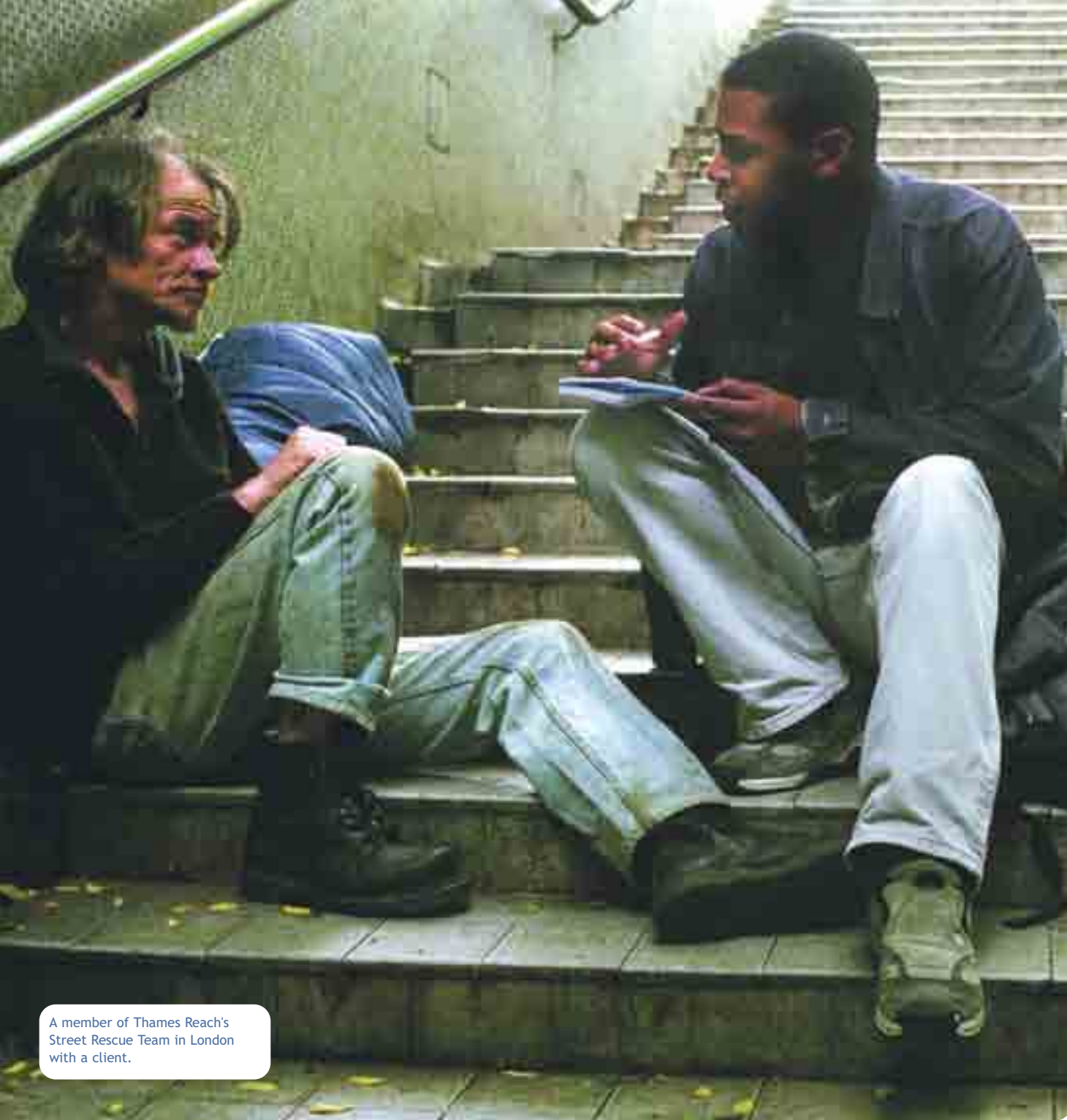
For people with multiple needs escaping homelessness is much more difficult. Combinations of poor mental and physical health, substance misuse, personality disorder, disability or challenging behaviour can be exacerbated by age. Paradoxically having multiple needs makes accessing mainstream services more difficult: people get passed from one service to another getting none of their needs addressed. Many fall back on homelessness services.

AREAS FOR ACTION

- Introduce an 'SP Plus' for homeless people with multiple needs, with funding from government departments whose aims will benefit from savings produced.
- Combine this with a capital programme to create specialist supported housing with holistic and multidimensional services including emotional and psychological support, advocacy, education and training.
- Introduce a new PSA social inclusion target outcome to ensure public services support homeless people with multiple needs. This would help health, addiction, education, training, employability and other services focus on the needs of the most excluded. This should be one of the core outcomes for local government and built into Local Area Agreements.
- Establish integrated housing and treatment pathways for homeless people with drug and alcohol addictions.

CHECKLIST:

- Find out what happens to people with multiple needs in your area.
- Visit your local homelessness service to find out what would help them.
- What can your party do to ensure its policies help this group?



A member of Thames Reach's Street Rescue Team in London with a client.

ROUGH SLEEPING

Since the early 1990s concerted efforts have been made to tackle rough sleeping. The Conservatives introduced the Rough Sleeping Initiative first in London and then more widely (see page 21). In 1997 Tony Blair recognised the problem as the most extreme form of social exclusion and set the national goal of reducing rough sleeping to “as close to zero as possible” but at least by two thirds in the short term. This sparked intensive work by government, third sector charities and local authorities, working in partnership. As a result, levels of rough sleeping across England have been reduced by around 75 per cent (rather less in London). This contrasts with the situation in many other nations where rough sleeping, particularly in the major cities, has been rising rapidly to unprecedented levels.

This has been a real success. However, falls in numbers have now reduced or ceased. The most recent national figures show a rise in some areas.

Longstanding rough sleepers need intensive support for their multiple needs to prevent them recycling through the system.

Ten years after the target was set will be a good moment for a thorough review of progress. It is a great opportunity to set a new challenging national target to combat this most extreme form of homelessness.

AREAS FOR ACTION:

- Set a new national target to end rough sleeping by 2012, in time for the Olympics. Consult on an action plan to achieve this.
- Extend the CHAIN tracking system for rough sleepers nationally. This could: prevent interruptions to support; identify those recycling through services who need more support; reveal the interventions that have the most significant impact in helping people leave homelessness.



AMBITION ACHIEVED - THE OUTCOMES

- Rough sleeping - A new target and action plan effectively ends rough sleeping by 2012. Vigilance ensures that this is maintained.
- People with support needs have access to high quality localised services. These provide personalised support to meet physical, emotional, social and behavioural challenges as well as help with practical issues.
- People with multiple needs are supported by specialist services that help them make a journey of change. These offer holistic support covering emotional and psychological issues; extra curricular activities; education, training and work experience; and advocacy that ensures access to public services such as health, housing and benefits.
- The concept of Foyers is extended to include older people who need help gaining skills and getting into work.
- Support staff are well qualified and well paid. Their work is highly respected for the challenges they deal with and knowledge they bring. Their practice is evidence-based and focuses on empowering clients.
- Services are centred on the customer, working to discourage dependency and to develop confidence to live as independently as possible.
- People know that they will not necessarily be cut off from support when they leave to live independently. There are well-managed transitions and they are connected to people who can provide support and friendship in their new community.



THE FACTS:

There are 1.5 million on waiting lists for social housing, up nearly half a million in three years

Photo: Richard Bailey (020 8450 4148)

ACCOMMODATION

‘The shortage of suitable permanent low-cost housing is a fundamental cause of homelessness... The extensive periods which homeless people spend in temporary accommodation or hostels is a result of a shortage of homes at the disposal of local authorities to let or make nominations to. The supply of new, affordable social housing is failing massively to keep up with demand, and right to buy is reducing the number of lettings from existing stock.’

Select Committee Report on Homelessness 2004

Ambition 3: An affordable, accessible and decent home for everyone.

Actions: To increase the match between people’s need and the accommodation that is available to rent or buy at a price they can afford.

MORE HOMES

For many years Britain has failed to build enough homes to keep up with demand. The number of homes at affordable rents is at the lowest level since the war. The population is growing and there are more small households among working age and older populations. As people find it harder to be a first time buyer they too seek homes to rent at prices they can afford. The most vulnerable people drop off the bottom of the ladder for rented housing and become homeless.

It is widely accepted that a ‘step change’ is needed. The Government is doubling investment in housing. While there are differences in emphasis, all political parties back the need for change.

AREAS FOR ACTION

- Establish targets for new homes that will over time address the backlog of need and the projected rise in households.
- Continue to increase house building with an emphasis on investment in the supply of new affordable homes for rent.

HOW MANY NEW HOMES ARE NEEDED?

There is a particularly urgent need to increase the number of affordable homes for rent. Calculations of need for completions of new social homes show the current gap.

Government's target for completions in 2007	30,000
Shelter's minimum assessment to meet urgent need and achieve the Government's TA target	50,000
National Housing Federation assessment of need	80 - 85,000

Shelter's minimum level above includes families in temporary accommodation but excludes most homeless people living in hostels and other forms of supported temporary accommodation.

THE MOVE-ON PROBLEM

Homeless Link's report, *No room to move*, shows that around 45 per cent of the residents in hostels are ready to move on but have no suitable housing option available. Many are not 'statutory homeless'. They remain in supported accommodation that is not good for them and is costly. Over the five years to 2006, the average length of stay in 13 key London hostels has doubled from just over six months to nearly 12.

Homeless Link's Move-on Pilots Project (MOPP), backed by DCLG, brings councils and hostel providers together in partnership to tackle the problem. Early feedback from the pilot areas indicates that we will need to find more than double the number of social homes currently available to address silting up.

AREA FOR ACTION

Establish a new special strand of the National Affordable Housing Programme to provide second stage accommodation and affordable homes to rent for people who need it to move on from hostels.

NOMINATIONS AND ALLOCATION

Adequate supply is only part of the picture. The MOPP project has identified a range of barriers facing hostel residents such as restrictive nomination rules that can exclude people from social housing. An example is barring people who have former rent arrears.

AREA FOR ACTION

Ensure that nominations and allocations policies do not prevent homeless people from accessing the housing they need.

CHECKLIST

- Find out how many homes were completed in my area last year.
- What do current plans say about how many should be built?
- How many are affordable homes to rent?
- How does my local council work to ensure that people in temporary accommodation such as hostels can move on?

HOSTELS

Overall in recent years the standard of hostel accommodation for homeless people has improved considerably. However, in some places people still have to stay in dormitory style rooms in buildings that are unpleasant, unsafe and run down. The first phase of the Hostels Capital Improvement Programme (HCIP) is starting to address this problem so that hostels can become real Places of Change. However there are many areas that have not yet received investment and desperately need it.

AREAS FOR ACTION

- Extend the HCIP to continue to improve hostel facilities
- Continue backing Homeless Link's regional work to support HCIP hostels and others to transform the services they offer.

SPECIALIST ACCOMMODATION

There are some people whose problems mean they need a home with support or care long term. For example, there are older people among the homeless population whose needs for are getting more severe.

AREA FOR ACTION:

The National Affordable Housing Programme should include new supported housing, extra care and other forms of housing for more vulnerable homeless people with support needs.

THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

A home in the private rented sector is a good solution for many people. With the severe shortage of social housing, sometimes it is the only realistic option. The right private tenancy can be more suitable for a vulnerable person than a home on a difficult estate. But there are problems. High rents, often not covered adequately by Housing Benefit, can create a poverty trap. People fear becoming homeless again at the end of a six-month assured short hold tenancy - the source of 14 per cent of homelessness applications.

In some areas proactive local authorities are creating positive models of partnership with private landlords and voluntary organisations to get the most out of this option. These offer tenants greater security and support if they need it while giving landlords prompt housing benefit payments, grants for improvements and assistance if tenancy problems emerge.

AREAS FOR ACTION:

- Incentivise private landlords to offer longer-term tenancies and more affordable rents, through the tax system or offering management solutions.
- Use Empty Homes powers to encourage better use of available stock
- Create incentives to reduce under-occupation of social housing

RENTS, HOUSING BENEFIT AND THE POVERTY TRAP

Most government subsidy on housing is paid to landlords via housing benefit. When rents are high this can create a poverty trap. The Working Futures and the Transitional Spaces projects are piloting innovative ways to restructure rent and benefits to create opportunity not dependency.

There are other issues that need to be addressed:

- Slow housing benefit administration still causes homelessness.
- Tapers, unrealistic rent reference levels and the single room rate can cause deep poverty for people taking up tenancies after homelessness.
- The right earning disregard can help people move into work.

AREAS FOR ACTION

- Prevent rent levels in hostels creating a disincentive to work.
- Reform housing benefit so that it tackles homelessness more effectively.
- Make work pay for homeless people returning to employment. Restructure benefits to ensure a smooth transition into work, which reduces risk for the person making the move back to independence.

AMBITION ACHIEVED – THE OUTCOMES

- A convergence of fully measured housing need and supply.
- A more balanced and fair housing system, less empty property and more stable and affordable house prices.
- Minimal waiting lists and much shorter stays in temporary accommodation including hostels.
- Rents and benefits do not create poverty traps, especially in hostels.
- Sufficient specialist accommodation for those with higher needs.
- An allocations system that does not penalize homeless people.

CHECKLIST

- Find out how much it costs to get a private rented home in my area.
- Ask my local hostel provider how easy it is to get people resettled.
- See what my party can do to improve supply of housing.
- Would my local hostel benefit from help from the Hostels Capital Improvement Programme?
- Campaign to increase the number of homes being built, especially social and affordable homes.
- Does housing benefit cover market rents in my area?



DOUBTS AND QUIBBLES

But don't people choose to be homeless?

A common myth is that people are homeless through choice. We accept that for a very few individuals that may be true, but the numbers are negligible. Outreach workers tell us that usually when someone says they prefer to sleep rough it is because they are frightened of change, or because they are suffering from mental illness. Assertive outreach and engagement is often successful in helping people come in from the cold.

Won't having this target lead to coercion to achieve it?

We know that coercive approaches are not successful. But experience tells us that we should never give up on anyone. Assertive engagement works.

Won't there always be at least a few homeless people at any time

A few people may still become homeless in a crisis but this number will be very small and an effective safety net and services mean the time they are homeless will be minimised. No one should have to sleep rough.

But homelessness is only part of the problem for many people. You can't solve everything.

There are some people whose complex needs and challenging behaviour mean that they get little or no help from public services. Most have had disturbed childhoods. Challenging behaviour often leads to people being evicted and/or excluded from services. Unable to hold down a tenancy, and often with few social or family ties, they often end up in hostels, prison or sleeping rough.

Homelessness services are often the only places that try to help, but many are overwhelmed by the level of need, and this leads to high levels of evictions and abandonment from some hostels. But beacons of excellence demonstrate that, with careful design and adequate funding, services can help even the most chaotic people to move towards a better life.



THE COSTS AND BENEFITS OF ENDING HOMELESSNESS

Many of the changes we argue for in this pamphlet are cost neutral - they are better ways of focusing existing resources. Other recommendations will require an 'up front' investment, but the savings will be considerable in the longer term.

At the moment we spend far too much dealing with the effects of homelessness. It would be much cheaper to prevent it. According to the National Audit Office, around one billion pounds is spent each year on 'preventing and tackling homelessness'. Most is spent on the high costs of temporary accommodation.

This figure does not take into account the more hidden costs that homelessness adds to other areas of public spending:

Health Homeless people with poor levels of mental and physical health often rely on costly acute services.

Crime Homeless people trapped by addictions or offending behaviour needing help to change.

Benefits People in expensive temporary accommodation want to work but can lose 89p of benefits for every pound earned - a real barrier to independence.

Some recommendations need greater investment in support and housing. Refocusing expenditure now into preventing or resolving homelessness will result in longer-term savings across government budgets.

AREA FOR ACTION

Agree a cost benefit framework as the foundation for the 'invest to save' case for ending homelessness.

ENDING HOMELESSNESS: A ROAD MAP

Comprehensive Spending Review:

- New PSA target for adults with multiple needs
- Increased funding for multiple needs services, affordable housing, hostels and support
- Government commits to end rough sleeping by 2012 and sets out action plan
- Mayor's London Housing Strategy aims to end rough sleeping in time for Olympics
- Policy forum of people with experience of homeless advises Government
- All parties sign up to ambition to end homelessness
- Think tanks and policy teams work up and test different approaches
- New methodology agreed to measure full extent of homelessness
- National research programme produces evidence of best ways to tackle and prevent homelessness

- New government sets out its detailed program for the term ahead, increasing investment in accommodation, prevention and support, with a timetable and outcomes.
- 50,000 social housing completions achieved

The census clarifies level and profile of housing need

Increased house building means house prices and rents now in line with inflation

2022

2017

2013

2012

2011

2010

2009

2008

2007

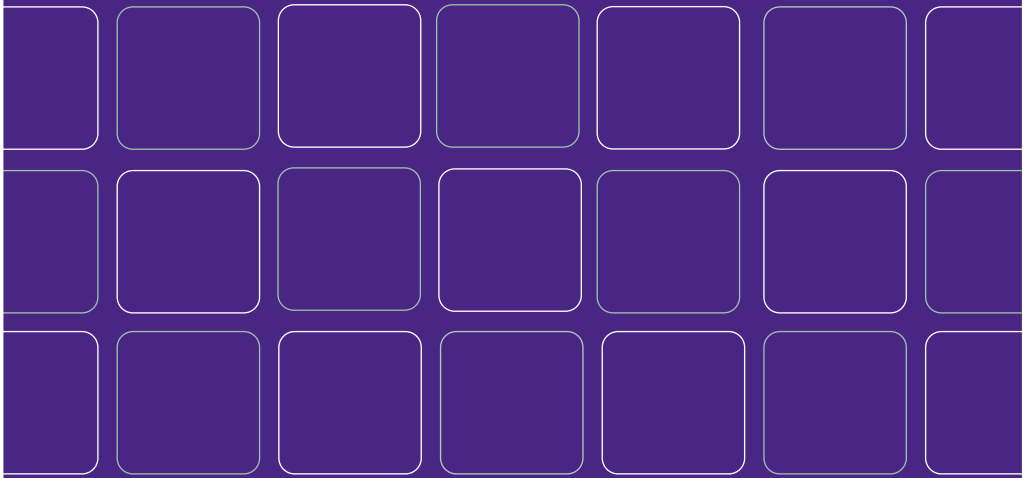
- Temporary accommodation and decent homes target achieved
- New homelessness law offers safety net to all

The target for ending rough sleeping is achieved and celebrated as the UK hosts the Olympics

Tracking of impact of investment and reform shows sustained results against targets. Adjustments made where necessary

UK announces it is the first nation where homelessness is history

- Party manifestos commit to the aim, set out alternative approaches and pledge key steps
- Housing needs assessments consider full range of homelessness
- Review of private rented sector recommends fiscal incentives, investment and tenure changes.
- Public and third sector share understanding of supporting life change for vulnerable people with multiple needs
- A full cost / benefit study reveals the value of up stream prevention



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