



FACT SHEET 1

WEB BASED RESOURCES ON HOMELESS SERVICES OR DEVELOPING A HOSPITAL INTRANET

This Fact Sheet is number 1 of 6, all of which link to and provide background information for the guidance on producing a protocol for the Admission and Discharge of People from Hospital. The other Fact Sheets in the series are:

- Fact Sheet 2 The Housing Act and examples of letters to local authorities for medically vulnerable patients
- Fact Sheet 3 Housing Status
- Fact Sheet 4 Developing integrated care pathways for homeless people
- Fact Sheet 5 Discharging homeless people from mental health wards
- Fact Sheet 6 Service users with no recourse to public funds

RESOURCES ON HOMELESSNESS

In order to fulfil the requirements of effective discharge of people who are homeless, hospital staff will need access to local information on services for homeless people. Staff within hospitals will not be aware of the range and structure of homelessness housing and support services within their locality. If all staff within the hospital who will be dealing with the discharge of homeless people have access to the internet there are lots of online resources. Accessing these will enable staff to refer homeless people on appropriately. An information sheet which also includes a named person within the local authority housing advice/homeless persons unit with whom hospital staff can liaise and detailing relevant websites should be made available on the intranet and in paper form on the wards and in A&E.

If all staff do not have access to the internet, intranet pages or a resource book will need to be developed and kept up to date with details of all local relevant services.

NATIONAL INFORMATION

[Homeless UK \(http://www.homelessuk.org/\)](http://www.homelessuk.org/) has details of the local authority housing departments and the services they offer and of local advice services and day centres for homeless people. You can search for organisations by the name of the organisation, if you already know it, or if you don't by area, by client group. (e.g. homeless people, people with alcohol problems, women experiencing domestic violence, or by type of service, e.g. housing department , CAB).

All details of services on this website are updated annually. If staff are aware of Homeless UK and know how to use it there should be no need for a lot of leaflets or searching for local information services as it is fairly comprehensive. If you are aware of local services that are used by homeless people that are not on the site, additional information should be kept on the intranet,

LONDON INFORMATION

[Homeless London \(http://www.homelesslondon.org/\)](http://www.homelesslondon.org/) is the leading source of information about advice, support, hostels and supported accommodation for homeless people and those at risk of homelessness in London. It has details of all hostel accommodation in London, details of referral routes and details of what to do for someone who is homeless in an emergency for each borough.

Homelessness provision for people sleeping rough is different in London to other parts of the country. Most referrals to central London hostels have to go through the relevant outreach team. Very few hostels would take direct referrals from hospital staff. For rough sleepers it will be important to find out if they are already in contact with an outreach team and have an outreach worker. The patient may be able to give you a contact name and number. If they don't know which outreach team they have been in contact with CHAIN is a very useful resource.

CHAIN (Combined Homelessness And Information Network) (<http://www.broadwaylondon.org/CHAIN>)

CHAIN is London's most comprehensive and widely used database on rough sleeping and the street population. Outreach teams and others use CHAIN to record information about the contacts they make with rough sleepers.

People working on a regular basis with rough sleepers (e.g. discharge co-ordinators with responsibility for homeless people) within hospitals can request View Only access to the system. This will help them identify any outreach teams, day centres and hostels a person is in touch with. The form to request access can be found here: <http://www.broadwaylondon.org/CHAIN/AccessToCHAIN>. This page also provides contact information for outreach teams.

If you are in contact with a rough sleeper and are someone who does not regularly work with rough sleepers (e.g. ward staff who are care planning around the discharge of a person who has slept rough) you can call the CHAIN team to see if they can identify a service that it might be helpful to link the person back in with. The CHAIN team will need to call back through the hospital switchboard to ensure they only give information out as appropriate. They will try and work out the best person for you to contact to talk about the patient's case rather than providing information about the individual's needs and history.

Call CHAIN on 0207 710 0562

[Thamesreach Street rescue site \(http://www.thamesreach.org.uk\)](http://www.thamesreach.org.uk) also has details of all the London street outreach teams working with people sleeping rough.

IF A RESOURCE FILE OR INTRANET PAGES ARE DEVELOPED WHAT SHOULD THEY CONTAIN?

Factsheets 1-5 can be adapted and used on the intranet or in a resource file. A resource file could include:

- Information on local statutory and voluntary sector services (i.e. a leaflet from each, if available, describing the services they deliver, referral criteria, contact names and telephone numbers, web addresses).
- Information on other support services linking to homelessness e.g. Community Mental Health Teams, substance misuse teams, domestic violence charities, refugee organisations.
- Information or links to other areas within hospital on sensitivities around data protection and vulnerable adults e.g. women fleeing violence.
- A glossary including definition of the types of services, relevant acronyms (some of which are included here), and types of workers involved.
- Details about Homeless UK and Homeless London

DEVELOP YOUR OWN ONLINE SYSTEM

You could develop your own specialist online directory and resource file. Features could include full local coverage of specialist services, local named contacts, local procedures and online referral forms. Homeless Link can help you develop such an online tool. We build cost effective online directories and information systems for statutory services and voluntary organisations. Working in partnership with other local agencies (e.g. your local authority housing department or voluntary sector homelessness services) can help share the costs by developing a system that other agencies and the public can also use.

If you would like to find out about how we can develop a local site for you, please contact Peter Watson on 020 7840 4467 or email peter.watson@homelesslink.org.uk

HOW OFTEN SHOULD INFORMATION BE UPDATED?

Because services change a named person or position within the hospital should be identified, who has the responsibility for updating the local liaison contact names, the intranet or resource file annually.

USEFUL NATIONAL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

•The domestic violence helpline (0808 2000 247)

Run in partnership by Women's Aid and Refuge, provides support, information and a listening ear to women experiencing (or who have experienced) domestic abuse and to those seeking help on a woman's behalf.

• Shelter's Free Housing Advice helpline (0808 800 4444)

<http://england.shelter.org.uk/>

Shelter provides a free, national telephone advice line, staffed by trained housing advisers.

WHO'S WHO IN THE HOUSING SECTOR?

You should consider including the information below in your resource book/intranet page, adapted for your local area:

LOCAL HOUSING AUTHORITY

The local housing authority has responsibility for housing some people who are homeless and for giving advice to everybody to help prevent homelessness. To be eligible for housing, a homeless person has to show that their homelessness is unintentional, i.e. their actions did not contribute to their homelessness, and that they have a priority need for accommodation. Priority need categories include people who have children and those who are vulnerable as a result of having a long-term illness or disability.

HOSTEL WORKERS/KEY WORKERS

Many hostels operate a key worker system, and employ specialist workers for mental health, drug misuse, and alcohol dependency. These workers provide support and advice to clients, often advocating for them, and also act as a bridge between voluntary and statutory organisations. If a patient has come from a hostel it is important to involve key workers in ongoing care planning for the patient.

OUTREACH WORKERS

If it is established that the patient has been sleeping rough, and has a known outreach worker, they should be contacted. They are likely to know the person's history, can be engaged in care and support planning and this will help to prioritise the patient for accommodation.

The local housing authority will require supporting evidence to determine whether a person is homeless and in priority need. Include a checklist of what this is in your resource book. It is likely to include:

- relevant identification documents - e.g. passport, birth certificate
- a housing reference number if the patient is already registered on the system
- a letter setting out what their health problems are and why they make them vulnerable in relation to housing (see fact sheet 2)
- evidence of their connection to the area through residence, employment, family association or any special circumstance.

HOUSING RELATED SUPPORT

Housing-related support can include assistance to build tenancy and related skills; support in accessing health and other services; and support in accessing and claiming benefits. It is for the local authority to decide what support should be made available locally. This can include support services based within hostels, as well as 'floating support' services, which can work with the individual regardless of location or tenure.

DAY CENTRES

Many homeless people attend day centres, which provide a range of services, such as benefit advice, primary health care, housing advice, food, showers and clothes. Day centres will also know about local accommodation services.

CHECKLIST

Do staff responsible for discharge know where to access information on:

- Local authority housing departments
- Outreach teams and other services for people sleeping rough
- Hostels
- Local day centres
- Supported Housing services
- Shelter's free phone line
- Local domestic violence charities
- Drug and alcohol charities
- Voluntary mental health services e.g. Mind
- Services for elderly people e.g. Age UK
- Probation
- Primary Care Trust
- Community Mental Health Teams

This fact sheet has been produced by Homeless Link and updated in October 2010.. It relates to the CLG/DH guidance

[Hospital Admission and Discharge: People who are homeless or living in temporary or insecure accommodation](#)

(<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/154289.pdf>)

The five other related fact sheets can be found on the [Homeless Link website](http://www.homeless.org.uk/hospitals) (<http://www.homeless.org.uk/hospitals>)

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