

Economic Affairs Committee inquiry: Social Care Funding in England– Homeless Link response

Introduction

1. Homeless Link is the national membership body for frontline homelessness agencies and the wider housing with health, care and support sector. We represent over 750 organisations providing supported housing and homelessness services across England. We work to improve services through research, information, training and guidance, and to promote policy change that will ensure everyone has a place to call home and the support to keep it.
2. Homeless Link is also part of the Making Every Adult Matter, a coalition with Clinks and Mind formed to improve policy and services for people with multiple needs. Together the charities represent over 1,300 frontline organisations that have an interest in the criminal justice, substance misuse, homelessness and mental health sectors. We support local areas across the country to develop effective, coordinated approaches to multiple needs that can increase wellbeing, reduce costs to public services and improve people's lives.
3. Homeless Link welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Economic Affairs Committee inquiry on social care funding in England. Our response focuses on addressing the following two questions:
 - What are the funding challenges for social care in England?
 - How can these challenges be overcome?

Summary

4. We have a number of concerns regarding access to social care for people who are homeless or living in supported accommodation we wish to raise through this inquiry. Our key points are:
 - Budgetary pressures on social care and wider support services for homeless people and people with multiple needs are resulting in high levels of unmet need.
 - Fragmentation of services makes it difficult for people and the professionals supporting them to navigate the system and secure the necessary care and support.
 - Funding for social care for homeless people and people with multiple needs must not be lost in the broader discussion about social care funding.
 - Levels of social care and support funding need to meet current and future need.
 - Social care funding should be invested in the roll-out of Housing First.

What are the funding challenges for social care in England?

5. Social care services have a significant role to play in both preventing homelessness and responding to the needs of people who are homeless or in supported accommodation. This is especially important given the very high levels of poor physical and mental health among people who are homeless.¹ Retaining investment in support for people experiencing homelessness, and increasing the support available to prevent it in the first place, is a critical

¹ Homeless Link (2014) [The unhealthy state of homelessness](#)

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challenge against a backdrop where homelessness is rising across England.² Rough sleeping has increased by 73% over the past three years, and the number of households in expensive, temporary accommodation has increased by 66% since December 2010.³

6. According to the National Audit Office, Government funding for local authorities has fallen by an estimated 49% in real terms from 2010-11 to 2017-18.⁴ Financial pressures impact on the perceived gatekeeping of resources, limited proactive engagement with socially excluded groups, high levels of staff turnover and the extent of services offered.⁵
7. The pressures on social care funding have been replicated in other key areas of support for people with multiple and complex needs. Supported housing enables people to live more independently, preventing the need for costly residential services and improving outcomes for people in areas such as health, wellbeing and employment. There have been significant cuts to housing-related support funding (previously Supporting People funding) in recent years. Following the removal of the Supporting People funding ring-fence in 2009, spending on this has fallen by at least 59% in real terms since 2010-11 (from £1.44 billion to £588 million).⁶
8. Our research found that the primary source of funding for more than half of the sectors accommodation projects (55%) was housing-related support, and 39% of accommodation projects reported a decrease in funding.⁷ This is a clear indicator of how reliant this part of the sector is on housing-related support funding and the pressures they are facing. In addition, drug and alcohol services have seen a 15% cut in four years.⁸
9. Our members report an increasing level of mental health need in their services as community mental health teams struggle with high caseloads, meaning that thresholds to access support are extremely high. In 73% of cases where homeless accommodation projects turn someone away, one of the reasons cited is that their needs are too high to be safely supported in the service.⁹ This shows there is a significant gap in support for people who are most in need of it.
10. Frontline homelessness practitioners talk about a fragmentation of services that makes it even more difficult to navigate the social care system.¹⁰ This fragmentation and difficulty accessing social care support is evident at a number of key points in a person's contact with the health and social care system, including hospital discharge¹¹ and palliative care for people who are homeless.¹² The Care Act provides an opportunity for homelessness agencies to highlight needs that are sometimes unrecognised by social care services, partly because homelessness services currently provide a response to these needs. When the Care Act was introduced in 2014 there was some optimism that the removal of references to 'eligible' and 'ineligible' groups could open up routes to assessment for people who were previously excluded. This was particularly welcome given the very high levels of poor physical and mental health among people who are homeless.¹³ The new national eligibility criteria could also minimise the local variation around thresholds for support.¹⁴ However we know from members that they are struggling to access assessments for the individuals they are supporting. The reasons for this

² National Audit Office (2017) Homelessness

³ MHCLG (2018) Statutory homelessness and homelessness prevention and relief, England: January to March 2018

⁴ <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Adult-social-care-at-a-glance.pdf>

⁵ Mason et al. (2017) [Multiple Exclusion Homelessness and adult social care in England: Exploring the challenges through a researcher-practitioner partnership](#)

⁶ <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Homelessness.pdf>

⁷ Homeless Link (2018) Single Homelessness Support in England: Annual Review 2017

⁸ The Independent (2017) [Drug and alcohol treatment funding slashed across England by 16% in four years](#)

⁹ Homeless Link (2017) [Single Homelessness Support in England: Annual Review 2016](#)

¹⁰ Mason et al. (2017) [Multiple Exclusion Homelessness and adult social care in England: Exploring the challenges through a researcher-practitioner partnership](#)

¹¹ Healthwatch England (2015) [Safely Home?](#)

¹² Care Quality Commission (2017) [A Second Class Ending](#)

¹³ Homeless Link (2014) [The unhealthy state of homelessness](#)

¹⁴ Cornes et al. (2015) [The Care Act, Personalisation and the New Eligibility Regulations](#)

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are not solely funding-related, but financial pressures do have an impact on the perceived gatekeeping of resources, limited proactive engagement with socially excluded groups, high levels of staff turnover and the extent of services offered.¹⁵ The King's Fund explained: 'The removal of £5.5 billion from social care budgets over the past six years is now taking its toll. [...] The Care Act – a well-intentioned legal framework [...] has created new expectations of local authorities that are completely at odds with the financial trajectory of social care spending.'¹⁶

How can these challenges be overcome?

11. Increased funding in support and services which help people in their homes and prevent the need for costly services down the line is needed. Funding also needs to respond flexibly to the diversity and complexity of people's individual needs and aspirations.
12. To create a truly sustainable supported housing sector, there has to be assurances about levels of support funding to meet current and future need. Investment in housing-related support leads to savings in other parts of the system. The most comprehensive evaluation of Supporting People (housing-related support) found that a £1.6 billion investment generated net savings of £3.4 billion to the public purse. This included avoiding £315.2 million health costs, £413.6 million costs of crime and criminal justice and £96 million costs of homelessness.
13. Better integration across the health, housing and social care sectors is a key solution to funding challenges.¹⁷ The Making Every Adult Matter work has demonstrated the positive impact a more coordinated approach can have on supporting people with multiple and complex needs.¹⁸
14. Homeless Link runs Housing First England, a national project created to develop and support a national movement of Housing First services across England. Housing First is an internationally evidence-based approach shown to be successful at supporting people experiencing multiple disadvantage due to the most complex needs (homelessness, mental ill health, substance misuse, contact with the criminal justice system and experiences of violence and abuse).
15. Homeless Link welcomes the Government's commitment to Housing First through the pilots it is delivering across Liverpool, Manchester and the West Midlands. However, we believe there is already a significant body of evidence that supports the roll-out of Housing First for the cohort of people for which it has been proven effective.¹⁹ This should be part of a wider investment in a range of services for people who are homeless and vulnerably housed, including emergency beds, hostels and other services.

For more information, please contact:

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¹⁵ Mason et al. (2017) [Multiple Exclusion Homelessness and adult social care in England: Exploring the challenges through a researcher-practitioner partnership](#)

¹⁶ Humphries, R (2018) Taking Control of our social care system, The King's Fund: <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/blog/2016/07/takingcontrol-our-social-care-system> (blog post accessed March 2018).

¹⁷ Local Government Association (2017) [The Impact of Homelessness on Health: A Guide for Local Authorities](#)

¹⁸ Barclay, J (April 2016) [Changing systems, changing lives](#)

¹⁹ See Housing First England's research and evaluation resources for more information <https://hfe.homeless.org.uk/>