

## POLICY UPDATE

### December 2017

This update has been prepared by Homeless Link's Policy Team. Please contact Paula Reid ([paula.reid@homelesslink.org.uk](mailto:paula.reid@homelesslink.org.uk)) or Chris Brill ([chris.brill@homelesslink.org.uk](mailto:chris.brill@homelesslink.org.uk)) for more detail on any item contained within the briefing.

#### KEY ANNOUNCEMENTS

##### **Homelessness Code of Guidance**

The Homelessness Reduction Act recently became law and is due to be enacted in April 2018. The Act seeks to modify and extend existing homelessness law through:

- Improving the advice and information available about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness;
- Extending the period 'threatened with homelessness' from 28 days to 56 days;
- Introducing new duties to prevent and relieve homelessness for all eligible people, regardless of priority need, intentionality and local connection;
- Introducing assessments and personalised housing plans, setting out the actions housing authorities and individuals will take to secure accommodation;
- Encouraging public bodies to work together to prevent and relieve homelessness through a duty to refer.

In October, DCLG published a draft Homelessness Code of Guidance which provides direction on how local authorities should meet the requirements of homelessness legislation and which has been updated to include information on the Homelessness Reduction Act. Consultation on the guidance will run until 11<sup>th</sup> December 2017 and will be finalised for publication in spring 2018. Homeless Link's response to the consultation, based on consultation with members and our Expert Panel, can be found on our policy resource page: <http://www.homeless.org.uk/our-work/policy-resources>.

##### **Supported housing consultation**

On 31st October 2017, DCLG and DWP published a revised set of proposals for supported housing funding and announced a 12 week consultation on their plans. The consultation document was published alongside the Government's response to the previous round of consultation, the response to the joint Select Committee reports and the four independent task and finish groups that were convened to inform the development of the proposals.

Ahead of publication, the Prime Minister had announced that the LHA cap would no longer be applied to the supported and wider social housing sector. Further changes announced in the consultation include:

- Delay in implementing a new system from 2019 to 2020
- Older people's housing to be subject to a 'Sheltered Rent' paid through the benefits system
- Long-term supported housing to continue to have costs met through the benefits system, with further consultation to come with sector on outcomes and oversight
- Short-term accommodation (up to two years) fully funded through a local authority ring-fenced grant held at the upper authority level, supported by a new planning and oversight regime

Homeless Link's webinar on the proposals is available on our website (<http://www.homeless.org.uk/future-funding-2017>) and the consultation closes on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2018. We are currently consulting with members on the proposals and will be circulating our

key headlines in the new year to support those of our members planning to respond to the consultation.

### **Autumn Budget 2017**

On 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2017 the Chancellor announced his Autumn Budget. Homeless Link had made a submission to the Budget outlining our key asks around homelessness, welfare and affordable housing, available on our policy resources page: <http://www.homeless.org.uk/our-work/policy-resources>.

The Budget reiterated the Government's manifesto commitments around homelessness and £28 million for Housing First pilots in Manchester, Liverpool and the West Midlands. A number of changes to Universal Credit were also announced, including removal of the seven waiting days from February, reducing the wait for an initial payment from six weeks to five, and greater access to advance payments and alternative payment arrangements. However, none of these changes come in until next year and we still have concerns about the design and implementation of Universal Credit. For further details about the Budget proposals and our view on where further reform and funding is needed, read our Budget blog: <http://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/blogs/2017/nov/27/budget-round-up-2017>.

## **POLICY UPDATES**

### **Homelessness and housing**

#### **National Audit Office report on homelessness**

On 13<sup>th</sup> September 2017 the National Audit Office published its report into homelessness which highlighted that the Government has not assessed the impact of welfare reform on levels of homelessness and makes recommendations to the DCLG around a cross-government strategy and greater oversight of the work of local authorities in addressing homelessness: <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/homelessness/>

#### **Improving access to social housing for victims of domestic violence**

On 30<sup>th</sup> October 2017 the Government published a consultation on new statutory guidance for local authorities to support victims of domestic abuse to access social housing. The consultation will run until 5<sup>th</sup> January and the draft guidance can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/improving-access-to-social-housing-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse>

#### **Draft Tenant Fees Bill**

On 1<sup>st</sup> November 2017 the Government published their draft Tenant Fees Bill, part of their commitment to make renting fairer and easier for tenants by allowing them to see upfront what a given property will cost them in the advertised rent level without any additional costs. The bill will also introduce a lead enforcement authority in the lettings sector and cap security deposits at 6 weeks' rent. - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-action-to-end-letting-agent-fees>

#### **Homeless households inquiry**

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) is running an inquiry into homeless households, looking at local authorities' progress in combatting homelessness and the work of DCLG and DWP. Details of the inquiry and evidence gathered to date is available on the Parliament website: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/public-accounts-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/homeless-households-17-19/>

#### **Commons Library research briefings**

The Commons Library has published a number of research briefings on housing and homelessness in the last quarter:

- Use of temporary accommodation: <https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CDP-2017-0216>

- New homelessness statistics tool:  
<https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7586>
- Quarterly homelessness statistics for England:  
<https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN02646>
- Trends in rough sleeping in England since 2010:  
<https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN02647>
- Housing support for ex-offender (England and Wales) – this explores the housing support available to people leaving prison:  
<http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN02989#fullreport>

## Welfare

### **Work and Pensions select committee report on Universal Credit**

On 26<sup>th</sup> October 2017 the Work and Pensions Select Committee published its inquiry into Universal Credit. Their key recommendation was to reduce the initial six week wait for payment and argued that advance payments, while welcome, were loans that did nothing to address the fundamental flaws of UC design: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/work-and-pensions-committee/news-parliament-2017/6-week-wait/>

### **Roll-out of Universal Credit**

One of the changes to Universal Credit announced in the Autumn Budget was a slow-down in the current roll-out schedule up to May 2018. A new roll-out schedule was published alongside the Budget announcement – you can see when your Job Centre area is due to get Universal Credit here:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/652180/universal-credit-transition-rollout-schedule.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/652180/universal-credit-transition-rollout-schedule.pdf)

## Health and social care

### **Commons Library NHS reconfiguration briefing**

The Commons Library has published a research briefing on NHS service reconfiguration, including a summary of policy developments and drivers of changes in services:

<http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-8105>

### **LGA: impact of homelessness on health**

The Local Government Association has published a briefing on the impact of homelessness on health for local authorities. It aims to support local authorities to reduce health inequalities and improve population health by tackling homelessness and its causes:

<https://www.local.gov.uk/impact-health-homelessness-guide-local-authorities>

### **CQC report: the state of health and social care in England**

On 9<sup>th</sup> October 2017 the Care Quality Commission (CQC) published its annual report on the state of health and care in England. The report covers the key areas regulated by the CQC, including primary care, social care and mental health: <http://www.cqc.org.uk/publications/major-report/state-care>

### **End of life care for homeless people**

The CQC, alongside the Faculty for Homeless and Inclusion Health, has published ‘A second class ending – Exploring the barriers and championing outstanding end of life care for people who are homeless’. The report identifies that actively linking health care, social care, housing and voluntary services would improve care for this group, and that there needs to be a strategic, equality-led approach at a local level, delivering personalised care. The report can be found at <http://www.cqc.org.uk/publications/themed-work/second-class-ending-exploring-barriers-championing-outstanding-end-life>

## Criminal justice

### Transforming Rehabilitation inquiry

The Justice Select Committee is running an inquiry on the Transforming Rehabilitation reforms to probation and whether Government measures are doing enough to address the challenges faced by probation. Further details on the progress of the inquiry are available here:

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/justice-committee/news-parliament-2017/transforming-rehabilitation-17-19/>

## Multiple Needs

**MEAM** launched their new programme of Big Lottery funded work on 23 November 2017 at an event bringing together 25 local areas across England to develop coordinated, effective support for people experiencing multiple needs. Over the next five years, as part of MEAM, we will work with the 25 MEAM Approach areas (rising to 40 by the end of the Programme) and the 12 local areas that are part of the Big Lottery Fund's Fulfilling Lives programme. For more information go to <http://meam.org.uk/blogs/>