

# POLICY UPDATE

## NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

### July 2018

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

## 1. KEY ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Homelessness and housing

#### Rough Sleeping

On 9 June 2018, the Government announced that 83 areas will share £30 million to boost the immediate support available to people living on the streets and help them into accommodation.

Local authorities across England with the highest numbers of rough sleepers will receive a share of this funding to significantly increase the support they are able to offer people now and also those at risk this coming winter. Government has said that funding will be used to provide an additional 1,750 additional bed spaces for rough sleepers and an additional 531 dedicated homelessness workers. The funding will also help improve the co-ordination of services available to those in need and at risk. More details can be found here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/james-brokenshire-announces-30-million-immediate-support-for-rough-sleepers>

## 2. POLICY UPDATES

### Homelessness and housing

#### Changes to Homelessness Code of Guidance

MHCLG have made some small changes to the Homelessness Code of Guidance, to provide further clarity on a number of points raised by local authorities. The below summarises changes made to the Code on 20<sup>th</sup> June.

- A link has been added to the LGA's revised protocol for referrals from one local authority to another under local connection provisions;
- A change in paragraph 10.41 to clarify that the 56 day period of the relief duty begins once the receiving authority has accepted they owe a relief duty to an applicant;
- Changes to paragraphs 11.36, 19.3 C, 19.3 E and 19.15 A to provide greater clarity on an applicant's right to review of the reasonable steps set out within their Personalised Housing Plan;
- Changes to paragraph 14.30 to provide more guidance on when a local authority is able to end the prevention and relief duties where an applicant becomes intentionally homeless from accommodation provided for them under those duties;

The updated Code of Guidance can be found at the following link:  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities>

## Welfare

### **NAO report on Universal Credit**

On 15 June 2018, the National Audit Office (NAO) published a report that assesses the value for money of the Department for Work and Pensions' introduction of Universal Credit (UC). The report considers how the Department's plans have evolved, whether the approach works for claimants and the organisations supporting them, and the likelihood of Universal Credit achieving its aims.

The NAO concludes that Universal Credit has taken significantly longer to roll-out than intended, and that UC has not delivered value for money and it is uncertain that it ever will. For more, please see <https://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/news/2018/jun/15/issues-with-universal-credit-need-addressing>

### **Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC) consultation on moving claimants on legacy benefits to Universal Credit**

The Government have proposed legislation to move claimants on legacy benefits to Universal Credit. This will be debated in Parliament later in the year. The legislation sets out the government's proposals on:

- requirements for claimants on existing benefits to make a claim for Universal Credit (including the deadlines for doing so) and arrangements for ending their existing benefit
- the calculation, award and ongoing treatment of transitional protection

The task of safely moving around 3 million claimants, including people experiencing homelessness and those in supported housing, from legacy benefits to Universal Credit raises important questions about the delivery challenge facing the department and the potential impact on claimants.

SSAC has decided to examine this draft legislation, and the impacts that flow from it, in more detail. They will submit a scrutiny report to ministers and Parliament. This will help inform the debates later in the year.

To help inform this work, the committee is seeking evidence from a broad range of organisations and individuals who have good insight into and/or experience of the following aspects of these proposals:

- the overall migration timetable
- arrangements for contacting claimants and inviting claims from them
- issues associated with making a claim, and ending legacy benefit claims
- the calculation of transitional protection (including the treatment of earnings and capital)
- the impact of proposed transitional protection (including how easily it will be delivered and the degree to which it will be understood by claimants)
- the impact on workers, including the self-employed

- equality impact (whether there will be particular effects for different groups and how these can best be addressed), for example are there any groups that will not be covered by transitional protection?
- monitoring and evaluation

Homeless Link will be providing evidence from our members to ensure that the committee's advice to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions is informed by a range of perspectives. We will be seeking from our membership of real or hypothetical case studies or specific examples as part of our evidence. **Deadline for evidence Monday 20 August 2018.**

For further details see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-proposal-to-move-claimants-on-legacy-benefits-to-universal-credit-consultation-announced>

## Health and social care

The Prime Minister has set out a 5 year funding plan for the NHS of £20 billion. The funding will support a 10 year NHS plan that will be brought forward to improve services.

Details of the funding settlement can be found at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/717765/nhs-settlement-numbers.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/717765/nhs-settlement-numbers.pdf)

A report on the long term funding of social care was published as the first Joint Report of the Health and Social Care and Housing, Communities and Local Government Committees. The report concludes that *“Spending on social care needs to rise to: meet the funding gap for the provision of social care by local authorities in 2020; provide the additional funding to meet future demand; meet the care needs of everyone, whether critical, substantial or moderate; and to improve the quality of care delivered, which includes ensuring the stability of the workforce and care providers.”* The report also highlights the importance of establishing a link between health, social care, public health and housing.

The report can be found at:

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmcomloc/768/768.pdf>

## Criminal justice

### Justice Committee report on Transforming Rehabilitation

Following an eight-month inquiry, the Justice Committee released a report outlining that that they were ‘unconvinced that the Government’s programme of reforms can ever deliver an effective or viable probation service.’ In relation to prisoner release, the report outlined that:

“One of the key components of the TR reforms was that all offenders would receive an element of continuous support from custody into the community. The current TTG provision merely signposts offenders to other organisations and is wholly inadequate. We recommend that the Ministry of Justice reviews the purpose of TTG and the support it provides to offenders (including whether it should introduce a prisoner discharge pack, based on need). We also recommend that real consideration should be given to whether it is appropriate to release prisoners, with few family ties, from custody on a Friday because access to Government services can be difficult.

The TR reforms introduced a 12-week intervention point: 12 weeks prior to release, pre-release resettlement activity (such as arranging accommodation, dealing with finance, benefits and debts and support related to education, training and employment) commences. We find that this approach is too inflexible and does not reflect the varying, and often complex, needs of offenders. We propose that offenders should begin receiving pre-release resettlement activity no later than 12 weeks prior to release.”

The full report can be found here:

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmjust/482/482.pdf>

### 3. INFLUENCING

#### Homelessness and housing

##### **Work and Pensions Select Committee inquiry into sanctions**

Homeless Link responded to the Work and Pensions Select Committee inquiry into sanctions, outlining the disproportionate impact sanctions policy has on people experiencing homelessness, and the lack of awareness of homelessness easements. We proposed the following recommendations to current practice:

- Sanctions statistics to be analysed and presented in a way that allows the DWP, and other relevant stakeholders, to establish the extent to which homeless people and other vulnerable groups are being affected by sanctions, and whether this is disproportionate to the general claimant population.
- Activities and support that people experiencing homelessness are required to do as part of their conditionality should be meaningful and tailored to their individual circumstances. Any mandated activity should take into account the impact of someone’s housing situation, and any other complex needs, on their ability to effectively seek or prepare for work
- To support the effective implementation of DWP duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act, Claimant Commitments will need to correspond to activities outlined in local housing authority developed Personalised Housing Plans. This should support individuals to stabilise their housing situation and learn to manage their own tenancy if required, thus promoting effective move-on from homelessness.
- The homelessness easement should be extended beyond people who are newly homeless to include anyone who is homeless. This could be facilitated through effective linkage between the Claimant Commitments and the Personalised Housing Plan, and partnership working between local JCP and homelessness services (e.g. hostels, supported housing projects). All people experiencing homelessness who have been made a Housing First offer should have conditionality automatically suspended to prevent them returning to homelessness.
- JCP staff should provide a flexible, person centred approach to individual claimants.

##### **Department for Digital Culture, Media and Sport consultation on civil society**

Homeless Link responded to the Department for Digital Culture, Media and Sport consultation on civil society. In addition to recommendations around partnership working, coproduction and the role of social investment, Homeless Link raised issues and recommendations relating to the funding and financing environment within which the voluntary and community sector operates:

- Current spending largely falls on dealing with the aftermath of homelessness, rather than on services which can help prevent and alleviate it.
- Retaining investment for this support for people experiencing homelessness, and increasing the support available to prevent it in the first place is critical against a backdrop where homelessness is rising across England.
- Funding pressures have meant that despite increasing need, we have seen disinvestment in recent years. Local funding cuts have meant that some organisations, through having to make the same outcomes with less money, are operating at a loss on core costs.
- The current commissioning and funding landscape for homelessness and supported housing services is complex and uncertain. Specific spending to tackle homelessness is often only available on a short-term, 'pilot', or cyclical basis which does not allow commissioners or providers to plan for the future
- The pressures on local authorities in recent times has also meant that a number have restructured their commissioning teams, with risks that specialist expertise being lost.
- The funding landscape for homelessness services is being further destabilised by the uncertainty created by the national Government's proposals around the future funding of supported housing, and the delay in any agreement. Homeless Link calls for a solution to be reached, in partnership with sector, as soon as possible.
- A more holistic, long-term and strategic approach to funding would allow substantial pieces of work to take place locally and ensure sustainability of vital homelessness and supported housing services. This could be done through:
  - Investing earlier to prevent homelessness to make spending more efficient, whilst ensuring that investment is protected in the solutions that we know can help prevent and tackle homelessness.
  - Funding for services should be made reliable and long term in order for services to confidently build on their practice, offer service users the longer term support that some need, and ultimately for services to remain available.
  - Contracts should cover full costs of service, reducing the risk in investment in the sector. Funding should be responsive to external factors that may have an impact on costs within a contract period, such as costs associated with changes in health and safety legislation.
  - Commissioners should be trained with the specialist expertise of the homelessness sector. Work should be undertaken to ensure that burdens on applying for contracts is not onerous on small organisations

## Criminal justice

### Justice Select Committee

In June 2018, Homeless Link was invited to meet with members of the Justice Select Committee to discuss cross-departmental matters affecting people in the criminal justice system. The Committee wanted to hear about key challenges facing people experiencing homelessness, potential cross-departmental solutions and the key priorities for the soon to be established Reducing Reoffending Taskforce.

Homeless Link raised that:

- The level of housing expertise on offer to clients of Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) is variable; in our research people have reported some poor or limited advice from the CRCs and it was picked up as a weak area in a recent inspection of Transforming Rehabilitation overall.

- There are barriers to the CRCs securing accommodation for those at risk of homelessness. Often processes cannot be started before the release date (or very close to it). Cuts to LA budgets have resulted in fewer bed-spaces in hostels or supported accommodation for individuals who have support needs. Further, there is a shortage of affordable and suitable private rented sector accommodation in many areas, which further limits people's accommodation options.
- Key changes with the Welfare Reform agenda have made it more challenging for some people to access accommodation when vulnerably housed or homeless. This includes:
- LA Housing Options teams are an essential service for those who are facing homelessness. However, links between Housing Options Teams and CRCs are variable and generally not well established in England.
- A whole-systems approach needs to be facilitated to ensure there is join up between organisations both on a local and national level
- Improvements need to be made to the information about the housing needs and levels of homelessness amongst offenders, including collection and dissemination of the proportion of people accommodated on leaving prison to assist with identifying trends. The MoJ should provide clear definitions of key terms including homelessness and appropriate accommodation, outline when and how these terms should be used and determine key indicators for success.

### **Domestic abuse consultation**

Homeless Link responded to the Government's consultation on responses to victims of domestic abuse. The consultation sought views on how the Government could support effective multi-agency working around domestic abuse and address the needs of victims who might face additional barriers to accessing support. We flagged the need for commissioning of gender-specific services, and also supported the widening of the definition of domestic violence to domestic abuse. We recommended that the approach and statutory definition is wide enough to ensure that homeless women are protected from sexual exploitation and violence from men on the street, in addition to domestic abuse.

## **4. HOMELESS LINK HIGHLIGHTS – Update on Homeless Link Projects**

### **Research**

In April 2018, we published two research reports: one on Prevention and one on Move-On. The Prevention report presents case studies of good practice on prevention, identifying key learning as well as challenges and success factors and you can get a copy at <https://www.homeless.org.uk/facts/our-research/prevention>. The Move-On report explores what is meant by move on, presents five case studies and explores the challenges and opportunities in moving individuals on from homelessness. You can find a copy of the report at <https://www.homeless.org.uk/facts/our-research/move-on>

In June, we published a research report on hostels, the Future Hostel. This is based on ten in-depth case studies of hostels across England and analyses data from Homeless Link's online database of homelessness services. It explores the range of approaches and interventions that are covered by the term 'hostels' and focuses on key principles, learning points and best practice. Thanks to you all of you who participated in this research and you can find the report at <https://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/blogs/2018/jun/28/future-hostel-%E2%80%93-what-do-we-know-about-how-hostels-can-help-end>

[Housing First England](#) project: we are progressing our new research plans for the remainder of the project, with a new report on the future commissioning of Housing First due for publication this month. We are continuing to support services and commissioners to develop plans for Housing First and have met with representatives in some of the new pilot areas (which will be receiving a share of the MCLG £28m to run Housing First services) to discuss how these will be developed in line with the Housing First principles. We also ran a webinar looking at how the Care Act can be used to access support for Housing First residents. All of these resources and others are on our website [www.hfe.homeless.org.uk](http://www.hfe.homeless.org.uk)

### **StreetLink**

Following the March cold weather event, we continue to build the StreetLink community. An Advisory Group meeting was held on 18 June to review the response to the winter surge in activity due to the extreme cold weather.

### **Health and Wellbeing Alliance**

We have worked in partnership with Pathway and held two combined focus groups with Pathway Experts by Experience and our Expert Panel, to examine housing status recording in hospital. The evidence from the two focus groups have informed a meeting that Pathway has had with the Office of National Statistics. The group agreed on the appropriate question, and a follow up meeting is to be convened with Pathway to agree next steps.

Homeless Link is part of NHS England's Acute Provider Engagement group, part of the Hospital to Home programme that is seeking to develop better links between health and social care. The group has held two national events on Health and Housing with regional providers and health partners to look at ways of improving delayed transfers of care through stronger health and housing partnerships. Homeless Link provided facilitation at one of the workshops, as part of the core work of the [Health and Wellbeing Alliance](#).

**EEA nationals:** The Connection at St Martin's has updated Homeless Link's guidance on supporting EEA nationals. The new resources provide an overview of key information, principles and good practice in response to EEA nationals experiencing homelessness, including updated information on entitlements to welfare, and a **Timeline of legislative changes on EEA rights**. For more, see <https://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/blogs/2018/may/29/guidance-on-supporting-eea-nationals>