

## **POLICY UPDATE**

### **NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**March 2019**

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)) or Michaela des Forges ([Michaela.DesForges@homelesslink.org.uk](mailto:Michaela.DesForges@homelesslink.org.uk)) for more detail on any item contained within the briefing.

## **1. KEY ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **NHS Long Term Plan**

On 7 January 2019, the NHS Long Term Plan was released - <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/>. The plan sets out its strategy for the next decade, as well as detailing how it will spend the Government's pledged investment of an extra £20.5bn a year over the next five years.

Homeless Link were pleased to see a wider focus in the plan on addressing health inequalities. We have long been calling for Government to improve the health and wellbeing outcomes for those at highest risk of, and experiencing, the poorest health. There will now be a requirement that all major national programmes and every local area across England set out specific measurable goals and mechanisms by which they will contribute to narrowing health inequalities.

As part of this wider focus on addressing health inequalities, there is a commitment to spend up to £30 million to ensure people sleeping rough have better access to specialist homelessness support integrated with existing outreach services. Together, with more than 20 of our members and health organisations, we wrote to Simon Stevens, Chief Executive of NHS England calling for this investment. We backed these calls with a more detailed policy briefing jointly with St Mungo's and through engagements and workshops with officials.

Homeless Link also strongly called for reinvestment in community mental health services and the need for improved care for people with co-occurring mental health and substance misuse conditions. The Plan is going to deliver spending of at least £2.3bn more a year on mental health care, and community-based physical and mental care for 370,000 people with severe mental illness a year by 2023/24. We also feed into to other aspects of the plan through our engagement at events and workshops. Other aspects of the plan that could be of interest include:

- Integrated Care Systems to be rolled out across the country by 2021. ICSs bring together NHS providers and commissioners and local authorities to work in partnership in improving health and care in their area.  
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/integratedcare/integrated-care-systems/>
- Over 1,000 trained social prescribing link workers will be in place by 2020/21, working with people to develop tailored plans, connecting them to local services to address issues related to wider determinants of health, such as housing.  
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/social-prescribing/>
- Funding for specific new evidence-based NHS prevention programmes, including to cut smoking; to reduce obesity, partly by doubling enrolment in the successful Type 2 NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme; to limit alcohol-related A&E admissions; and to lower air pollution.

- The Better Care Fund will be reviewed in 2019/2020 by the Department of Health and Social Care and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The review will include clear requirements on reducing delayed transfers of care and improve the availability of care packages for patients ready to leave hospital.  
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/part-rel/transformation-fund/bcf-plan/>

Our joint response together with our Health and Wellbeing Alliance inclusion health sub-group can be found here: <https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/NHS%20Long%20Term%20Plan%20response.pdf>

A more detailed policy briefing jointly with St Mungo's is here:  
<https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Homeless%20Link%20%26%20St%20Mungo%27s%20NHS%20Long%20Term%20Plan%20consultation%20response.pdf>

Our response to the announcement can be found here:  
<https://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/news/2019/jan/07/nhs-long-term-plan-includes-commitments-to-improving-health-of-people>

## Homeless Deaths ONS data

On 25<sup>th</sup> February 2019 the ONS published *Deaths of Homeless People in England and Wales: 2013 to 2017 Local Authority level data*. The main findings include:

- In 2017, the highest estimated numbers of deaths of homeless people by local authority were in major urban areas such as Manchester and Birmingham.
- The highest estimated rates of deaths of homeless people, relative to the total population of each area, included some smaller towns such as Blackburn with Darwen.
- Local areas in England with the highest deprivation had around nine times more deaths of homeless people relative to their population than the least disadvantaged areas.
- Many more deaths of homeless people occurred in urban areas (574 in 2017) compared with rural areas (only 26).

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/deathsofhomelesspeopleinenglandandwales2013to2017localauthorityleveldata>

## Consultation on Tackling Homelessness Together

On 21 February 2019 the Government published consultation on *Tackling Homelessness Together: a consultation on structures that support partnership working and accountability in homelessness*. The consultation seeks views on how the Government could improve local accountability for the delivery of homelessness services.

The Secretary of State, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP, in the Foreword to the consultation document states:

*“This consultation looks at the landscape of local delivery of homelessness – a complicated mosaic of agencies and bodies with different priorities and varying levels of accountability. A complicated landscape, yes, but one that is absolutely critical to our efforts to tackle homelessness.*

*This consultation poses some fundamental questions around where our collaborations are working, what more we can do, what is stopping us from doing it, how we can make better use of data and how we can improve accountability. To help us answer these questions, we want to hear from everyone involved in the delivery of homeless services, because this consultation is a*

*vital part of our ongoing conversation about how we deliver change for some of our most vulnerable people and get them the help they need.”*

MHCLG are seeking views on:

- the effectiveness of existing non-statutory and statutory local accountability and partnership structures in homelessness services
- whether the government should introduce Homelessness Reduction Boards and, if so, how this could be done most effectively
- how else we might improve local accountability and partnership working in homelessness services

The consultation closes on **16 May 2019**. You can read the full document here: <https://bit.ly/2NpSbSN>

## 2. POLICY UPDATES

### Homelessness and housing

#### Rough sleeping figures

On 31st of January 2019, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government released the autumn 2018 figures for rough sleeping. A total of 4,677 people were counted or estimated by local authorities to be sleeping rough in England on any one night in autumn 2018, representing 2% decrease from the 2017 figure of 4,751. This is the first time in eight years that the estimated number of rough sleepers in England has gone down.

The number of people sleeping rough in England has increased by 31% in the last 3 years, and 165% in the last 8 years. Across England:

- Westminster remains the local authority with the highest number of rough sleepers (306)
- Brighton and Hove (-64%) and City of Bristol (-5%) are the only local authorities in the top ten to report a reduction in the number of rough sleepers.
- Birmingham, Enfield, Hillingdon and City of London, reported large increases in the number of rough sleepers. These local authorities were not in the top ten in 2017.
- Luton, Bedford, Southend-on -Sea and Cornwall are no longer in the top ten. Luton reported a reduction of 46%, Bedford reported a reduction of 33%, Southend-on-Sea a 85% reduction and Cornwall a 22% reduction.

In Homeless Link's response, Chief Executive Rick Henderson identified that the situation would be far worse without the work being undertaken by local homelessness services, many of whom are struggling as cuts continue to affect their ability to deliver these vital services. Reaching a zero sum by 2027 will require a sustained cross-Government approach to tackling the structural causes of homelessness.

Our full response to the figures can be found here:

<https://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/news/2019/jan/31/we-must-tackle-structural-causes-of-homelessness-rough-sleeping-figures-for>

Our analysis of the figures can be found here:

[https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Homeless%20Link%20-%20analysis%20of%20rough%20sleeping%20statistics%20for%20England%202018\\_0.pdf](https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Homeless%20Link%20-%20analysis%20of%20rough%20sleeping%20statistics%20for%20England%202018_0.pdf)

### Repeal of Vagrancy Act

In February 2018, Liberal Democrat MP, Layla Moran launched a campaign to repeal the Vagrancy Act. Moran tabled a Private Member's Bill, 'The Vagrancy (Repeal) Bill', gained support for an Early Day Motion and raised the issue at Prime Minister's Questions. The Bill

was objected to before it reached second reading and as a result it has been unable to pass through Parliament.

In 2018 the UK Government published its rough sleeping strategy, which states that "some people, including the Advisory Panel [for the strategy], have expressed concerns about how the Vagrancy Act is being used in relation to people who sleep rough. Those who find themselves sleeping rough are some of the most vulnerable in society and we are clear that people who sleep rough should not be discriminated against.<sup>4</sup>" While it does not commit to repeal the Act, it states: "We will launch a wider review of homelessness and rough sleeping legislation, which will include the Vagrancy Act."

We are working alongside CenterPoint, Shelter, Crisis, and St Mungo's on a campaign calling for repeal of the Vagrancy Act.

## Health and social care Prevention Green paper

In November 2018, Prevention is better than cure was published <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevention-is-better-than-cure-our-vision-to-help-you-live-well-for-longer>. The document sets out the government's vision for:

- stopping health problems from arising in the first place
- supporting people to manage their health problems when they do arise

The goal is to improve healthy life expectancy by at least 5 extra years, by 2035, and to close the gap between the richest and poorest. A collection of case studies has been published, including talk2sort a homelessness mediation service provided by The Bridge, showing examples of good practice in preventing health problems from happening.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/prevention-is-better-than-cure-case-studies>

Following this, the Government is currently developing a Prevention Green Paper. Homeless Link is calling on the Government to focus on the wider determinants of poor health and truly address the causes of poor health, with a focus on ensuring everyone has a home and the support to keep it.

## Draft Domestic Abuse Bill

This was published on 21 January 2019. This new legislation will:

- introduce the first ever statutory government definition of domestic abuse to specifically include economic abuse and controlling and manipulative non-physical abuse - this will enable everyone, including victims themselves, to understand what constitutes abuse and will encourage more victims to come forward
- establish a Domestic Abuse Commissioner to drive the response to domestic abuse issues
- introduce new Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders to further protect victims and place restrictions on the actions of offenders
- prohibit the cross-examination of victims by their abusers in the family courts
- provide automatic eligibility for special measures to support more victims to give evidence in the criminal courts.

Through our involvement with the APPG on Ending Homelessness and the National Housing and Domestic Abuse Policy and Practice Group we will be supporting influencing work on using this Bill as an opportunity to make fleeing domestic violence an automatic priority need category under the homelessness legislation. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-publishes-landmark-domestic-abuse-bill>

## Changes to welfare

### **Managed migration to be piloted before full implementation**

The Government delayed a vote on proposals to move existing benefit claimants on to Universal Credit (UC), and instead will be running an initial 10,000 claimant pilot.

Homeless Link, alongside Centrepoin, Crisis, Depaul, Shelter and St Mungo's, wrote to MPs in December 2018 to call for the Government to delay the vote to allow for further scrutiny, specifically as the regulations as drafted could have led to people experiencing homelessness having their benefits terminated if they did not make a new claim. Although it is welcome that the managed migration regulations have been delayed, these have still been adopted for the forthcoming pilot.

Homeless Link is working with members and the Department to ensure the experiences of people who are homeless including those in supported accommodation are considered in the development and implementation of the pilot.

It is important to note that although the vote on managed migration has been delayed, anyone making a new claim for benefits will have to make a claim for Universal Credit. Further, various changes in circumstances for those on legacy benefits can still result in people being moved over to Universal Credit. Although the Department has not provided a definitive list, these circumstances include where claimants will have historically had to claim a new benefit, for example, if they become unemployed or receive housing benefit and move to a different local authority.

Our full concerns with the managed migrations can be found here:

[https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Joint%20sector%20briefing%20on%20managed%20migration%20DEC%2018\\_0.pdf](https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Joint%20sector%20briefing%20on%20managed%20migration%20DEC%2018_0.pdf)

## 3. INFLUENCING

### **Ministerial meetings**

#### **Universal Credit Managed Migration Partnership event**

Homeless Link will be attending a Universal Credit Managed Migration Partnership event on 5<sup>th</sup> March to discuss how to safely support people who do not engage with DWP correspondence around moving on to UC

#### **Cross Government meetings**

Homeless Link is a member of a new, Department of Health and Social Care led Informal Advisory Group on Rough Sleeping which began in August.

#### **MHCLG oversight for supported housing**

MHCLG officials attended our Expert Panel to discuss the work on developing a robust oversight regime. We have also been attending various workshops with officials, NHF and the wider sector to feed into the development of the oversight regime.

#### **Prevention Green Paper**

We have submitted information to the Department of Health and Social Care to feed into the development of the prevention green paper and will work with members and the Health and Wellbeing Alliance to influence this work.

#### **APPG on Ending Homelessness**

On 14<sup>th</sup> January 2019 we attended the APPG on Ending Homelessness and the focus of the meeting was on homeless deaths and speakers included senior representatives from MHCLG,

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

### **Housing First England project**

The research element of the Housing First work is progressing, with the models report currently being prepared for publication. The support journey research is also under way, and the economic impact report is being prepared for publication. The Housing First evaluation is under way, with the commissioned consultant CFE giving initial findings to the project team in September 2018.

### **Towards inclusive workplaces**

Homeless Link and Win/Win Alliance are co-leading a project involving eight other Alliance members as well as the Employment Related Services Association (ERSA), and Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM). Funded by Public Health England (PHE), the project will produce resources to help employers to embed good practice approaches supporting disabled people, people with long-term health conditions and/or people from protected characteristic groups towards, into and to stay in work. As part of this project, we issued a Call for Evidence for examples of national and local employment support initiatives and “success stories” helping people towards, into and to stay in work.

We are also working with ERSA and Claire Ritchie (No one Left Out) to develop a toolkit for employers that focuses on supporting employees using the Psychologically Informed Environment (PIE) approach. A number of workshops with employers and people with lived experience are taking place in November and December and will be led by Alliance members for their specific group.