

POLICY UPDATE

NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

May 2018

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

1. KEY ANNOUNCEMENTS

On 29 March, the Government announced that it will amend regulations so that all 18-21 year olds will be entitled to claim support for housing costs in UC. This is very welcome news and an issue that Homeless Link and our members have been campaigning on for some time. Young people will still be required to undertake the Youth Obligation – an intensive package of labour market support for 18-21 year-olds looking to get into work. No date has been announced for the implementation of reinstatement. More available [here](#) and [here](#)

On 30 March, the Government announced measures aimed at tackling rough sleeping. This includes a new Rough Sleeping Team, alongside a £30million fund for 2018/19 targeted at local authorities with high levels of rough sleeping. This announcement had not previously been discussed at the Government's Rough Sleeping Advisory Group, so while this is welcomed in many ways, we are keen that these measures will be well aligned to whatever recommendations the Advisory Group makes, and also recognises the expertise and contribution of the voluntary sector.

On 30th April, a Cabinet reshuffle saw Sajid Javid appointed as Home Secretary and James Brokenshire appointed to replace him as Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government. James Brokenshire has previously held ministerial roles at the Home Office and was Secretary of State for Northern Ireland from July 2016 to January 2018.

2. POLICY UPDATES

Homelessness and housing

Supported housing: interim response

On 3rd April, the Government published its interim response to the supported housing consultation which closed in January. The response highlighted three main points from the consultation:

- Concerns about the definition of the short-term accommodation model
- Assurance that Government is committed to maintaining this ring-fence indefinitely
- A number of providers urged the Government to revise its policy

You can find the response on the Government website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/funding-for-supported-housing-two-consultations>.

A short-term accommodation working group has been announced which Homeless Link will be represented on.

Homelessness Reduction Act

The Homelessness Reduction Act came into force April 3 2018, alongside new Code of Guidance outlining local authorities' responsibilities under the Act

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities>

The Act introduces 5 key changes:

- Improving the advice and information
- Extending period 'threatened with homelessness' from 28 days to 56 days
- New duties to prevent and relieve homelessness
- Assessments and personalised housing plans
- Duty to refer

The Duty to refer will be introduced in October 2018. Under this, some public bodies will be required to notify a housing authority of people they consider may be homeless or threatened with homelessness. The public bodies listed include prisons; Jobcentre Plus; social service authorities and hospitals, and further announcements have been made that the Government will work with housing associations and the police on how they can also support the Act.

Welfare

Overview of recent changes

In addition to the change to housing costs for 18-21s in full UC areas, the following changes to the welfare system have recently come into force:

- Abolishment of seven waiting day period in Universal Credit (Feb 2018)
- Where someone moves from HB to UC an additional two weeks' of housing costs will be paid after end of HB claim (April 2018) <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/moving-from-housing-benefit-to-universal-credit>
- Direct payments of UC in temporary accommodation from April 2018 (short-term measure)
- Increased Simple Payments replaced by HM Government Payment Service
- Time limit for providing information or evidence of advantageous change of circumstances is reduced from one month to 14 days (11.4.18)
- As the Government will not appeal the court decision around PIP, the Government has said that it will write to everyone who has been affected and that it will backdate payments to when you had your decision or to December 2016

The DWP have also updated their webpages to include a Understanding Universal Credit portal, which should support claimants and organisations supporting them with information on Universal Credit www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk

Health and social care

Review into NHS charging

The review of the changes to NHS charging regulations has been extended until June in acknowledgement of the fact more time was needed to assess the impact – if your organisations are beginning to see any impact of these changes on individuals you are supporting, please do let us know, or contact the lead for this review at DHSC directly on alexander.sinclair@dh.gsi.gov.uk (for more info on this, see our blog from January <https://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/blogs/2018/jan/12/review-into-new-nhs-charging-regulations>).

Memorandum of Understanding between health and housing

In March, the refreshed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on improving health through the home was launched. Homeless Link is one of the signatories – you can find a full list of signatories and the updated document on Gov.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-health-and-care-through-the-home-mou>.

This MoU, which has support from Government departments and organisations across the health, care and housing sectors, outlines key principles for joint working to improve health and care outcomes. The renewed MoU incorporates some of the key changes to the policy context since the last iteration and reflects on the achievements of the signatories so far. For more information, you can read our blog from the launch:

<https://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/blogs/2018/mar/21/strengthening-link-between-health-housing-and-care>

Criminal justice

Domestic abuse consultation

The Government is currently running a consultation on responses to victims of domestic abuse. A large part of the consultation focuses on criminal justice responses to domestic abuse, including creating a new Domestic Abuse Protection Order (DAPO). Other proposals include the introduction of a Domestic Abuse Commissioner and a new statutory definition of domestic abuse. The consultation is also seeking views on how the Government could support effective multi-agency working around domestic abuse and addressing the needs of victims who might face additional barriers to accessing support. The deadline for the consultation is 31st May. The consultation is available at <https://consult.justice.gov.uk/homeoffice-moj/domestic-abuse-consultation/> and our blog on the consultation is up on our website:

<https://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/blogs/2018/apr/06/transforming-responses-to-domestic-abuse-%E2%80%93-government-consultation>

NICE quality standard on mental health of adults in contact with the criminal justice system

In February, NICE published its quality standard on recognising, assessing and managing mental health problems in adults who are in contact with the criminal justice system. This includes police contact, court and prison custody, street triage, liaison and diversion services, and probation services: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs163>

3. INFLUENCING

Rough Sleeping Advisory Group

Several meetings of the Government's Rough Sleeping Advisory Group have taken place over the past few months. Rick Henderson is on the group and you can find out a bit more about the group and its membership at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-lead-national-effort-to-end-rough-sleeping> A key focus of the group will be on supporting the Government to develop a Rough Sleeping Strategy and to support the work of the cross-Government Ministerial Homelessness Reduction Taskforce. There are five Task and Finish Groups which have met since February to develop sets of recommendations in the following areas: Prevention, Interventions, Recovery, Long term Societal Change, and Data & Accountability. Homeless Link is represented on all five groups. It is hoped these will inform the development of the Rough Sleeping Strategy and wider policy within Government.

4. HOMELESS LINK HIGHLIGHTS – Update on Homeless Link Projects

In March we published our [Annual Review of Support for Single Homeless People](#) which provides an overview of support available across England and an updated picture of who is accessing services, funding changes, and other practice developments.

In April we published our 2018 **Young and Homeless research**, which tracks trends in youth homelessness, provision available, and provides recommendations on improving policy and practice. As in previous years we worked with Youth Voice (previously National Youth Reference Group) to shape the research. This year's findings showed that while family breakdown remains the main cause of homelessness among young people, making up half of cases (49%), structural factors including changes to welfare benefit entitlements and a lack of affordable housing are also significant contributory factors.

Ninety-two percent of survey respondents identified delayed Universal Credit payments as having an impact on youth homelessness, with 90% and 80% respectively reporting that sanctions and the capping of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) are also having an effect. Although the Government's recent reversal of proposals to remove Universal Credit housing costs for 18-to-21-year-olds is welcome, it highlights the need to consider the impact that other elements of policy may be having on vulnerable young people.

[Housing First England](#) project: in February we held our first national Housing First Conference which brought together organisations to share and debate approaches to Housing First. We were also joined by Sec of State Sajid Javid who outlined some of the Government commitments to Housing First. The initial findings from our national mapping research of Housing First were launched and can be accessed [here](#)

[StreetLink](#): The updated StreetLink app and website has been well received, and we had a strong level of press coverage during the cold weather snap earlier this year. The project has been independently evaluated by Crisis, with positive findings. We published the report alongside a [blog](#) on 13 April 2018.

[Health and Wellbeing Alliance](#) project: Current pieces of additional work are almost completed. We will be publishing a report on end of life care for marginalised communities, developed in partnership with Hospice UK and others, pending NHS England approval. We will also be publishing an audit tool for working with inclusion health groups, and a learning resource and toolkit for public health nurses working with homeless families. The additional work bid proposals for 2018-19 have been submitted under the health and work, our lead project is on developing tools for employers to use the Psychologically Informed Environments approach to support people with long term conditions and those from protected characteristic groups. We are also named in two bids under the mental health theme, one for the Prevention Concordat for Mental Health, and the other on Suicide Prevention.