

<b>MINISTERIAL WORKING GROUP ON PREVENTING AND TACKLING HOMELESSNESS</b>
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**WEDNESDAY 16 JUNE 2010 2PM – 3PM**  
**Large Ministerial Room, House of Commons**

Attendance

<b>Government:</b>	Grant Shapps	CLG (Chair)
	Andrew Robathan	MOD
	Paul Burstow	DOH
	Lord David Freud	DWP
	Crispin Blunt	MOJ
	Tim Loughton	DfE
<b>Officials:</b>	Kate Oakes	DOH
	Manmeet Gill	MOD
	Martin Hill	DWP
	Jonathan Sedgwick	UKBA
	Jane Bateman	BIS
	Alex Powell	CO
	Ruth Stanier	CLG
	Michael Scorer	CLG
	Hannah Gregory	HO
	Shirley Trundle	DfE
	Savas Hadjipavlou	MOJ
<b>Secretariat:</b>	Vida Paittoo	CLG

Apologies

John Hayes (BIS)  
James Brokenshire (HO)

**Agenda item 1 & 2 – Welcome and Introductions / Aims and membership of the Working Group**

- 1.1 The chair welcomed members to the first meeting of the Ministerial Working Group on Preventing and Tackling Homelessness. He explained that the Prime Minister had agreed to new arrangements on homelessness given the truly cross-government nature of the problem. The purpose of the Group was to better resolve unintended policy issues that cut across a number of relevant Government departments.
- 1.2 The following points were raised in discussion:
  - The Group needs to scope out which groups of homeless people it was aiming to focus on as homelessness incorporates a broad range of groups, from rough sleepers to sofa surfers.

- It's important that the Group focuses on the DWP Work Programme to help the homeless and as individual Department's consider approaching DWP to top-up the job outcome funding for the homeless within the Work Programme. The funding model for the 'Work Programme' could be distributed to the Group once it had more detail.
- Sofa surfers could include students who were not homeless, potentially causing confusion. It was therefore important to be clear on the scope of the Group.

**Action: Grant Shapps to circulate revised aims of the Ministerial Working Group to members. This should clarify the scope of the Group with regard to different forms of homelessness.**

### **Agenda item 3 – Priority Issues for Discussion**

- 2.1 The chair asked for the Group's views on priority issues to be focused on at future meetings. The following points were raised in discussion:
- The Group should focus on those at most risk of homelessness, and not inaccurate perceptions. For example, research had highlighted that only 6% of the homeless in London were ex-service personnel.
  - Ex-service personnel faced a particular set of circumstances and therefore should be categorised as an at-risk group in their own right.
  - The Group should focus on all forms of health issues and not just mental health when looking at ways to resolve better access to health services. It would be important to look at this area in conjunction with other policies, such as the Supporting People programme. Items at future meetings should include a focus on what work has already been done to address the issue.
  - Care leavers and runaways were a key concern, particularly runaways who were a difficult group to identify.
  - Ex-prisoners who become homeless are sometimes deemed to be intentionally homeless by a local authority. The Group should examine this local authority practice. It would also be helpful to examine what more local authorities can do to ensure appropriate access to the private rented sector for ex-prisoners.
- 2.2 The chair informed members if they had any other suggestions they wanted to raise in the meantime, they should send them to his private office. He added that he was proposing to invite key homelessness organisations to the next meeting to seek their views on the priority issues that the Group should focus on.

- 2.3 An additional point was raised after the meeting in writing advising that more work should be done to assess the housing needs of prisoners whilst in custody, and to assess the impact of removing the ring-fence of housing-related support grants on vulnerable groups, such as offenders.

**Action: Secretariat to reflect the priority issues raised in preparing a work programme for the Ministerial Working Group.**

#### **Agenda item 4 – Rough Sleeper Count**

- 3.1 The chair outlined his reasons for overhauling the way rough sleeping in England is evaluated which had been announced that day. He said that this will lead to a higher, but more honest, level of rough sleeping under the coalition Government and will provide a better basis for continuing to drive numbers down.
- 3.2 Members supported the proposals to overhaul the rough sleeper count. It was suggested that it would be helpful for local authorities to also include data on the main characteristics of rough sleepers.

**Action: Grant Shapps to assess the potential for obtaining data on the numbers of rough sleepers who are ex-service personnel, care leavers, young people and ex-offenders.**

#### **Agenda item 5 - Conclusions**

- 4.1 In summing up the discussion, the chair thanked the members for attending. He said that it was important for Group members to work together closely and to remain in close contact as officials progressed the priority issues.
- 4.2 The next meeting of the Ministerial Working Group would be scheduled for October.

**MWG Secretariat  
June 2010**