

Policy Fact Sheet: Updating the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities

Introduction

The 13 measures in the Homelessness Reduction Bill will introduce new duties, powers and functions in relation to homelessness, and changes to how local housing authorities¹ exercise their current legal duties. This briefing provides information on how the Government intends to ensure that local housing authorities have the guidance necessary to ensure that they understand the new provisions.

Background

The Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities (the Code of Guidance) is published at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-councils-july-2006>

It applies to local housing and social services authorities, who are required to have regard to the guidance in exercising their functions in relation to homelessness. The Code gives guidance on how local housing authorities should exercise their homelessness functions and apply the various statutory criteria in practice.

The Code of Guidance was last updated in July 2006, since which there have been a number of developments including the Homelessness Reduction Bill. We now plan to review and update it to support the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Bill.

Updating the Code of Guidance

The revised Code of Guidance will be needed to ensure that local housing authorities understand their new duties, powers and functions and how they interact with the current legislative framework, and to ensure that they are able to train their staff in advance of the implementation of the Bill.

DCLG will work closely with local authorities and other key stakeholders to review and update the guidance. We are setting up a Bill implementation working group with local authorities from across the country, and one of its key roles will be to support the review of the Code. The draft Code of Guidance will be subject to consultation before it is finalised.

¹ In England, local housing authorities are district councils, the Council of the Isles of Scilly, the London Borough councils and the Common Council of the City of London

Publishing the updated Code of Guidance

The Code will be published in sufficient time for use by local housing authorities and others to prepare for implementation of the Bill.

To support the successful implementation of the Code of Guidance, the Government is also taking forward complementary projects:

1. The Homelessness Prevention Hub will bring together the Code of Guidance and supporting information on 'best practice' and evidence from around the country. The Hub will allow local housing authorities and others working with the homelessness to work together collaboratively to develop and share best practice.
2. Through the Government's Homelessness Prevention Programme, launched at the end of 2016, the Government has provided funding to local authorities to take forward a range of new initiatives, responding to the specific needs in their communities and focusing on prevention. Learning from this programme will be fed into the Homelessness Prevention Hub.
3. The Government is setting up a network of expert advisors, who will provide support and challenge to local housing authorities throughout the implementation period.