



Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government

# Making every contact count

A joint approach to preventing homelessness

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# Making every contact count: A joint approach to preventing homelessness

## Foreword

I set up the Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness because I know just how complex a problem homelessness is. It is not just about providing people with a roof over their heads - in fact, those who are “homeless” in official government figures get help and housing from their local authority. But we mustn’t simply settle for this type of emergency response. Intervening earlier to prevent homelessness is key to our ambitions on social justice.

My Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness first focused on a vision to end rough sleeping. We have made good progress and I am delighted to see that Merseyside, Northampton and Kent have already followed the London Mayor’s example in rolling out *No Second Night Out*, ensuring that those facing the most extreme homelessness - sleeping on the streets, are helped quickly. Over the coming months Leeds, Manchester, Nottingham, the West Midlands, Oxford, Devon, Southampton, Peterborough, Cambridge and Newcastle will all follow suit.

Now is the time to build on this progress by ensuring that everyone who is at risk of homelessness gets help at the earliest possible stage to prevent them from losing their home. This government has prioritised homelessness prevention. We are passing £400m of funding for preventing homelessness to local authorities and voluntary sector partners over this Spending Review period. And on top of that I announced an additional £70m investment last year.

But we know the answer does not just lie in homelessness services. For many people, becoming homeless is not the beginning of their problems; it comes at the end of a long line of crises, a long line of interactions with public and voluntary sector services, a long line of missed opportunities. We must change that.

So the vision of this report is simple, but bold. There is no place for homelessness in the 21st Century. The key to delivering that vision is prevention - agencies working together to support those at risk of homelessness.

That is a challenge for all of us. No single voluntary sector organisation, government agency, local authority or central government department can prevent homelessness alone but working together we can make a big impact.

Through this report we are showing how central government is playing its part.  
I call on our local and voluntary sector partners to do the same.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Grant Shapps". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP  
Minister for Housing

## Executive summary

1. Through the Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness<sup>1</sup>, we promised to bring Government departments together to ensure that all of Whitehall was playing its part in tackling homelessness. Our first report rightly focused on the most visible end of homelessness - those coming onto the streets, often facing advanced and overlapping problems such as offending, drug and alcohol addiction or mental health problems. We have made significant progress since then - driving forward the national roll out of the innovative rough sleeping approach *No Second Night Out* and investing an extra £70m through the sector to help tackle homelessness.
2. In this report we turn our attention up stream to think about how services can be managed in a way that prevents all households, regardless of whether they are families, couples, or single people, from reaching a crisis point where they are faced with homelessness.
3. This report has a simple aim - to make sure that every contact local agencies make with vulnerable people and families really counts. It brings together **government commitments** to:
  - **tackle troubled childhoods and adolescence** - through interventions to turn around the lives of the most troubled families; and by promoting innovative approaches to youth homelessness
  - **improve health** - including improving outcomes for homeless people with dual drugs / alcohol and mental health needs; and helping to ensure medical professionals discharging patients know who to approach for help meet housing needs
  - **reduce involvement in crime** - through support to the new Police and Crime Commissioners; improving offender access to private rented sector accommodation; and measures to help those on short sentences retain their tenancy
  - **improve skills; employment; and financial advice** - through new housing demonstration projects which help claimants budget and manage rent payments; a commitment to explore a payment by results approach for those some distance from the labour market; and piloting community learning trusts
  - **pioneer social funding for homelessness** - through a world first Social Impact Bond for rough sleepers and support to other local commissioners to turn social investment propositions into reality

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<sup>1</sup> Minister for Housing, Grant Shapps MP set up the Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness (MWG) in 2010, bringing the relevant government departments together to share information and resolve the cross cutting issues faced by homeless people.

4. But this is not a problem we can fix from the centre alone. We need local authorities and their partners to bring these commitments to life. So Government is setting ten local challenges that, if adopted, should lead to all local homelessness teams delivering a gold standard service and aspiring to the achievements of the best.
5. The **ten local challenges** this report poses to the sector are to:
  - adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services
  - actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs
  - offer a Housing Options prevention service, including written advice, to all clients
  - adopt a *No Second Night Out* model or an effective local alternative
  - have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support
  - develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both clients and landlords
  - actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme
  - have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs
  - not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation
  - not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and then for no longer than 6 weeks

## Chapter One: Preventing Homelessness

*“Very few people decide to be homeless.....why wasn't there someone there to help us?” - Homeless Link Expert Advisory Panel Member<sup>2</sup>*

### Our approach

1. This Government have introduced a range of reforms and investment to tackle homelessness - like the national roll out of the *No Second Night Out* model and additional funding to protect the most vulnerable and support them to adapt to changing housing benefit rules. This report sets out what we are doing to build on the investment and ideas in our last report but, importantly, takes a longer term view, seeking to understand and tackle the experiences that make households and individuals susceptible to homelessness in the first place.
2. The Government recently published its Social Justice Strategy<sup>3</sup>. It sets out an ambitious new vision for supporting the most disadvantaged individuals and families in the United Kingdom - tackling many of the underlying problems that, if left unchecked, can contribute to homelessness. Our vision for social justice is based on two fundamental principles. First, prevention and early intervention throughout a person's life, with carefully designed interventions to stop people falling off track and into difficult circumstances. Secondly, a 'second chance society' ensuring that no one is 'written off' and that anybody who needs another chance gets access to the support and tools they need to transform their lives. That is the way to improve social mobility to help ensure that every individual has a fair opportunity to fulfil their potential.
3. Our work to tackle the complex causes of homelessness takes the same approach - focusing on prevention and early intervention and on locally designed integrated services that step in when things go wrong, to give people another chance.
4. If the commitments and proposals outlined in this report are fully implemented, and if local authorities and their partners work together to prevent homelessness, the impacts will be profound and long lasting. We can build a future where mistakes and difficulties in youth or discharge from prisons, hospitals and care do not lead to homelessness in the way they too often do now. Vulnerable individuals at risk of homelessness will be spotted earlier and their underlying problems will be addressed before they reach crisis point. Those that do become homeless will have a better chance of rebuilding their lives. Individuals will receive the help they need to get their lives back on track - to be healthy, find a stable home, enter and hold down employment, manage their finances, up skill, and stay away from crime. Central to this will be

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<sup>2</sup> Homeless Link's Expert Advisory Panel is comprised of individuals with current or previous experience of homelessness. They meet every two months to advise Homeless Link and represent the views of homeless people to government and other policy makers.

<sup>3</sup> Department for Work and Pensions, *Social Justice: Transforming Lives*, 2012

local action. Local authorities working in partnership with other local organisations from all sectors, will be able to stop problems before they reach crisis point, and to truly prevent homelessness.

10. Homelessness brings misery and uncertainty to individuals and families. But it is also negative for society, leading to additional public service expenditure across government. It can be difficult to separate causes from symptoms of interlinked patterns of addiction, offending and homelessness. Some of the possible causes of homelessness, like unemployment, can have much broader costs to society and the economy attached to them. The New Economics Foundation estimated an annual cost to the state of around £26,000 a year for a 'job ready' homeless person, or an estimated £550 million per year for 'dealing with the effects of homelessness', including health, crime, drugs and alcohol, social services, accommodation, lost economic output, tax and National Insurance, benefits, and support costs<sup>4</sup>.

### **Progress since our last report**

11. The Ministerial Working Group's first report, *Vision to end rough sleeping: No second night out nationwide* was published in July 2011<sup>5</sup>. Since then we have gathered and reviewed evidence from across Government departments on the costs of homelessness. This is set out in a separate paper, *The Costs of Homelessness: A summary* published alongside this report<sup>6</sup>.

We have also:

- Driven forward the national **roll out of No Second Night Out** - the Mayor of London's approach to rapidly identifying and supporting new rough sleepers so that they do not have to spend a second night on the streets. Merseyside, Northampton and Kent have already launched their service and Newcastle, Manchester, the West Midlands, Southampton, Cambridge, Oxford, Peterborough, Nottingham, Devon and Leeds expect to launch theirs later in the year. There are local authority areas up and down the country that are working towards developing their own local *No Second Night Out* models in addition to these cities

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<sup>4</sup> New Economics Foundation, *Work it out: Barriers to employment for homeless people*, 2009. Costs are estimated based on a sample of 20,000 Business Action on Homelessness (BAOH) clients. This sample is not representative of the wider homeless population, for example BAOH clients have fewer mental health and substance abuse problems. Costs therefore should be treated as indicative only.

<sup>5</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government, *Vision to end rough sleeping, No second night out nationwide*, 2011

<sup>6</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government, *The Costs of Homelessness: a summary*, 2012



- Launched a **£20 million Homelessness Transition Fund** to help front-line voluntary sector providers to deliver the programme and other innovative approaches
  - Supported access to the private rented sector for single homeless people through a **£10.8 million fund administered by Crisis to support the voluntary sector to deliver private rented sector access schemes**, which have already created around 1370 tenancies in its first year, sustaining 76% of these for at least six months. The programme aims to create 8000 tenancies by 2014
  - Delivered **£18.5 million to groups of local authorities to develop prevention services and improve the local offer to single homeless people**. This fund can help ensure every applicant approaching a local authority for support is given a bespoke service concluding an advice letter confirming the options discussed
  - Invested in a **£5m Social Impact Bond** in partnership with the Mayor of London to help deliver sustained long term outcomes for London's most frequent rough sleepers
  - Delivered **£20 million for local housing authorities for preventing repossessions**. £19 million is for all local housing authorities to set up a Preventing Repossessions Fund and £1 million is to fund Housing Court Possession Duty Desks in 54 county courts in England that are not already funded by other sources
  - Announced a **national rough sleeper reporting line** and website to be put in place by Christmas 2012. This will enable concerned members of the public to report the details of any rough sleeper they see. Information will be referred to the appropriate authority for action and the member of the public will receive an update on the action being taken
  - Published a report Government commissioned from Homeless Link and St Mungo's on how **hospital admission and discharge can be improved for homeless people**<sup>7</sup>
  - Funded Homeless Link to work with five local authority areas to explore **improving outcomes for homeless people with co-existing mental health and substance misuse** needs
12. These reforms and investment came on top of the £6.5 billion allocation for Supporting People over the Spending Review period and one of the strongest homelessness safety nets in the world - protected by law. The law puts a duty on local authorities to provide accommodation for

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<sup>7</sup> Homeless Link and St Mungo's, *Improving Hospital Discharge for Homeless People*, 2012

families with children and vulnerable individuals in priority need who are homeless through no fault of their own<sup>8</sup>.

13. Whilst local authorities have no statutory duty to accommodate other people, we expect them to provide support. They have a duty to provide advice and assistance to all those threatened with homelessness, and many provide a housing options service which is open to a broader range of people than those who would be statutorily homeless. Local authorities also directly fund hostels and other supported accommodation for single homeless people.

### **Prevention matters**

14. Government homelessness statistics show that, in percentage terms, the immediate homelessness triggers for families and vulnerable single people housed by local authorities have remained fairly consistent in over the years. In 2011/12, the main cause was eviction by parents, relatives or friends at 34%. In 19% of cases, households were unable to find alternative accommodation when their tenancy ended.
15. Many people in society, as part of everyday life, face experiences, or triggers that could lead to homelessness such as a relationship breakdown or the ending of a tenancy. In most cases individuals cope and find suitable accommodation using their own resources. But for others it is these life events that tip them into homelessness; either because they lack the resources to tackle their immediate challenge - for example enough money for a deposit; or because they suffer more underlying problems - such as an addiction or mental health problem - which makes it hard for them to deal with their situation<sup>9</sup>.
16. The evidence backs this up and reinforces our view that we should make every contact count - giving local services the incentives and flexibility they need to work together to intervene earlier to tackle these underlying problems and to ensure that those at risk of homelessness get access to integrated and responsive services - preventing a common life experience from turning into a housing crisis.
17. Evidence consistently points to the higher incidence of difficulties during childhood amongst single homeless people. Most of the multiply excluded rough sleepers in a recent<sup>10</sup> study had experienced troubled childhoods marred by school and/or family problems, with many also reporting traumatic experiences such as sexual or physical abuse,

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<sup>8</sup> A full legal definition of homelessness can be found here: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/part/VII/crossheading/homelessness-and-threatened-homelessness>.

<sup>9</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government, *Statutory Homelessness in England: the experiences of families and 16-17 year olds*, 2008

<sup>10</sup> Fitzpatrick *et al.*, Heriot-Watt University, *Multiple exclusion homelessness across the UK: A quantitative survey*. A multi-stage quantitative survey conducted in Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow, Leeds and Westminster (London), 2011

homelessness or neglect. For example, it was a common experience to have been suspended, excluded or expelled from school (36%), have had parents / step-parents or carers with a drug or alcohol problem (24%), or been brought up in a workless household (21%). A survey of 16/17 year olds accepted as homeless by a local authority also found that these young people were much more likely to have lived through a wide range of negative experiences in their childhood. 54% had been excluded from school, 44% had parents who had suffered from mental health problems and 17% had experienced sexual abuse<sup>11</sup>.

## Family breakdown

18. The breakdown of families is a significant cause of homelessness with the number of local authority acceptances due to relationship breakdown increasing in the last couple of years. These represented 18% of all acceptances in 2011/12, and almost 70% of such cases involved violence<sup>12</sup>.
19. The main 'trigger' for youth homelessness is the breakdown of family relationships, often compounded by difficulties at school (for 16/17 year olds), overcrowding at home, mental health problems, substance abuse and crime<sup>13</sup>. Two thirds of the 16/17 year olds accepted as homeless surveyed in the study mentioned above had seen their parents separate or divorce<sup>14</sup>.

**Table one: Multiply-excluded rough sleepers: median age of first occurrence of common experiences<sup>15</sup>**

Median Age	Experience	Percentage
15	Used solvents, gas or glue	23%
17	Left local authority care	16%
17	Thrown out by parents/carers	36%
17	Had sex or engaged in sex act in exchange for money, drugs, etc.	10%
18	Involved in street drinking	53%
19	Used hard drugs	44%
20	Had a period in life when had six or more alcoholic drinks on a daily basis	63%
20	Stayed with friends or relatives because had no home of own	77%
20	Shoplifted because needed things like food, drugs, alcohol or money for somewhere to stay	38%
20	Were a victim of violent crime (including domestic violence)	43%
21	Went to prison	46%
22	Had a period in life when very anxious or depressed	79%
22	Injected drugs	27%

<sup>11</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government, *Statutory Homelessness in England: The Experiences of Families and 16-17 year olds*, 2008

<sup>12</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government statistics, Homeless households accepted by local authorities, by reason for loss of last settled home

<sup>13</sup> Youth homelessness in the UK, Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2008

<sup>14</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government, *Statutory Homelessness in England: The Experiences of Families and 16-17 year olds*, 2008

<sup>15</sup> Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, B. & Johnsen, S. *Pathways into Multiple Exclusion Homelessness in Seven UK Cities*, Urban Studies (forthcoming), 2013

26	Slept rough	77%
26	Admitted to hospital because of a mental health issue	29%
26	Made redundant	23%
27	Applied to the council as homeless	72%
28	Stayed at a hostel, foyer, refuge, night shelter or B&B hotel	84%
28	Begged (that is, asked passers-by for money in the street or another public place)	32%
28	Evicted from a rented property	25%
29	Experienced bankruptcy	6%
32	Divorced or separated	44%
34	Home was repossessed	6%
43	A long-term partner died	10%

Base 452

20. The circumstances in which families find themselves homeless tend to differ from those of single homeless individuals. A study of families who had been re-housed following acceptance as statutorily homeless found that nearly two thirds were female lone parents (65%) and a similar proportion (64%) were workless<sup>16</sup>. Other research points to social, and health disadvantages but finds that this group are not, as a whole, very vulnerable or 'chaotic'<sup>17</sup>. Whilst outcomes for the majority of this group are generally improved when they move into stable accommodation, a minority are extremely vulnerable and require ongoing support<sup>18</sup>.

### Wider housing reforms

21. Changes in the Localism Act provide local authorities and housing providers with greater flexibility to manage housing need in their area with a range of accommodation options which better meet local circumstances and priorities, and provide quality realistic housing advice for everyone in need regardless of statutory status. Local authorities have the opportunity to use this new flexibility to move to a new approach to housing advice and homelessness prevention which provides a tailored solution for each household and a more joined up approach to identifying and addressing the range of underlying problems that can lead to homelessness. Many local authorities are already responding with vigour and imagination by finding new ways to work with the private rented sector as well as drawing on their broader assets, knowledge and powers, and those of their partners. These include establishing local lettings agencies, accreditation and training, partnerships, tenancy support, and taking enforcement action when needed.

<sup>16</sup> S Fitzpatrick and N Pleace, *The Statutory Homelessness System in England: A Fair and Effective Rights Based Model?* Housing Studies, Dec 2011

<sup>17</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government, N Pleace et al, *Statutory Homelessness in England: The experience of families and 16-17 year olds*, 2008

<sup>18</sup> For example; substance misuse (11 per cent), experience of specialist mental health services (3 per cent), spending time in prison (4 per cent), or engagement in crime or anti-social behaviour (9 per cent). S Fitzpatrick and N Pleace, *the Statutory Homelessness System in England: A Fair and Effective Rights Based Model?* Housing Studies, Dec 2011

22. The Localism Act maintains the protection for the vulnerable provided by the statutory 'reasonable preference' criteria - which ensure that the priority for social housing goes to those in the greatest need. New statutory allocations guidance makes clear that we expect social homes to go to people who genuinely need them, rather than to those who do not, such as people who already own a home that is suitable for them to use<sup>19</sup>. It also encourages councils to adopt the 'bedroom standard' as a measure of overcrowding - so families in crowded housing will find it easier to move into more suitably sized homes.
23. These reforms are supported by the Government's wider housing strategy which recognises that a thriving, active but stable housing market which offers choice, flexibility and affordability is central to our economic and social wellbeing<sup>20</sup>. The strategy outlines a range of initiatives designed to get the house building sector moving again, including a £570 million Get Britain Building investment fund which is designed to unlock up to 16,000 homes on stalled sites, the NewBuy mortgage scheme which could help up to 100,000 prospective buyers and the release of public land with the potential to deliver up to 100,000 new homes.
24. Government and providers have together committed £19.5 billion to the Affordable Homes Programme which will deliver 170,000 units. Building on this, we are considering how we can encourage more affordable housing - including through supporting greater innovation and competition between social landlords and encouraging new private entrants into the social housing market. As part of the Affordable Homes Programme, £100 million is being provided to bring empty homes back into use as affordable housing. We've recently announced a further £60 million to tackle some of the worst concentrations of empty homes, which will be match funded by local authorities bringing the total £220 million. Reform of the Housing Revenue Account will also now provide local authorities with 15% more on average to spend on management, maintenance, and repairs of their housing stock. As part of our strategy we are also looking at ways to support growth and investment in the private rented housing market. We have already amended the stamp duty treatment of bulk purchases of homes and introduced reforms that remove barriers to entry to the UK Real Estate Investment Trusts regime. We have also commissioned Sir Adrian Montague to carry out an independent review, which will report shortly, into the barriers to institutional investment in private homes for rent.

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<sup>19</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government, *Allocation of accommodation: Guidance for local housing authorities in England*, 2012

<sup>20</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government, *Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England*, 2011

## **Devolved Administrations**

25. The devolved administrations are responsible for many of the policies involved in tackling homelessness. Those elements of the Government's approach to tackling homelessness where responsibility is devolved therefore fall to the relevant administration in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland who have their own approaches to tackling homelessness. However, depending on the individual devolution settlements, government action on homelessness in areas such as social security, defence and tackling crime are also relevant to other parts of the United Kingdom. The Government is committed to working with the devolved administrations in tackling homelessness and to ensure they have the opportunity to both shape and benefit from our approach.

## Chapter two: the journey to homelessness - Government Commitments

*“Take stock....go a lot deeper to look at the causes of someone’s homelessness”* - Homeless Link Expert Advisory Panel Member

26. The previous chapter noted that most individuals and families cope when confronted with an event that might cause homelessness. But for some these events tip them into homelessness because they suffer underlying problems.
27. This chapter therefore considers how local agencies can work together to deliver integrated and responsive services to ensure these underlying problems don't lead to homelessness. It also sets out the commitments Government is making to strengthen local agencies and help them respond to these challenges.

### Tackling troubled childhoods and adolescence

28. Many people experiencing homelessness had a range of negative experiences in their childhood or youth. And young people are themselves a key risk group - 35% of those accepted by local authorities as homeless in 2011/12 were under 25<sup>21</sup>.
29. As noted earlier family breakdown is the prime cause of youth homelessness. Young people with experience of care are particularly vulnerable to homelessness with 16% of rough sleepers surveyed by the Multiple Exclusion Homelessness study<sup>22</sup>, and 13% of London rough sleepers recorded on Broadway's Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) database, having experienced care at some point during their childhood<sup>23</sup>.
30. The Government is working with local agencies to support a group of troubled families whose lives are so chaotic they cost the Government some £9 billion in the last year alone. Many of those families will be living in poor quality and unstable housing or be at risk of homelessness. The Troubled Families Team will work with local councils to bring about a new focus on working intensively with these families, intervening earlier to address their problems.
31. Supporting vulnerable young people to make a successful transition to adulthood helps them to avoid long term benefit dependency. It also avoids expensive interventions through specialist health services, social care, the criminal justice system and homelessness services

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<sup>21</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government statistics on households in priority need accepted by local authorities by age of applicant

<sup>22</sup> S. Fitzpatrick et al, *Multiple Exclusion Homelessness in the UK*, 2012, Extended Interview Survey, 2010

<sup>23</sup> Broadway, *Street to Home Annual Report 2010-11*

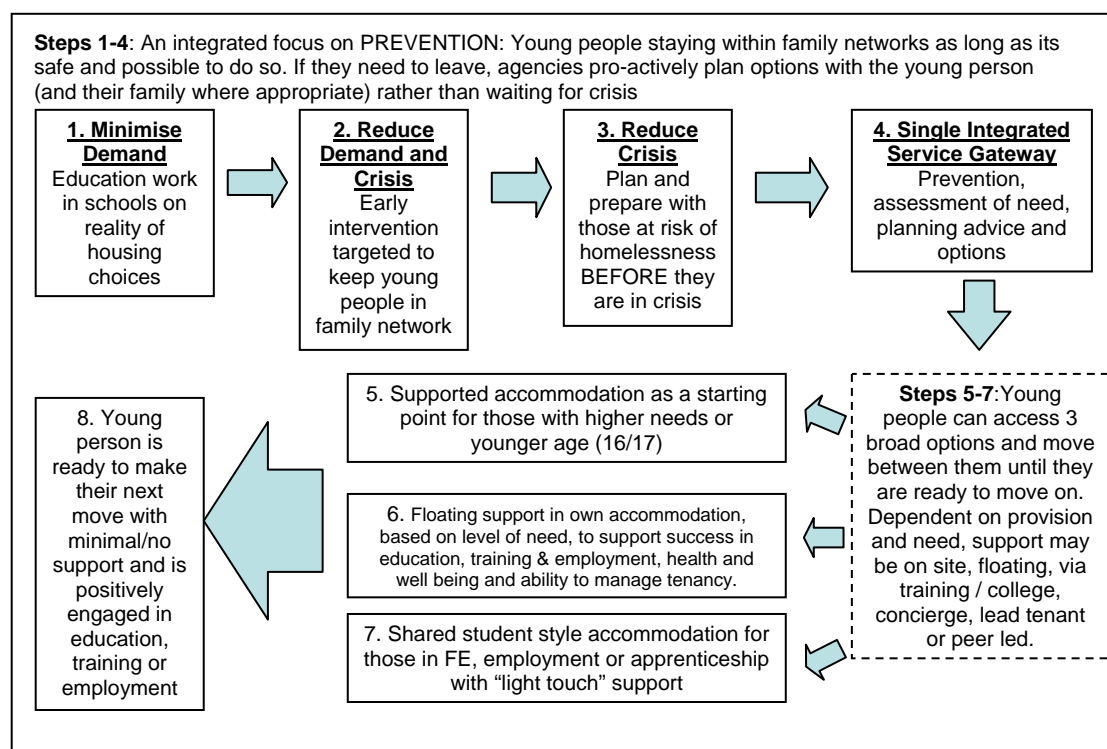
32. DCLG have worked closely with leading voluntary sector organisations and local authorities to develop a positive youth accommodation pathway for those who cannot stay within the family network or are leaving care. The pathway offers tailored accommodation options and a supportive transition into adulthood which helps them to avoid the crisis of homelessness. It focuses on:
- **Developing services and practices which invest in early intervention rather than just reacting to crisis.** Whilst some young people are able to become independent, the majority are better off staying within their family home where it is safe and possible to do so. Working with young people unable to stay at home and planning moves into tailored accommodation decreases the number of young people reaching crisis point. Many housing services offer bespoke training to individual schools affected by youth homelessness.
  - **An ethos which puts young people and their families in charge of planning for the future and provides consistent information and advice about every aspect of the young person's life, not just housing.** Greenwich Council, for example offer a tailored '1st Base Support' walk in service for 16-21 year olds that combines housing advice with other services such as family support work, financial training and help to address other needs including skills, employment and health.
  - **Delivery of seamless, easy to use services which make better use of resources through improved coordination.** This can include pooled budgets and local knowledge, community assets and voluntary effort. For example, in North Yorkshire the County Council and the seven District Housing authorities have worked together with Foundation (a voluntary agency) to develop six geographical "hubs". This new way of working has allowed 88% of at risk young people aged 16 - 25 to remain with their families<sup>24</sup>. Similarly Birmingham City Council's Youth Hub provides a service focal point for young people at risk of homelessness. It delivers housing advice alongside triaging to other support services including family mediation.
  - **For those young people not able to remain at home, or leaving care, recovery and progression to economic independence** is the focus, through a range of **tailored accommodation options to meet different needs.** Good quality, safe and stable accommodation provides an essential base from which young people can participate in education, training or employment and achieve economic independence. Significant sustained and supportive relationships with one or two skilled professionals are often the key for young people making a successful transition. St Basils, for example, provide longer term continuity through support workers who work consistently with the young person throughout their journey to adulthood.

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<sup>24</sup> Interim data from North Yorkshire County Council (unpublished)



## Youth Accommodation Pathway



33. Schools know which children are at risk of exclusion and many already put them and their families in contact with other support services (such as social services or housing options) where they believe this to be necessary. The Government's work to increase schools' autonomy is freeing up schools to use their expertise and experience to make decisions about how and when to intervene and provide support to their pupils.
34. As part of this increased autonomy, the Government is testing a new approach to exclusions in which the school, rather than the local authority, uses a devolved budget to take responsibility for sourcing alternative placements for excluded pupils and monitors attainment<sup>25</sup>. This ongoing oversight will help ensure continuity for these pupils who are at risk of homelessness.
35. We are encouraging local authorities to offer support to schools to identify young people (or whole families) that may be at risk of homelessness and ensure that they know where to go to access support for housing and other needs. This may include referral to family mediation services, local housing options services or to local services for Troubled Families.
36. Many schools already invite outreach workers into lessons to raise student's awareness of the realities of homelessness. DePaul, for

<sup>25</sup> See <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/exclusion/b00200074/exclusion-trial> for further information

example, estimate that their Oldham Reconnect project has saved the local authority £1.2m by identifying young people at risk in schools and referring them to the project for family mediation<sup>26</sup>.

### **Commitment One: Tackling troubled childhoods and adolescence**

The Government will:

- help schools, local service commissioners and other local delivery partners to support vulnerable young people at risk of homelessness by **producing an evidence based document showcasing effective local approaches to preventing youth homelessness** and to securing positive outcomes for vulnerable young people who do leave home at a young age
- **fund the St. Basils youth homelessness charity to promote use of the youth accommodation pathway** and innovative approaches to youth homelessness, working with local authorities and leading voluntary sector providers over 2012-2013
- **invest £448 million to turn around the lives of troubled families** over the next three years. This funding will help local authorities get to grips with whole families and deal with their problems at root cause through proven techniques, rather than a multitude of agencies working with single people within a family, often just reacting to their problems
- improve the life chances of young people at risk of exclusion from school and reduce their chances of becoming homeless by supporting **300 schools to take part in a three year exclusion trial** to improve the education of permanently excluded pupils

### **Improving health**

37. Tackling inequalities in health is at the heart of the Government's health reforms. The National Health Service Commissioning Board and clinical commissioning groups will be under legal duties to have regard to the need to reduce inequalities in access to and outcomes from health services and in the integration of services. We will now go further. Our ambition is for everyone who uses health, care and support to experience joined-up services that meet their needs and goals. The draft Care and Support Bill will set out a duty on local authorities to promote integration of services, along similar lines to the duty on the local National Health Service already enacted by the 2012 Act. In addition, the

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.depauluk.org/uploads/documents/homelessness-prevention-report-reconnect.pdf>

draft Bill will provide for further duties of co-operation which encourage local partners to work together to improve the wellbeing of local people.

38. Government is supporting Health and Wellbeing Boards to develop Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies that identify and respond to the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. The new Public Health Outcomes Framework, which sets out the desired outcomes for public health and how these will be measured, includes two indicators on homelessness as well as others which will encourage a focus on the health of the local homeless population<sup>27</sup>.
39. With millions of patient contacts a day, from doctors, nurses and midwives, and far beyond, there is real potential for health services to do more to help identify those at risk of and to prevent homelessness by referring them on to the appropriate service to address their needs. The Government has accepted the National Health Service Future Forum's recommendation that all healthcare professionals should 'make every contact count' by using every contact with patients to maintain or improve their wellbeing, mental and physical health.
40. The National Health Service Future Forum also reported that people often find care systems difficult to navigate, and that having a person to help co-ordinate their care made a significant difference to both their experience and the effectiveness of their care. The Government wants everyone with a care plan to be allocated a named professional who has an overview of their case and is responsible for answering any questions they or their family might have. We believe that including a new pledge on care co-ordination for people with complex needs and long term health conditions in the National Health Service Constitution will support this. The National Health Service Future Forum is currently considering potential changes to strengthen the National Health Service Constitution and we will ask them to include this in their review.
41. The new Public Health Outcomes Framework indicator on 'people with mental illness and disability in settled accommodation' makes the link between mental health and housing explicit for the first time. The Mental Health Strategy for England, No Health Without Mental Health recognises that secure and stable housing is essential for good mental health and that homeless people experience a range of mental health problems, often in conjunction with drug and alcohol problems. The forthcoming Mental Health Strategy implementation framework will support local organisations in ensuring that the mental health needs of homeless people and those at risk are properly taken into account by local services.
42. A recent Government sponsored report supports this approach and highlights the importance of developing psychologically informed

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<sup>27</sup> Department of Health, *Healthy lives, healthy people: Improving outcomes and supporting transparency*, 2012

environments which focus on the psychological and emotional wellbeing of homeless people with complex trauma<sup>28</sup>.

### **Drug and alcohol dependency**

43. Early engagement with drug and alcohol treatment agencies and interaction with the criminal justice system are critical points for identifying and helping those at risk of homelessness<sup>29</sup>.
44. The Government Alcohol Strategy recognises the clear association between alcohol dependence and poor mental health and stresses that recovery goes beyond medical or mental health issues and includes dealing with wider factors that reinforce dependence such as reducing involvement in crime, ensuring suitable housing and employability. Flexible and integrated local services are important to meet this need. Some parts of the country are already tackling this challenge. The London Drug and Alcohol Network (which is part of Drugscope) for example, has a pan-London network to support frontline organisations to work together strategically, share good practice and improve the quality of service delivery for homeless people with drug and alcohol problems<sup>30</sup>. Local authorities will become responsible for commissioning drug and alcohol misuse services, including prevention, treatment and recovery, from April 2013.

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<sup>28</sup> *Good Practice on Physiologically Informed Environments*, 2012  
[www.homelesshhealthcare.org.uk/pies](http://www.homelesshhealthcare.org.uk/pies)

<sup>29</sup> S. Fitzpatrick et al, *Multiple Exclusion Homelessness in the UK: An Overview of key findings*, Briefing Paper 1, 2012

<sup>30</sup> [www.ldan.org.uk](http://www.ldan.org.uk) Delivered in partnership with Homeless Link and Shelter, the network is funded by London Councils to support homeless agencies in London - with LDAN providing support around substance misuse.

## Commitment Two: Improving Health

Government will:

- work with the Inclusion Health Board to **improve the evidence base on the health of homeless people** and the recording of homeless patients in the health system
- fund Homeless Link to **improve outcomes for homeless people with dual drugs / alcohol and mental health needs**. They will work with five local authority areas to support local services and commissioners to understand and identify clients with dual needs, and to develop and disseminate effective service models
- work with the Chartered Institute of Housing, the Recovery Partnership and local Drugs and Alcohol Treatment Teams to develop **sector led guidance to improve understanding of how the two sectors can work together** to support people to achieve full recovery. Initial material will be published later in the summer
- work with **Homeless Link to ensure medical professionals discharging patients who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless know who to approach** for help with meeting housing needs
- explore how to make **every contact with a health professional count** to reduce health inequalities and prevent homelessness **for the vulnerable** and excluded in society

## Involvement in crime

45. Following the Ministerial Working Group's last report and the *Breaking the Cycle* Green Paper<sup>31</sup>, Government is promoting better offender housing support and joint working with local authority housing departments. There are some good examples of key statutory partners working closely with non criminal justice agencies, such as local authorities, health services, housing and supported accommodation providers and the voluntary and community sector. Recent research<sup>32</sup> suggests that there is a need to widen the scope of the framework to ensure that all offenders, including those not subject to statutory probation service supervision and those who may be at risk of homelessness are able to benefit from the integrated approach.

<sup>31</sup> Ministry of Justice, *Breaking the Cycle: Effective punishment, rehabilitation and sentencing of offenders*, 2010, and *Breaking the Cycle: Government response*, 2011

<sup>32</sup> Homeless Link, *Better Together: Preventing Reoffending and Homelessness*, 2011

46. Offender access to housing services is now mandated in the National Offender Management Service's core rehabilitative offer. Local commissioners (prison Governors, Chief Executives and Directors of private sector prisons) are encouraged to avoid duplication and maximise efficiency by enabling offenders to access mainstream services wherever possible. The core rehabilitative offer is described in the National Offender Management Services' Rehabilitation Services specifications for custody<sup>33</sup> and community<sup>34</sup>. Results from the longitudinal study, *Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction*<sup>35</sup>, published in March 2012, indicate that 'targeted help with accommodation upon release, based on awareness of prisoners' circumstances pre-custody, may impact positively on re-offending rates'. The Youth Justice Board will therefore explore the possibility of producing a best practice toolkit to help ensure that young offenders are able to access accommodation on their release from custody.
47. To help ensure that prison leavers have access to the support they need to get back into work and reduce their longer term risk of homelessness, prison leavers claiming Jobseeker's Allowance are now mandated to the Work Programme as soon as they are released from custody. We will also work with the Skills Funding Agency to explore how housing advice and tenancy support training can be provided in prisons via Virtual Campus, the electronic learning system, rolling this out across the prison estate in England if the exploratory work shows that this is the right way forward.

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<sup>33</sup> Ministry of Justice, *Prison Service Instruction 12/2012* - outputs 14 and 15  
<http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/offenders/psipso/psi-2012/psi-12-2012-rehabilitation-services.doc>

<sup>34</sup> Ministry of Justice, *Probation Instruction 06/2012* - output 14  
<http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/offenders/probation-instructions/pi-06-2012-rehabilitation-services-community.doc>

<sup>35</sup> Ministry of Justice, *Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction*, 2012

### **Commitment Three: Reducing Involvement in Crime**

Government will:

- **commission national homeless charity Crisis to develop guidance for prison and probation practitioners on improving offender access to private rented sector accommodation.** This guidance is due for publication later in the year and builds on the Government-funded Access to the Private Rented Sector programme led by Crisis
- **highlight homeless prevention to new Police and Crime Commissioners** - following their election in November 2012. Once in place, the Commissioners will allow for more cross-cutting service commissioning across local criminal justice system partners
- **use the published Integrated Offender Management key principles to set out the advantages of a wide partnership involvement.** Where this involves homelessness service providers this will help areas meet the accommodation needs of locally targeted offenders, as part of broader arrangements to reduce the risk of further offending
- **help prevent prisoners from becoming homeless on release from custody by keeping in payment the housing element of the new Universal Credit from October 2013 to those serving sentences of six months or less,** allowing them to maintain their tenancies. Under current rules Housing Benefit payments cease if a person imprisoned longer than three months

### **Unemployment and skills**

48. Unemployment and low skills are significant issues for many homeless individuals, and are a risk factor in future homelessness. We know that 64% of families who became statutorily homeless in 2008 were out of work, compared with 14% of the general population<sup>36</sup>. A recent survey of St Mungo's clients found that 24% have not worked for over ten years and 24% have no qualifications<sup>37</sup>. Wherever possible, the best route forward for homeless households is for them to gain confidence, skills, and the means to support themselves, through paid employment. Our welfare reforms encourage people into work which is good for them and their communities. These are underpinned by a substantial package of financial and practical support which the Government has put in place, including providing local authorities with £420m over the Spending Review period to support households through the changes.

<sup>36</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government, *Statutory Homelessness in England: the experiences of families and 16-17 year olds*, 2008

<sup>37</sup> St Mungo's, *Client Needs Survey*, 2012

49. Over the next seven years the Work Programme will provide intensive personalised support to individuals to address the barriers that are preventing them from accessing employment. A differential payment model is designed to encourage providers to work with the hardest to help clients, designing and delivering support tailored to each individual's personal circumstances. Homeless claimants, at the discretion of Jobcentre Plus advisors, are able to access the Work Programme earlier than other claimants.
50. A Flexible Support Fund forms part of the overall Jobcentre Plus offer to pre-Work Programme claimants, giving District Managers the flexibility to commission additional support from local partners to meet local need. The Fund allows additional scope to influence local priorities and engage with local partners to overcome barriers to employment faced by the most disadvantaged claimants. To ensure this funding is effectively targeted, Jobcentre Plus have committed to work with the voluntary and community sector to strengthen staff awareness of the issues faced by homeless people and their understanding of how to improve services for this group.
51. Government is committed to expanding the reach and scope of payment by results regimes. We recognise that some individuals facing multiple disadvantages (such as homeless rough sleepers) are a long way from the labour market and will explore options to work with voluntary and community organisations, private and social enterprises to support this group on this basis.
52. The Government is actively exploring a range of opportunities with the homelessness sector to enhance our knowledge and produce descriptive statistics of how homeless people interact with benefits and contracted provision. As part of this approach, Government will use the opportunity offered by the introduction of the Universal Credit (from October 2013) to explore whether the data on homeless claimants can be improved and refined.
53. Following consultation with Professor Harrington, Government is working with Broadway, Crisis, Homeless Link, Shekinah, St Mungo's and Thames Reach to ensure the Work Capability Assessment process recognises better the impact homelessness can have on an individual's capability for work.
54. Skills training, apprenticeships and pre-employment support can contribute to preventing homelessness and facilitating the recovery process. Government is creating a clear vocational route from education or unemployment to employment and for people already in work to progress in their careers. Strong partnership working at a local level is the key to delivering the support which meets the needs of individuals and the local community. We are simplifying funding systems to enable



providers to focus on supporting local employers - ensuring a closer match between employers demand and the skills available.

55. This approach has been confirmed by *Investing in a World Class Skills System* which provides investments in adult further education and skills of £3.8bn in 2012/13<sup>38</sup>. This investment provides full Government funding for English and Maths basic skills. As part of the Government's commitment to support unemployed people into work, we will fully fund units and full qualifications for people in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance (in the Work Related Activity Group) depending on what they need to help them enter and stay in work. And the commitments we made in *Making Prisons Work: Skills for Rehabilitation*<sup>39</sup> are already making the training arrangements in prisons an authentic part of the skills system, giving prisoners the skills which will help them avoid unemployment, and the re-offending associated with it, on release.
56. In addition, our £210 million Community Learning budget supports learning that leads to a wide range of outcomes, including personal development, social integration, improved mental/physical health, better parenting/school links and skills for progression to formal courses. *New Challenges, New Chances: Building a world class skills system* announced new objectives for this budget, including a new, clearer commitment to using the public funding subsidy to support access and progression in its widest sense for people who are disadvantaged, further from learning and least likely to participate<sup>40</sup>.
57. Community Learning aims to open up new opportunities and improve lives, whatever people's circumstances, and focus public funding on the people who are most disadvantaged and least likely to participate, including homeless people or those at risk of becoming so. Community Learning Trusts pilots are empowering local people to make local planning and funding decisions. They are testing a new way of delivering the new community learning objectives and improving access and progression for disadvantaged people, according to local needs.

## Debt

58. Debt is a significant issue for many households and individuals facing homelessness with 44% of clients in an average homelessness project affected<sup>41</sup>. Local authorities can help households struggling with rental or mortgage payments and at risk of eviction or possession. Many authorities commission voluntary sector partners to deliver free and independent debt advice, and can refer or signpost those at risk of

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<sup>38</sup> Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, *New Challenges, New Chances: Skills Investment Statement 2011-14: Investing in a World Class Skills System*, 2011

<sup>39</sup> Ministry of Justice, *Making Prisons Work: Skills for Rehabilitation*, 2011

<sup>40</sup> Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, *New Challenges, New Chances Further Education and Skills System Reform Plan: building a world class skills system*, 2011

<sup>41</sup> Homeless Link, *Survey of Needs and Provision*, 2008

homelessness. These services help the householder to maximise their income by ensuring they are receiving the full range of benefits they are entitled to and by helping them to reduce their expenditure and prioritise their debt payments. The earlier money advice is sought, the more likely a positive outcome such as sustaining a tenancy or mortgage.

59. Authorities already have access to the Mortgage Rescue scheme which offers vulnerable households who are at risk of repossession help to stay in their home. The scheme is a valuable tool for preventing homelessness offering Local Authorities value for money savings on the costs of responding to homelessness and the provision of temporary accommodation. Authorities also have access to Preventing Repossession Funding offering interest free loans of under £5,000 to help individual households to pay off debts or reduce arrears, allowing them the breathing space they need to address their financial situation and avoid possession. If households reach the stage of attending County Courts for a possession or eviction hearing, the Housing Court Possession Duty scheme offers free on the day legal advice to help avoid a negative housing outcome. Government continues to fund The National Homelessness Advice Service which provides specialist professional advice and training to support local authorities, local Citizens Advice Bureau, and other voluntary sector organisations to offer debt advice to their clients.
60. Funded through a levy on financial service firms, the Money Advice Service now coordinates debt advice across the United Kingdom. The Service delivers quality independent, free and impartial debt advice either directly or through other organisations. The Money Advice Service will commission free face-to-face debt advice services to help up to 150,000 over-indebted households most in need of advice in 2012/13.
61. Government is widening access to financial products as part of the preparations for the introduction of Universal Credit in October 2013. Universal Credit will provide a new single system of means tested support directly paid to working-age people in or out of work. Conscious that some low income claimants may lack the budgeting skills to effectively manage direct rent payments, Government is working with the banking and financial sectors to build the financial capability to help them to adjust to the new system.

## **Commitment Four: Improving access to financial advice, skills and employment services**

Government will:

- Test the support required to help claimants budget and manage their rent payments effectively through a series of **Housing Demonstration Projects which will run to June 2013**. The projects will also be used to explore which types of budgeting products can be used to support Universal Credit claimants in the longer term
- Support the not-for-profit advice sector to adapt to changes in the way that it is funded by **providing £33.6m over two years** (2013-15). Government will shortly publish a report setting out the findings of the review and how they will be taken forward
- **Pilot a range of Community Learning Trust models** in 2012/13 - enabling learning providers deliver a fair and balanced learning offer that meets the needs of their communities and helps those furthest from the labour market improve their skills
- **Analyse the issues faced by homeless people in accessing skills training**. The Ministerial Working Group will consider the findings and agree next steps later this year
- Explore options for supporting individuals facing multiple disadvantages that are some distance from the labour market (such as homeless rough sleepers) **on payment by results basis**

Homeless Link will:

- Support a pilot in one area bringing local voluntary homelessness sector and the local authority together with **Jobcentre Plus, Work Programme and Work Choice providers**.

## **Lack of income due to immigration status**

62. Migrants can be disproportionately at risk of homelessness - either if they are unable to find work and do not have access to public funds, or if they are granted leave to remain in the country but need to leave National Asylum Support Service accommodation. Over half of London's rough sleepers are non UK nationals (52%) and 28% of the total are from Eastern European countries<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) database 2011/12, Broadway London

63. To ensure that migrants are prepared when travelling to the UK, Government is working with embassies to raise awareness of the reality of moving to the UK without arranged accommodation and employment. In particular we are working in partnership with The Passage in London to support their *Before You Go campaign*; designed to raise awareness of the risks associated with not preparing for life in the UK (via promotional material in migrant's own languages) and prevent homelessness.
64. And we are acting to tackle the proliferation of illegal and often unsafe 'beds in sheds' that we have seen, particularly in London. Ministers have set up a national taskforce to work to address the problem. As part of this Government has provided nearly £2m to those local authorities which have seen an increase in 'beds in sheds'. The Government is collaborating with local authorities to gather further intelligence on the nature and extent of the problem and ensure that action is taken locally to remove any illegal structures. The UK Border Agency is also leading work with the voluntary sector, and key local agencies to tackle 'beds in sheds' and repatriate those who are not permitted to remain in the UK. We are also working with the Chartered Institute of Housing, British Landlords Association, the British Property Federation, the Local Government Association and local authorities to produce a guide for local authorities on using their existing powers to tackle criminal landlords and sheds with beds. The guidance will also include information on avenues for dealing with immigration offenders and homelessness.

### **Supporting those leaving the Armed Forces**

65. A small minority of service leavers making the transition from Armed Forces to civilian life can be vulnerable to homelessness. We know, for example, that 4% of the UK nationals seen sleeping rough in London in 2011/12 claimed to have served in the Armed Forces at some point<sup>43</sup>.
66. Government has already introduced a range of measures to minimise the risk of Service personnel becoming homeless on leaving the Armed Forces. Legislative changes have improved access to social housing by allowing Service personnel to establish a local connection with the area in which they are serving or have served. Additionally, Government plans to change the law, by regulation, so that former personnel with urgent housing needs are always given high priority on waiting lists. We are also issuing new statutory social allocations guidance for local councils, setting out how their allocation schemes can give priority to current or ex-Service personnel, including through the use of local preference criteria and local lettings policies.

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<sup>43</sup> Broadway London's Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN), *Street to Home Annual Report 2011-12*

67. Government will continue to use Vulnerability Assessment Procedures to identify Service leavers at risk of homelessness and work with the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency's Veterans Welfare Service and voluntary and community sector partners to help ensure that they receive appropriate accommodation advice. Service Leavers are signposted, as part of that assessment, to the advice and assistance available from the local authority area they wish to resettle on leaving the Armed Forces. Signposting to ex-Service charities also occurs, where it is assessed that charitable assistance may be required.

## Chapter three: Local Leadership, Innovative Funding and Service Integration

*“There are [currently] several points of entry to services so people don’t know where to go..... You need a one stop shop”* - Homeless Link Expert Advisory Panel Member

68. This report has highlighted the key services that need to work together to tackle the underlying problems that can lead to homelessness and ensure those who become homeless get the second chance they deserve.
69. This is not a new message. People have long recognised the need for joined up strategies to prevent homelessness and tackle the impact it can have. But, we need to do more to ensure that appropriate and effective services are in place across the country. For example the recent report from Homeless Link and St Mungo’s shows that far too many homeless people are being discharged from hospital back to the street because of the lack of service integration between health and housing<sup>44</sup>. This is damaging to the health of the individual and costly for health and other services.
70. Although there are some excellent services across the country not all local authorities have established the right frameworks beyond the housing department to encourage the change in public services needed. We encourage local partners to consider what further steps they can take to integrate services that meet the needs of homeless people and those at risk in their communities.

### Supporting local innovation and collaboration

71. In our last report we made a number of commitments to increase local control over investment in local services and reduce bureaucratic burdens which can hamper local action. Since then four pilot schemes have expanded the original Community Budgets concept from a focus on a single issue, such as ‘families with complex needs’, to cover a wide range of local services. Through joint teams with local partners, aided by secondees from Whitehall Departments and the Local Government Association, these pilots are establishing devolved budget proposals with decision making structures for a locally run operation; each pilot area will report back to Government in October.
72. In addition, the Government is supporting ten Local Inclusion Labs, small local projects to trial new approaches to delivering for adults facing multiple disadvantages including mental health conditions, drug and alcohol dependence, homelessness and learning disabilities. We will

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<sup>44</sup> Homeless Link and St Mungo’s, *Improving Hospital Discharge for Homeless People*, 2012

feed the lessons learned into the Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness.

73. The voluntary sector is also playing their part in testing new approaches to preventing homelessness. Multi-project homeless charity and social enterprise, Emmaus, for example, have taken a holistic approach by providing accommodation, work, training opportunities and personal development for single people with multiple needs in a community setting. Emmaus also empowers residents to begin to make a positive contribution to society through volunteering their time and skills to help others; for many residents this proves a crucial step in rebuilding their self-esteem and self-respect.
74. The Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) coalition - formed of Clinks, DrugScope, Homeless Link and Mind - has recently supported three pilot services to better coordinate local services for people facing multiple needs and exclusions. The pilots have demonstrated that intensive case management coupled with a flexible response from local agencies can benefit vulnerable people. An evaluation of the pilots has shown significant increases in individual wellbeing and provided important data on how the pattern and cost of overall service use has changed<sup>45</sup>.
75. Since 2005, the homeless charity Broadway have run a social lettings agency, Real Lettings, leasing private sector properties from private landlords and letting them to homeless individuals and families. To increase the supply of properties available, they are now working with Resonance Ltd to raise £45 million of social investment. This funding will be used to purchase over 200 homes for rent in the Greater London area which will then be let to homeless clients, delivering a net rental yield to investors and over the term of the fund housing up to 500 homeless people ready to move into their own flat<sup>46</sup>.
76. Turning these pockets of innovation and good practice into the norm will require strong local partnerships. Government is setting an example by bringing together Ministers from eight Departments through the cross-government Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness. The Mayor of London has created the London Delivery Board which brings together local authorities, voluntary sector providers and other government departments to work together to end rough sleeping in London by the end of 2012.
77. We want to see all areas in England have their own multi agency partnerships to prevent homelessness. Local authorities are best placed to decide what will work best for their local communities. Some already have local structures that could be adapted for this purpose, such as the

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<sup>45</sup> FTI Consulting and Compass Lexecon, *Evaluation of the MEAM pilots: Interim Report*, 2012

<sup>46</sup> For further information see:

<http://www.broadwaylondon.org/Aboutus/LatestNews/Broadwaylaunchesfirstpropertyfundforhomelesspeople.html>

East London Housing Partnership's Homelessness and Lettings Group which provides strategic and operational oversight of prevention activity in East London.

### **Payment by results**

78. We believe there is a significant opportunity to tackle aspects of homelessness more effectively in the future by increased use of payment by results contracting, and by use of innovative social investment mechanisms.
79. Ten local authorities have already begun testing a range of innovative Payment by Results models with provider partners in relation to housing related support services. Some of the pilot areas are focusing on approaches which aim to improve innovation, outcomes and the value for money of housing related support services which work with homeless, socially excluded and vulnerable people to improve their outcomes and prevent them becoming homeless again. An evaluation will explore and disseminate the experiences of these pilot areas.
80. We are also using Payment by Results approaches for some of our voluntary sector schemes to encourage more sustainable outcomes. Government is providing £10.8m until 2014 to Crisis to fund voluntary sector schemes to promote access to the private rented sector for single homeless people. The funding includes an extra payment where tenancies are sustained for more than six months to encourage the provision of support to address underlying problems that may have led to the homelessness.
81. Contracting on a payment by results basis can leave voluntary sector providers free to do what is needed to help an individual, and is more likely to mean that resources are focussed on achieving outcomes for individuals rather than maintaining established services, which may no longer be the most effective way of doing things. Payment by Results also potentially gives local authorities and other commissioners the ability to try new approaches, because the risk is transferred from the commissioner, who does not pay if outcomes are not achieved.
82. However, many voluntary sector providers cannot afford to bear the financial risks either, and this is where the emerging body of social investors can be vitally important. Social investors take on the risk of outcomes being achieved, enabling service commissioners to become much more outcomes focussed, without putting voluntary sector providers in jeopardy. Social Impact Bonds, set up along these lines, are being developed in a number of areas, and may have significant potential to help homeless households, especially those with multiple problems.
83. We believe there is an opportunity for local authorities and other partners to attract social investment to develop similar initiatives on a much larger



scale, and potentially institutional investment in the longer term. For example to develop long term private rented sector accommodation for homeless families, whilst regenerating poorer quality accommodation, and increasing housing supply. Government is keen to learn from new approaches such as these and understand whether and how they could be delivered at scale.

#### **Commitment Five: Pioneering innovative social funding mechanisms for homelessness**

The Government will:

- provide £5m to launch **the world's first homelessness Social Impact Bond** in London. Designed to attract social investment into homelessness and to release the innovation and energy of the voluntary sector, it will help 700 of London's most entrenched rough sleepers. The new bond will use a Payment by Results model to reward providers who can get them off the streets quickly, and keep them off the streets by helping them into settled accommodation outside the hostel system, improving their health, and where possible helping them to take the steps towards getting and keeping a job
- provide **light touch support to help other local commissioners** with promising Social Impact Bond propositions get up and running in this area

#### **Common themes of an excellent local approach**

84. Some **common themes** emerge from the good practice we've seen and should form part of the local strategic response across the country.
85. The first of these is **services working together to target those at risk of homelessness**. For example, Oxford City Council are developing a protocol arrangement with local mental health services with a specialist mental health worker and have a priority referral arrangement with the Citizen's Advice Bureau for debt advice. The six boroughs in the North London Housing Partnership and the five in the South East London Housing Partnership have used both Department for Communities and Local Government funding to jointly commission St. Giles Trust to operate a Through the Gates service which will help to prevent homelessness and reduce reoffending amongst residents of those boroughs being released from prison.
86. Secondly, **identifying and tackling the underlying causes of homelessness** as part of housing needs assessments by **referring vulnerable clients into support services** where necessary. For

example, New Charter Housing Trust and Tameside Council have developed their housing advice service into an advice hub, providing a variety of services. These include welfare, debt, tenancy support, protection from illegal eviction, relationship breakdown and family conciliation, and support for 16/17 year olds, as well as refuge, Citizen's Advice Bureau and hospital based surgeries and street outreach<sup>47</sup>.

87. Thirdly, **local authorities coordinating access to services for vulnerable people and multi agency action to address** them also play an important role. As we mentioned earlier, the Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) coalition has demonstrated how intensive case management coupled with a flexible response from local agencies can benefit vulnerable people. Coordination is already common in serious circumstances such as child protection, domestic violence and serious ex-offenders and coordinated approaches such as those developed by MEAM should be used more widely for individuals facing multiple needs and exclusions<sup>48</sup>. Less intensive advocacy has also proven to be successful for those with lesser support needs. Learning from the *No Second Night Out* pilots highlights the value of advocate support to help individuals to navigate their way through the range of services available to support their recovery<sup>49</sup>.
88. Fourthly, **making rented accommodation work by supporting people to remain in their homes, and increasing access to the private rented sector is essential to manage demand**. Eviction prevention panels can work well in both social and private rented sector housing, bringing relevant services together to prevent vulnerable families from being evicted from their home. Most authorities now offer rent bonds or deposits to assist with accommodation options, Tameside Council and New Charter Housing, for example, offer practical help to maintain tenancies such as budgeting advice, furnishing assistance, signposting and advocacy for other services (including legal advice, mental health, drugs and alcohol services). They also provide advice for private landlords on fulfilling their legal responsibilities and assistance to find tenants.
89. Finally, **a focus on youth homelessness** is key to preventing homelessness in the longer term. Aside from managing demand for homelessness services, supporting vulnerable young people helps avoid long term benefit dependency and expensive interventions funded through specialist health services, social care and the criminal justice system. Tailored housing advice and integrated wrap around services (including education, employment, specialist health services, children's services, youth offending and probation services) at the point of crisis can offer positive options for young people. Birmingham City Council's successful Youth Hub, for example, provides a service focal point for

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<sup>47</sup> <http://www.tamesidehousingadvice.org/>

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.meam.org.uk/>

<sup>49</sup> *No Second Night Out: An evaluation of the first six months of the project*, Broadway, University of York and Crunch Consulting, December 2011

young people at risk of homelessness delivering housing advice alongside triaging to other support services.

90. Drawing on these themes we have developed ten local challenges for local authorities to consider. If adopted these could lead to all local homelessness services meeting the standards of the best.

#### **Ten local challenges**

1. To adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services
2. To actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs
3. To offer a Housing Options prevention service to all clients including written advice
4. To adopt a *No Second Night Out* model or an effective local alternative
5. To have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that include appropriate accommodation and support
6. To develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both client and landlord
7. To actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme
8. To have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually to be responsive to emerging needs
9. To not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation
10. To not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and for no longer than 6 weeks

91. Government has funded an extensive local authority Self Diagnostic Toolkit to help housing services to respond to these challenges. The Toolkit provides a comprehensive dataset for each local authority in England and basic benchmarking against regional and national figures to identify key challenges, priorities and emerging trends. Local authorities can use the Toolkit to assess their frontline and back office services, customer experience and compare the cost effectiveness of prevention versus statutory homelessness using their own internal finance figures<sup>50</sup>. Recent successes include Winchester City Council who were able to use the Toolkit to identify the need for additional front line staff. With the help of these staff they were able to move the city's 13 households living in bed and breakfast into settled accommodation, saving the Council £3500 a week<sup>51</sup>.

<sup>50</sup> The Toolkit was developed by DCLG's Specialist Homelessness Practitioners in partnership with the National Homelessness Advice Service. It is available to local authorities and members on the National Homelessness Advice Service website ([www.nhas.org.uk](http://www.nhas.org.uk))

<sup>51</sup> Unpublished figures from Winchester City Council, published with their permission.

92. Local Authorities' record in preventing homelessness is already impressive. Indeed today we published official statistics showing that 199,000 cases of homelessness prevention or relief by local authorities were recorded last year. This is an increase on the previous year, despite the pressures local authorities face on their resources<sup>52</sup>.

## **Conclusion**

93. These new approaches, taken together, have the capacity to transform the quality of support offered to vulnerable people, intervening before problems turn into crises and dramatically reducing the numbers of households presenting as homeless.

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<sup>52</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government statistics, Total cases of homelessness prevention and relief by type and region, England, 2011/12