



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Tackling homelessness together

A consultation on structures that support partnership working
and accountability in homelessness



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Scope of the consultation

Topic of this consultation:	<p>This consultation seeks views on how the Government could improve local accountability for the delivery of homelessness services. It covers the following areas:</p> <p>Existing accountability arrangements</p> <p>Homelessness Reduction Boards; and</p> <p>Other ways of achieving effective partnership working.</p>
Scope of this consultation:	<p>Views are sought on the effectiveness of existing non-statutory and statutory local accountability and partnership structures; the challenges and opportunities in two-tier authorities; whether the Government should introduce Homelessness Reduction Boards and, if so, how this could be done most effectively; and on how else we might improve local accountability and partnership working.</p>
Geographical scope:	<p>These proposals relate to England only.</p>
Impact Assessment:	<p>The information provided will inform Government policy and any assessments required under the Government's Better Regulation Framework for this Parliament.</p>

Basic Information

To:	This consultation is open to everyone and we would particularly value the views of those who work in or with local authorities
Body/bodies responsible for the consultation:	The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.
Duration:	This consultation will last for 12 weeks from 21 February 2019
Enquiries:	For any enquiries about the consultation please contact: homelessness.accountability@communities.gov.uk
How to respond:	<p>You may respond by completing an online survey at: https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/HomelessnessCon19</p> <p>Alternatively, you can email your response to the questions in this consultation to: homelessness.accountability@communities.gov.uk</p> <p>If you are responding in writing, please make it clear which questions you are responding to.</p> <p>Written responses should be sent to:</p> <p>Homelessness Directorate Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Ground Floor, South East – Fry Building 2 Marsham Street London SW1P 4DF</p> <p>When you reply it would be very useful if you confirm whether you are replying as an individual or submitting an official response on behalf of an organisation and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• your name;• your position (if applicable);• the name of your organisation (if applicable);• the type of local authority (e.g. district council) you work in/with (if applicable);• an address (including post-code);• an email address; and• a contact telephone number.

Ministerial Foreword

No one is predestined to become homeless. Everybody deserves a stable, safe and secure place to call home. Yet too many households still face the damaging consequences of becoming homeless.

It is simply not acceptable in 2019. That is why this Government has committed significant resources to tackle this issue, with more than £1.2 billion of funding.

But the challenge of homelessness is undoubtedly complex. It's clear that we can only advance our efforts by working across political lines and with a powerful coalition of local authorities, charities, businesses, communities and others.

The 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act – the most ambitious legal reform to homelessness legislation in a generation – is a perfect example of this thinking in action, helping to break the cycle of homelessness by working together. As our work gathers speed, more people are getting the help they need – and more quickly.

But I recognise that there is still much more we can be doing, and should be doing, to improve how we join up at every level.

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

This consultation poses some fundamental questions around where our collaborations are working, what more we can do, what is stopping us from doing it, how we can make better use of data and how we can improve accountability.

To help us answer these questions, we want to hear from everyone involved in the delivery of homeless services, because this consultation is a vital part of our ongoing conversation about how we deliver change for some of our most vulnerable people and get them the help they need.

Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Everyone deserves a decent, affordable and secure place to call home. Yet too many people live without the comfort of a home. Too many people are living out on the streets. We are committed to reducing all forms of homelessness, and ending rough sleeping once and for all by 2027. This is why we have:
- Committed over £1.2 billion of funding by 2020-21 to tackle homelessness;
 - Implemented the Homelessness Reduction Act, putting prevention at the heart of our response to homelessness, making sure that people get earlier support to prevent or relieve their homelessness, and providing support to a broader range of people than ever before;
 - Introduced key initiatives like Housing First, the Rapid Rehousing Pathway and the Private Rented Sector Access Fund to help people access and stay in sustainable accommodation;
 - Published the Rough Sleeping Strategy in August 2018, setting out an ambitious £100 million package to help people who sleep rough now and put in place the structures that will end rough sleeping once and for all, as a first step towards achieving our vision of a country where no one needs to sleep rough by 2027.
- 1.2 All partners at the local and national level must work together in a joined-up way, commissioning and building services based on evidence of what works, to ensure everyone in our society has the dignity and security of a home. Only by working together can we effectively tackle homelessness and rough sleeping, which can be so damaging to individuals' lives. By working together, we can improve services and interventions that support people when they are most in need and deliver better outcomes for them.
- 1.3 Working effectively together means we must also be able to hold each other to account for our actions and be accountable to those who need our support, and society more widely. We must be clear locally and nationally about who is responsible for delivering the services, interventions and commitments in national and local strategies that will reduce homelessness and rough sleeping.
- 1.4 At the local level this can be challenging. The local delivery landscape is complex, with a number of agencies and bodies with different priorities and funding constraints operating under a variety of accountability arrangements. Complexity has increased over the years as different layers of accountability arrangements have been introduced to tackle different problems. Whilst there are good examples of collaborative working and integrated approaches, this complexity can limit how effectively local partners can join forces and work together on shared objectives and action plans. It can also lead to lack of ownership and accountability between different tiers of local government, between different agencies and between statutory and non-statutory services.
- 1.5 We have listened to the views of the Rough Sleeping Advisory Panel and engaged with around 90 local authorities and other partners through a series of workshops.

Those conversations highlighted that current accountability arrangements for local partners involved in homelessness service provision could be more effective. We committed, therefore, to consult on ways to improve accountability at the local level, including the potential development of local Homelessness Reduction Boards

- 1.6 Having the right accountability arrangements builds trust between delivery partners, service users and society, establishes clear priority setting, ensures meaningful decisions and actions are taken forward, improves performance and outcomes, and ensures the appropriate use of money and people. To secure the right arrangements requires clarity on who is responsible for what, and at what time, particularly service interventions and the funding of them; duties, information sharing codes and rules to ensure appropriate actions are taken; internal and external checks and balances; and effective, transparent use and publication of data.
- 1.7 Equally, excessive regulation can encourage bureaucratic and costly accountability arrangements, distort service delivery, create perverse incentives and discourage local delivery partners from joining-up services and working together to tackle complex problems. We have been freeing local authorities from some of the accounting and reporting requirements of previous Governments. This enables authorities to more effectively tailor their services to the needs of their communities and join-up service delivery with other local delivery partners instead of looking upwards to Government and focusing on requirements.
- 1.8 Over the years, a range of statutory and soft levers have been used to increase accountability in public services including inspection regimes, reporting of performance metrics, defining clear roles, structures to bring local delivery partners together (e.g. Health and Wellbeing Boards) and sector support packages such as training, peer reviews and kite marks.
- 1.9 This consultation focuses specifically on how non-statutory and statutory structures might play a stronger role in facilitating local partnership working, enabling delivery partners to work together both strategically and operationally to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping, and holding them to account for their actions.
- 1.10 Over the years, many people have researched and discussed what makes structures and partnership arrangements successful, with some of the common drivers being:
 - **Purpose** - clarity of purpose, shared objectives and agreed outcomes, and the primary task of partners sat round the table;
 - **Place** - a focus on place with mutual understanding of the locality, its priorities, and its organisational and institutional landscape and history;
 - **Geography** - a geography that works, or has been made to work, across boundaries where necessary;
 - **Commitment** - a commitment to partnership working, particularly at political and senior levels;

- **Trust** - mutual trust and respect where partners recognise and value the contribution of other organisations, without perceived imbalance of power;
- **Leadership** - sharing power, supported by distributing leadership across partners and spending time building relationships;
- **Responsibilities** - clarity of roles and responsibilities, lines of accountability and reporting mechanisms;
- **Membership** - the breadth of membership must match the strategic goals without it becoming so cumbersome it becomes a 'talking shop';
- **Decisions** - combining capacity for decision making and executive action while extending the reach of the partnership to increase involvement of others;
- **Processes** - clear, tight operational processes that are agreed at the outset and maintained, including rules of engagement;
- **Success** - clear success criteria and meaningful indicators of progress that are monitored and openly reported on;
- **Communication** - good communication to facilitate trust and consolidate relationships between organisations and individuals;
- **Users** - appreciating the service users' perspective and using lived experience;
- **Collaboration** - finding effective ways for very disparate organisations to work together while exploiting their differences to maximise benefits from their combined knowledge;
- **Support** - high quality support to sustain the organisation and management of the partnership; and
- **Data** - using and analysing robust data as the basis for decision making.

1.11 This list is not exhaustive. The characteristics of each local area will mean that each of these drivers of success will have a different weight and influence in different areas. Nor is the list intended to be our view on the factors that enable structures and partnerships to flourish – the list is intended to give an insight to the factors that are commonly highlighted as being important and help you consider this consultation and frame your response.

1.12 Through this consultation, we seek your view on:

The effectiveness of existing accountability arrangements

- What informal, non-statutory structures local authorities have in place and how effective these are;
- How existing statutory structures address homelessness, and whether they might do more to address this issue;
- How effective existing structures are and what prevents them from being as effective as they might be; and
- The particular challenges and opportunities in two-tier authorities.

Homelessness Reduction Boards

- Whether we should establish a new local governance mechanism with a responsibility for addressing homelessness; and,
- How we might do this most effectively if we pursued this option.

Other ways of supporting effective partnership working

- How else partners encourage effective partnership working in their area;
- Examples of effective partnership working;
- How data is used to help delivery partners;
- The Duty to Co-operate; and
- How else central government can support partnership working.

2. Existing accountability structures

- 2.1 Local authorities' democratic mandate often makes them uniquely placed in their area to bring leadership and convene a wide range of partners to tackle some of our most complex and intractable problems.
- 2.2 The Homelessness Reduction Act, the most ambitious reform to homelessness legislation in decades, came into force on 3 April 2018 and places new duties on local housing authorities to take reasonable steps to try to prevent and relieve a person's homelessness. The Act also introduced the Duty to Refer on specified bodies, requiring them to refer an individual they are working with who they have reason to believe may be homeless, or at risk of homelessness, to a local authority of the individual's choice. Early indications show that the duty has encouraged and enhanced collaborative working between local agencies. However, there is no duty on local authorities to establish a structure which brings their delivery partners together to co-ordinate joint activity to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping in their area, as our policy has been for local authorities to establish structures and partnership arrangements that meet their area's particular needs.
- 2.3 In addition to the duties described above, there are a number of other pieces of legislation which set out responsibilities of other public authorities which impact upon homelessness duties and act as a 'safety net'. For example, the Children's Act 1989 contains the provisions under which a Social Services department may satisfy its duties to protect the wellbeing of children in its district, which may include the provision of accommodation.

Non-statutory structures

- 2.4 Most local authorities have established some form of non-statutory multi-agency forum, which is either entirely focussed on homelessness (e.g. a Homelessness Forum) or which covers homelessness as part of a broader agenda (e.g. a Vulnerable Adults Panel). Across the country these non-statutory structures vary in terms of what they focus on, who attends them, and the frequency with which they meet, according to local need.
- 2.5 In some areas, forums are a place for delivery partners and service users to share views about service provision while in others, forums are a vehicle for informal decision making. Some forums are limited to statutory agencies while others have much broader participation including a wide range of voluntary and community organisations. Some forums meet quarterly as an absolute minimum while others meet once or twice year.
- 2.6 We know that some of these structures work well. Equally, we are often told that others do not effectively support partnership working or hold to account those responsible for addressing homelessness. Specifically, we have heard that it can be challenging to get delivery partners to own and deliver the actions they have committed to take forward through forum and partnership discussions.

Consequently, we have heard that while these forums can lead to thoughtful discussions, they can often fall short of driving actual change.

- 2.7 We would like to understand what non-statutory structures are being used locally to address homelessness in the area, what their objectives are and how effectively they are working given some of the widely perceived characteristics of effective structures set out in the introduction.

Question 1: What non-statutory structures are you aware of in your area that cover homelessness as part of their agenda? For each of these please indicate which of the following could be considered one of their objectives:

- a) **Developing a strategic vision for tackling homelessness in the area;**
- b) **Agreeing actions that each delivery partner will take forward to help reduce homelessness;**
- c) **Co-ordinating use of funding and resources to reduce homelessness;**
- d) **Evaluating the effectiveness of homelessness services and interventions;**
- e) **Monitoring progress towards the delivery of the local homelessness strategy;**
- f) **Holding the local housing authority to account for the outcomes they achieve with people who are at risk of homelessness or are homeless, using key data and evidence;**
- g) **Holding delivery partners to account for the outcomes they achieve with people who are at risk of homelessness or are homeless, using key data and evidence;**
- h) **Discussion of how to manage individual cases;**
- i) **Support for specific vulnerable groups, for example offenders; and**
- j) **Other, please specify.**

Question 2: How effective are the non-statutory structures in your area in meeting their stated objectives?

Question 3: More generally, what are your views on whether these sorts of non-statutory structures can drive system change, support the reduction of homelessness in the local area and hold all local partners to account for delivering their commitments?

Statutory structures and roles

- 2.8 There are a number of statutory multi-agency structures which do not have a formal responsibility for reducing homelessness, but whose members are often involved in the delivery of services which support people who are homeless, or which can contribute to the reduction of homelessness in an area. These structures include Health and Wellbeing Boards, Safeguarding Adult Boards, Community Safety Partnerships, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences. Some of these are responsible for developing needs assessments and providing strategic vision while others are focussed on managing individual cases, often at point of crisis.

- 2.9 In the Rough Sleeping Strategy, the Government made a number of commitments to strengthen how some of these structures contribute to the reduction of homelessness. For example, we committed to working with Safeguarding Adult Boards to ensure that Safeguarding Adult Reviews are conducted when a person who sleeps rough dies or is seriously harmed as a result of abuse or neglect, whether known or suspected, and there is concern that partner agencies could have worked more effectively to protect the adult.
- 2.10 We are also committed to supporting Health and Wellbeing Boards in the Rough Sleeping Initiative areas to recognise and respond to the health needs of people who sleep rough.
- 2.11 Most local authorities will have a Cabinet Member with a portfolio that covers housing and covers the homelessness agenda. Similarly, in most local authorities the Director for Housing is responsible for the provision of homelessness services, but we are aware that this is not always the case and can vary between authorities. It has been suggested that the position of homelessness services in authorities' structures can affect the prominence given to reducing homelessness by the authority. Some stakeholders have told us that assigning a specific responsibility for homelessness to either a Cabinet Member or a Chief Officer within the local authority would improve the delivery of homelessness services and support the reduction of homelessness. We would welcome views on this. In addition to the structures mentioned above, some individuals such as Police and Crime Commissioners and City Region Mayors have statutory roles and functions which could impact on the delivery of homelessness services and can help reduce homelessness.

Question 4: Which statutory structures and individuals with statutory roles in your local area currently have strategic and operational conversations about how individual services and interventions can help reduce homelessness?

Question 5: Which statutory structures and individuals with statutory roles in your local area do you think should be having strategic and operational conversations about how to reduce homelessness?

Question 6: Please describe how you think the statutory structures and individuals with statutory roles in your area should be discussing and contributing to plans and actions to reduce homelessness i.e. what should they be doing?

Two-tier authorities

- 2.12 It is vital that in two-tier areas district councils which have responsibility for providing support to homeless individuals and for reducing homelessness in their area, and county councils which have responsibility for adult social care and children's services, work closely and effectively together. This happens in many places with effective working arrangements which enable, for example, strong support for those

who are homeless, transition pathways for young people in care into sustainable housing and a combined effort to reduce homelessness in the area more widely.

- 2.13 However, this is not always the case. There are particular issues in two-tier areas which can be driven by geography, having different objectives between the local authorities, and particular challenges associated with working relationships, capacity and resourcing. We are keen to understand where there is effective working in two-tier areas and what drives this, and what we can do to facilitate even more effective joint working in two-tier areas.

Question 7: For homelessness services alone, what are your views on how effective two-tier working is in your area, the specific challenges in two-tier working and/or the opportunities for strengthening joint working in two-tier areas?

Question 8: If you work in an area with two-tier local government, which individuals in a higher or lower tier of local government do you believe should have a responsibility for reducing homelessness and do you think they are already involved in strategic and operational conversations? Please explain your answer.

3. Homelessness Reduction Boards

- 3.1 The challenge of reducing homelessness may not always be given the attention needed under existing statutory and non-statutory structures. For this reason, we are considering the merits of establishing a new structure – a Homelessness Reduction Board - that would be responsible for tackling homelessness in the local area. We are, therefore, seeking views on whether Homelessness Reduction Boards should be established and, should they be, how these Boards can most effectively be set up with the right incentives and characteristics which ensures local partners work together to reduce homelessness.
- 3.2 A Homelessness Reduction Board could play an important role in convening relevant local delivery partners, ensuring a strategic, joined-up approach to reducing homelessness in the area, and identifying and delivering the services and interventions that deliver their agreed objectives and outcomes. The Board could be a forum for holding each partner to account, focussing on action and systemic change, and the services and interventions that partners have committed to deliver to help reduce homelessness. It follows, therefore, that the Board could be the place where data is reviewed so that progress in reducing homelessness is measured, and effective actions and interventions are identified. There is an open question about whether the Board could be used to discuss and resolve individual complex cases of homelessness, or threatened homelessness, that would benefit from a multi-agency response.
- 3.3 There is a body of opinion that this Board could be most effective and have most influence if it is put on a statutory rather than voluntary footing. If Boards are established on a voluntary basis, they might need a package of incentives and support to ensure they operate effectively and drive change in an area, and we are interested in hearing views on what incentives and support would be needed.
- 3.4 Members of the Board could include the local authority (elected members and/or senior officers), those responsible for other relevant statutory services, and voluntary sector organisations working with those who are homeless or rough sleeping. Board members would need to be sufficiently senior and influential in their own organisations to be able to make decisions at the Board on their organisation's behalf and ensure that actions they commit to on behalf of their organisation are delivered. Elected Councillors could have positions on the Board to gain traction and galvanise action, or they could be service led.
- 3.5 We are aware that the list of members that could be expected to attend, and some of the objectives of a Homelessness Reduction Board might be similar to those of existing structures like Health and Wellbeing Boards, and we are mindful of duplicating the functions of current arrangements.

Question 9: What are your views on whether the aims for Homelessness Reduction Boards could be met by amending the remit and function of existing local non-statutory and/or statutory structures?

Question 10: What are your views on the merits and drawbacks of establishing Homelessness Reduction Boards, and whether we should establish them?

- 3.6 We are interested in views about the potential objectives and functions of Homelessness Reduction Boards.
- 3.7 The functions of the Homelessness Reduction Board could include:
- Setting the strategic vision for reducing homelessness in the locality and monitoring progress in achieving it;
 - Using data, evidence, and user and lived experience to identify the homelessness challenges in the area, including those that may apply to particular groups of people, and priority actions – we discuss a particular role in shaping local homelessness strategies below;
 - Evaluating the effectiveness of service provision and interventions;
 - Mapping homelessness services and the delivery chain in the locality, redesigning them where appropriate to improve effectiveness and outcomes;
 - Identifying and co-ordinating across all partners the effective use of funding for homelessness services and interventions; and,
 - Promoting and facilitating the joint-commissioning of homelessness services and interventions.
- 3.8 We are particularly interested in whether Homelessness Reduction Boards should have a responsibility for the delivery of the local homelessness strategy. Section 1(4) of the Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to publish a homelessness strategy, based on the results of a homelessness review, every five years. As part of their strategies, local authorities are expected to develop action plans to help ensure that the objectives set out in the homelessness strategy are achieved.
- 3.9 The strategy and action plan are powerful tools for improving local responses to homelessness. However, we know that in some areas there are issues with how strategies are used. Sometimes what is written in a strategy does not accurately reflect the situation in the local area. With respect to implementation, it can be difficult to hold partners to account for the actions they have committed to take forward. We know that strategies and action plans are not updated as often as they should be. We have already begun to address these issues through commitments in the Rough Sleeping Strategy which aim to strengthen the use of local homelessness strategies, progress reporting and action plans. A Homelessness Reduction Board could be an effective forum for local partners to review their progress against their strategy and action plan and to hold one another to account for this.

If we were to establish Homelessness Reduction Boards:

Question 11: What do you think their purpose and objectives should be?

- 3.10 We are interested in views on the type of local authority Homelessness Reduction Boards would add value to. Boards could be established in each local authority area where the authority is responsible for providing support to those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless i.e. London Borough, metropolitan or unitary authority and district council. Another possibility could be to establish them only in local authority areas with high levels of homelessness and rough sleeping. Boards may have a particular role to play in bringing partners together where there are city region or cross-authority arrangements in place. Establishing Boards in areas where key agencies work across different geographic boundaries brings particular challenges.
- 3.11 We are exploring how Homelessness Reduction Boards might have most relevance and impact in two-tier areas. They could be a powerful vehicle for bringing homelessness, adult social care and children's services together to take action to reduce homelessness and explore the specific needs of groups like care leavers. Agencies operating across a county area may find it challenging and time consuming to engage with a separate Board in each district council area. Equally, it may not be appropriate or effective to have a county-wide Board when the characteristics, needs and priorities of district councils across the county, responsible for delivering homelessness services, might be very different. We are interested in hearing if there are existing structures across two-tier areas that are working well that could be a format for introducing Homelessness Reduction Boards in two-tier areas.

If we were to establish Homelessness Reduction Boards:

Question 12: In which authorities should Homelessness Reduction Boards be established (e.g. in all local authorities, areas of high homelessness, top-tier authorities only)?

- 3.12 One of the challenges with existing non-statutory and statutory structures is securing the attendance of the right partners, not least because of the large number of organisations that have a role to play in addressing homelessness. This is particularly challenging when partners work in areas that are not coterminous as partners may work across different geographical regions (for example, probation services which often have jurisdictions that cover several different local authority areas). Homelessness services provided by voluntary organisations, which may not be commissioned by the local authority, play an important role in assisting homeless people but do not always feel that they are part of a strategic partnership addressing homelessness, and have difficulties accessing the key forums where plans are developed, and decisions taken.
- 3.13 Without the right partners present the effectiveness of these structures is severely limited and over time attendance falls. Some stakeholders have suggested that attendance at these boards could be linked to those public authorities subject to the

Duty to Refer. This might be suitable for some of the specified bodies such as prisons and probation services, but might be less appropriate for others who might have less of a contribution to make. Other stakeholders have suggested that we create a new statutory duty for named partners to attend. For example, Section 194 (2) of the Health and Social Care Act 2012, lists five officers from within the local authority that must attend the Health and Wellbeing Board. The legislation also leaves scope for “such other persons, or representatives of such persons, as the local authority thinks appropriate” to attend. However, we have heard that statutory duties are not always the most effective way of encouraging partnership working as they do not guarantee the right attendance let alone effective participation – what is pivotal is local delivery partners working together to create the right environment in which they are all able to effectively participate and contribute.

- 3.14 Another option would be for central government to issue guidance on the attendance and broader running of these boards, potentially through the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities.

If we were to establish Homelessness Reduction Boards:

Question 13: Who should be members of Homelessness Reduction Boards?

Question 14: What is needed to make Homelessness Reduction Boards effective (e.g. guidance, legislation, incentives etc)?

4. Other ways of supporting effective partnership working

- 4.1 Structures and roles are just one of the means by which local authorities develop effective partnerships and accountability arrangements. At the heart of successful partnership tends to be strong local leadership, where leaders across different organisations are able to foster effective working relationships that enable them to collectively agree and drive systemic change and better outcomes in the local area. We have been told that it is these informal leadership relationships and working arrangements, alongside individualised local responses to tackling homelessness, that can be critical and have a significant impact.
- 4.2 Some authorities have told us that the co-production of homelessness protocols and charters is an effective means of securing buy-in from a wide range of partners. Conversely, we have heard that it can be hard to enforce the ambitions set out in these documents and that they rarely amount to more than a 'declaration of good intentions'.
- 4.3 We also know that local authorities use the collocation of services, secondments between different services, and the creation of roles within the authority that span more than one service area (e.g. mental health housing advisors), as a means of building partnerships.

Question 15: Other than through the creation of structures and roles, how else do you encourage effective partnership working in your area?

Question 16: Where there is effective partnership working in your area, what are the characteristics of this and what makes the partnership effective?

- 4.4 Data is essential for developing strategies, monitoring progress against action plans, designing service provision and intervention, commissioning services and evaluating what does and does not work. Used well, data is a powerful tool for helping delivery partners identify and agree ways to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping.
- 4.5 While there is a lot of data held locally and nationally, this is recorded and collected with differing standards of robustness and there are limited examples of where an integrated approach to using data has been effective. Some local authorities and their delivery partners use data well while others are yet to fully exploit the data that they have at their disposal to understand local needs and influence delivery. There are also different views on what good service provision and outcomes look like, particularly what in terms of good looks like across the breadth of public and voluntary sector provision. Therefore, we committed in the Rough Sleeping Strategy to establish data pilots to explore what data exists, the definitions and standards of data, and to develop and test an outcomes framework.

Question 17: What data exists locally to help delivery partners design services and interventions to reduce homelessness and monitor implementation, and how effectively do you think the data that is available is used?

Question 18: Are there good examples of how data is being used effectively in your area and what do you think prevents the effective use of data?

Question 19: What do you think we should consider and include in the design of the data pilots?

- 4.6 The Duty to Refer which was introduced through the Homelessness Reduction Act has enhanced working between local delivery partners. Nonetheless, we frequently hear that a Duty to Co-operate on delivery partners would be an effective way of bringing partners together, and of increasing the obligation to ensure that people at risk of homelessness are provided with timely advice and assistance. For example, this could require a delivery partner to co-operate with the local authority to prevent or relieve an individual's homelessness or require them to co-operate with the authority to reduce homelessness in the area. However, there is a challenge in establishing exactly how a Duty to Co-operate would work in practice, not least because it is difficult to define the broad number of ways in which partners are meant to co-operate or identify what a partner needs to do to discharge their duty.

Question 20: Do you think a Duty to Co-operate should be introduced and, if so, how do you think a Duty to Co-operate could be designed to work in practice, and what steps can we take to ensure that a duty is practical and effective?

- 4.7 We are keen to understand how we can further support local partners to work together to reduce homelessness. In the Rough Sleeping Strategy, we committed to work with the Local Government Association to develop a package of sector support. This could include a number of elements including, among other things, training for councillors, managers and frontline staff, mentoring, benchmarking, and peer support. We are eager to understand how we can support local authorities and their partners to further develop the skills and capability to effectively and successfully reduce homelessness and rough sleeping.

Question 21: What else could the Government be doing to support partnership working across local delivery partners in an area to systemically reduce homelessness?

5. Equalities

- 5.1 We have a duty to promote equality and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, when making decisions public bodies must have “due regard” to: the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations, in relation to relevant protected characteristics.
- 5.2 The purpose of this section is to ask for your views on the ideas set out above in this consultation, and whether they have or could have a positive or negative disproportionate impact on any individuals with relevant protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.
- 5.3 We are also keen to hear how well existing statutory and non-statutory structures address these sorts of issues, and whether data is used effectively to identify and address equality issues where they exist.
- 5.4 We are particularly interested in the role that a Homelessness Reduction Board could play in advancing equality of opportunity. For example, these boards could be a forum for addressing incidents in which homeless individuals have been harassed, discriminated against or victimised. As mentioned previously, they could also be responsible for identifying and addressing challenges that apply to particular groups of homeless individuals, including those with protected characteristics that differ from the broader population.

Question 22: Do you think that any of the issues discussed in this consultation could or already do have a disproportionate impact, positive or negative, on any individuals, in particular those with 'relevant protected characteristics' (i.e. age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation)? Please provide evidence to support your response.

Question 23: How could any adverse impact be reduced and are there any ways we could better advance equality of opportunity? Please provide evidence to support your response.