

## **ANNEX F: HOMELESSNESS AND YOUNG ADULTS**

### *Responsibilities for providing accommodation or advice*

If accommodation needs cannot be met by a local authority's Social Services with responsibility for the young adult, then its Local Housing Authority has a duty to assist by providing housing advice or accommodation.

The [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#) placed a duty on Local Housing Authorities (LHAs) to intervene at an early stage to prevent homelessness arising. This duty extends to those being released from custody. LHAs are required to provide advice, make an assessment, and provide planning and prevention proposals. They do not guarantee to provide accommodation.

The Act places a duty on the prison and probation services (HMPPS)<sup>1</sup> to refer potentially homeless prisoners in custody to the appropriate LHA when they are at risk of becoming homeless within 56 days.

Prisoners at risk of being homeless and who must be referred for advice and assistance include those in custody who were:

- sofa surfing
- sleeping rough
- living in a squat
- of no fixed abode
- living in transient or short-term accommodation.

Young adults are more likely than some other age groups to fall into one of these categories.

In late January 2021, the Ministry of Justice launched the prison leavers project<sup>2</sup> as part of wider Government strategy to tackle homelessness. Prisoners leaving custody became a priority group for increased expenditure and better coordination across the public, private and charity sections. Reducing homelessness has been shown to lower rates of reoffending. This initiative was to include expansion of places in approved premises as well as boosting other efforts to rehouse former prisoners.

### *Universal credit*

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) provides a programme of intensive support for 18 to 21-year olds making a new claim to Universal Credit. This is Youth Obligation Support Programme. It aims to encourage and support all young adults into employment, work-related training or apprenticeship.

In addition, regulations provide for all eligible 18 to 21-year olds to claim support for housing costs within Universal Credit.

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<sup>1</sup> [Rules and guidance for prison and probation staff detailing their duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act to reduce homelessness and support rehabilitation - Homelessness Reduction Act: Duty to refer policy framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [£70 million to keep prison leavers off the streets and cut crime - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Alongside the Youth Obligation Support Programme, these regulations mean young adults should receive comprehensive and intensive work-focussed support, whether they are learning or earning as they reach adulthood.

This means there should be no barriers to young adults accessing housing support because of age, consistent with the aims of the Homelessness Reduction Act. However, young adults will receive a lower level of both housing and work-related benefits than older applicants.

#### *Implications for the parole process*

Whilst a young adult may be unable to secure confirmed accommodation while still in custody, there are questions which may help illuminate relevant circumstances and assess whether their own behaviour and decision-making have contributed to the prospect of homelessness:

- Is this young adult going to be living independently or in the family home?
- Will suitable or unstable accommodation be available?
- Will rent be paid or contributions of other sorts be made?
- What part has been played or can be played by the young adult in identifying future accommodation?
- If the young adult does not want to return to the family home or live independently, what thought has been given to a solution?

Not having proposals for independent accommodation could be one indicator of a lack of planning for the future or could suggest avoidance of responsibilities. Declining to take an active part in planning could allow the young adult to remain embedded in immature social networks with overreliance on family members or staff. In turn, this could reinforce immature forms of thinking.

On the other hand, demonstrating that steps are being taken to secure suitable living arrangements, perhaps independent of the family, could be a sign of developing maturity and positive planning for the future. Even if planning to return to and live at the family home, the young adult may demonstrate maturity and commitment by considering how to contribute to family finances.

#### *Considerations about release plans and aftercare*

Panels will want to consider carefully the release plans of young adults (and children), especially those deemed particularly vulnerable. Advice should be sought from the Community Offender Manager (COM) about the appropriateness of approved premises, hostels, or other accommodation arrangements for the homeless young adult. There may be facilities and regimes which can be made available or adapted for a vulnerable young adult. Some arrangements – such as bed and breakfast settings – may not be regarded as appropriate unless the COM and other keyworkers undertake to pay particular attention to monitoring and meeting needs through additional support.

Even where homelessness is not an issue, panels will want to be cautious about returning a vulnerable young adult, without safeguards, to families or environments where they previously suffered trauma, relationship difficulties, negative peer influences or adverse childhood experiences.