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Frontline agencies in partnership

PRESS RELEASE

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THE COMPLEXITY OF HOMELESSNESS REVEALED

Homeless Link & RIS launch groundbreaking report into adult disadvantage and homelessness

Today, Homeless Link and Resource Information Service (RIS) are launching groundbreaking independent research in the field of adult disadvantage and homelessness. This is the first time the sector has had baseline demographic data on the state of the sector, showing the true complexity and vulnerability of the client group it supports.

Funded by Communities and Local Government (CLG) and CRASH, the research uncovers substantial amounts of data on services provided by day centres; bed spaces and use of hostels and other accommodation; the support needs of people who access homelessness services; and how these services are funded. Key messages are:

- Homelessness agencies are working with some of the most socially excluded individuals in our society. The majority of services estimate that most of the people they work with have multiple problems, for example drug and alcohol issues, mental health problems, benefits and debt problems
- While the government is doing much excellent work with homelessness, these complex and vulnerable individuals are being failed by a number of services:
 - There is a link between the lack of settled accommodation and criminal behaviour. One fifth of projects report the majority of the people using their services were prison leavers. This group is present in the majority of homelessness services. However, less than half of projects have funding for criminal justice services. Only 3% of services reported receiving any funding from criminal justice sources, for example
 - Support for education, training and employment is less commonly available than other types of advice and support. Only 5% of projects reported any level of funding from employment and education agencies

Jenny Edwards, Chief Executive of Homeless Link, said: "This type of information is critical to make sure that we can see what is needed to help these vulnerable people to move on in their lives. It helps us to identify the gaps - both in areas where there is little available and in the types of support that are needed and yet not adequately provided. So much is already being achieved within services that have become "Places of Change". Now we have the evidence to show what else needs to be put into place.

We pay tribute to CLG and CRASH for their vision in funding and backing this research. We now have the evidence to take to other parts of Government to underpin our call for them to play their part in changing the lives of the vulnerable adults who experience homelessness and deep disadvantage."

Matt Harrison, Chief Executive of RIS, said: "Information about the needs homeless people have and the services on offer to help meet these needs is vital. It not only ensures that homeless people are directed to sources of appropriate help and support but also identifies gaps in provision and helps service providers, policy makers, funders and government develop better services. This research shows the breadth and complexity of the homelessness sector, but also points the ways in which it needs to develop in the future."

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. About Homeless Link

Homeless Link is the national membership organisation for frontline homelessness agencies in England. Our mission is to be a catalyst that will help to bring an end to homelessness. Our two goals are:

- To raise standards in the services that support homeless people and tackle homelessness
- To influence the development of policy, strategy and investment at all levels of government.

Homeless Link's member organisations provide services through: hostels, day centres, outreach and resettlement agencies, housing advice centres, youth projects, health projects, welfare rights groups, regional and sub-regional homelessness networks, refuges, drug and alcohol services and church groups.

www.homeless.org.uk

www.endhomelessness.org.uk

2. About Resource Information Service (RIS)

Resource Information Service is a specialist information charity. We are the leading provider in the UK of directories, websites and information systems about services for people in need.

With our high quality publications, people can access the full range of options and most appropriate services to help them with their problems. Our information systems also help agencies to deliver better services to people in need.

www.ris.org.uk

3. Existing data sources

Two substantial sources of data about homelessness services exist:

- The national database of housing related support services for a range of vulnerable groups, including homeless people, which is funded by the Government's Supporting People programme
- Homeless UK, an online national database of accommodation and non-residential homelessness and related services, funded by Communities and Local Government (CLG) and published by RIS
www.homelessuk.org

4. About the figures in the report

Whilst the figures do not give an overall number of homeless people, they show the level of demand placed on homelessness services - 118,000 people coming through them every year.

- There are 187 day centres in England, provided by 171 providers, seeing on average 10,000 people a day. They deal with very vulnerable people, but are heavily dependent on charitable fundraising
- There are more than 50,000 bed spaces supporting homeless people in England
- There are 246 direct access hostels in England

5. About the research

The research objectives of the Survey of Needs and Provision (SNaP) were to provide a clear picture of homelessness services in order to assist decision makers identify local, regional and national priorities and to allocate resources to most effectively tackle and prevent homelessness and establish a baseline upon which to assess how services and the needs of homeless people change and develop over time.

6. About the methodology

This research project conducted by Homeless Link and Resource Information Service (RIS) brings together and makes publicly available data on single homeless people and couples in England from the two data sources mentioned above for the first time, and complements it by a survey of projects. The research focused on day centres and accommodation based services for single homeless people and couples, including both direct access/emergency hostels and second stage supported accommodation. The research consisted of three main elements:

- Analysis of data about hostels and supported accommodation from the Supporting People (SP) provider database and basic analysis of SP client records
- Analysis of data about day centres, direct access hostels and second stage supported accommodation from Homeless UK
- A telephone survey of a sample of 151 day centres, hostels and second stage supported accommodation providers on Homeless UK, to gather more detailed information about clients served and their needs, services provided, standards of buildings and sources of funding

The Supporting People data was analysed based on three client groups within the SP categories: Single homeless people with support needs, Rough sleepers and Young people at risk - all of the data in this report regarding Supporting People therefore only relates to these three client groups.

7. About CRASH

CRASH is the construction and property industry charity for the homeless. It harnesses the skills, products, talents and goodwill of the two industries to improve buildings and premises for voluntary agencies working with homeless people, throughout the UK.

For more information contact Francesca Roberts, Chief Executive Officer.

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Further information

If you would like more information on the research or on Homeless Link or if you would like a more detailed conversation about the relevance of this research to homelessness strategy, please contact:

Gill Perkins, Head of Communications at Homeless Link on 020 7960 3025 or 07881 921476 or by email gill.perkins@homelesslink.org.uk

Summary and full versions of the report can be accessed via our website at www.homelesslink.org.uk from 19th February 2008.

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