

## POLICY UPDATE

### November 2018

This update has been prepared by Homeless Link's Policy Team. Please contact Chris Brill ([Chris.Brill@homelesslink.org.uk](mailto:Chris.Brill@homelesslink.org.uk)) or Michaela des Forges ([Michaela.DesForges@homelesslink.org.uk](mailto:Michaela.DesForges@homelesslink.org.uk)) for more detail on any item contained within the briefing.

## 1. KEY ANNOUNCEMENTS

### New Rough Sleeping Strategy published

The Government published its Rough Sleeping Strategy on 13 August 2018, setting out the first steps on how it plans to meet its commitment to halve the number of people sleeping on the streets by 2022 and to end the problem by 2027.

Homeless Link sits on the Rough Sleeping Advisory Group and contributed to all five Task and Finish groups that fed in to the strategy. The strategy makes welcome commitments of funding for dedicated outreach teams and for emergency bed spaces, and nationwide trials of a 'somewhere safe to stay' duty and the review of the Vagrancy Act, among others. However, all of the members of the Advisory Group agreed that more needs to be done to tackle the root causes of all forms of homelessness and prevent it from happening in the first place, including building significantly more social housing and ensuring people have access to an effective welfare safety net and other support, in particular, for mental health and substance abuse issues

Further, as part of the strategy the MHCLG have:

- set out plans to fund 83 areas with the highest numbers of people at risk of rough sleeping over the next two years (£34 million, extension of the £30 million provided to councils in June through the Rough Sleeping Initiative Fund). This can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/funding-allocated-for-councils-to-help-rough-sleepers>
- published the prospectus (amended) for the Move on Fund. This can be found at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/733423/Move\\_On\\_Fund\\_Prospectus\\_Final.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/733423/Move_On_Fund_Prospectus_Final.pdf) This will remain open to receive new applications until 30 September 2020 or until funding is fully committed.
- published its Rapid Rehousing Pathways Expression of Interest Prospectus for the, i.e. Somewhere safe to stay pilots, Local lettings agencies, Supported lettings and Navigators (closed 31 October 2018). This can be found at: <http://meam.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/RRP-EOI-Prospectus-Final.pdf>
- launched £20 million Private Rented Sector Access Fund to allow councils to put in place new schemes so that those at risk of homelessness will have support to secure their own tenancy. Deadline November 21 2018. This can be found at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/746618/PRS\\_Access\\_Fund\\_Bidding\\_Prospectus.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/746618/PRS_Access_Fund_Bidding_Prospectus.pdf)

Homeless Link's response to the strategy can be found here:

<https://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/news/2018/aug/13/homelessness-and-housing-organisations-respond-to-government-rough-sleeping>

### Supported housing funding to be retained in welfare system

On 9 August 2018, MHCLG announced the response to the consultation on the future funding of supported housing. The Ministry for Communities and Local Government's response to the consultation can be read here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/732692/Supported\\_Housing\\_Funding\\_Consultation\\_Response.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/732692/Supported_Housing_Funding_Consultation_Response.pdf)

We welcomed the Government's decision to retain funding (for rental costs) for supported housing within the benefit system. Homeless Link's response to the announcement can be found here: <https://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/blogs/2018/aug/09/more-secure-footing-for-supported-accommodation>

Our focus is now on working with our members, and the wider sector, to support the Government to:

- increase the level of oversight and transparency for supported housing
- gain a better understanding of the sector, including the role of housing support.

We are working with our members, our sector partners, and wider stakeholders, to inform the Government's design of a future oversight regime. We have met with officials, members and the wider sector over the last couple of months to feed into this work and to understand concerns and views.

## Budget 2018

The Budget 2018 made a number of announcements relevant announcements around welfare and housing, including the following:

### Welfare

- Universal Credit Work Allowance (the amount you can earn before awards begin to withdraw) has increased by £1000, but only for households with children or people in
- Additional support for people who the DWP migrate onto Universal Credit (see Managed Migration section)
- 2-week run-on of JSA and ESA for people moving onto Universal Credit from July 2020
- Reduction of the maximum rate at which deductions can be made from a Universal Credit award from 40% to 30% of the standard allowance.
- Increase the period over which advances will be recovered, from 12 to 16 months (October 21).
- Re-iteration of the commitment to reinstate automatic entitlement to housing support for 18 to 21 year olds.

### Housing

- £500m for the Housing Infrastructure Fund
- Additional strategic partnerships between Homes England and nine housing associations
- A two-year extension to the Help to Buy equity loan scheme beyond the current end date of April 2021 – but only for first-time buyers and only for homes of up to 1.5 times average regional prices.
- A call for proposals for private shared ownership and affordable home ownership: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/private-shared-homeownership-call-for-proposals>
- Final recommendations from the Letwin review to speed up build-out rates with new planning rules requiring greater diversity of tenure and types of home plus new powers for local authorities to drive development. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-build-out-final-report>
- Consultation on planning reform to support more new homes on the high street. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/752222/Planning\\_reform\\_-\\_supporting\\_the\\_high\\_street\\_and\\_increasing\\_the\\_delivery\\_of\\_new\\_homes.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/752222/Planning_reform_-_supporting_the_high_street_and_increasing_the_delivery_of_new_homes.pdf)

Homeless Link were extremely disappointed that the Budget announcements fell silent on removing the freeze on local housing allowance rates and other working age benefits.

The promise of extra investment to address problems with Universal Credit was a step in the right direction and suggests that the Government are beginning to acknowledge issues with the current system. In particular, Homeless Link was pleased to see a commitment to a run on of benefits when people move from legacy benefits to Universal Credit, and a change to the level of debt repayments.

However, the announcements offer little for new claimants or those that move to Universal Credit before 2020. Homeless Link will continue to call for a pause in the roll-out until problems have been fully addressed.

Homeless Link's Budget submission can be found here:

<https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Homeless%20Link%20Submission%20Budget%202018.pdf>

A snapshot of Homeless Link's asks can be found here:

<https://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/blogs/2018/oct/23/budget-to-end-homelessness>

Homeless Link's response to the Budget can be found here:

<https://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/news/2018/oct/30/homeless-link-responds-to-budget>

## 2. POLICY UPDATES

### Homelessness and housing

#### Rough sleeping figures

Data released from the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) database shows that between 1 July and 30 September 2018, 3,103 people were recorded as sleeping rough on the streets of London, 17% more than the same period in 2017 and 20% more than the period before. Of these 45% were new people sleeping rough.

Homeless Link's response to the figures can be found here:

<https://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/news/2018/oct/31/alarming-increase-in-number-of-people-sleeping-rough-in-london>

Further, on 8 October 2018 the Bureau of Investigative Journalism reported that 449 people had died homeless in the last year. <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2018-10-08/homelessness-a-national-scandal>

### Social Housing Green Paper

On 14 August, the social housing green paper was released:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/social-housing-green-paper-a-new-deal-for-social-housing>

The paper aims to rebalance the relationship between landlords and residents, tackle stigma and ensure social housing can act as a stable base and support social mobility. The green paper set out 5 core themes:

- Tackling stigma and celebrating thriving communities
- Expanding supply and supporting home ownership
- Effective resolution of complaints
- Empowering residents and strengthening the regulator
- Ensuring homes are safe and decent

The consultation on the green paper closed on 6 November 2018. Homeless Link responded to the green paper and welcomed the focus of the green paper on improving social housing and supports its broad aims to ensure social homes provide an essential, safe, well managed service for all those who need it.

However, our view, and the view of many of our members, is that the green paper is not ambitious enough when it comes to increasing supply in order to help those whose needs are

not served by the market and it does not sufficiently convey that there is an acute housing shortage in England.

Our response can be found here: [https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Homeless%20Link\\_SocialHousing%20GreenPaperSubmission.pdf](https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Homeless%20Link_SocialHousing%20GreenPaperSubmission.pdf)

## Homelessness Reduction Act

### Duty to refer

From October 1 2018, hospitals, Jobcentres and prisons now have a duty to notify local authorities when they think someone may be homeless or at risk of homelessness. The duty aims to help people get access to homelessness services as soon as possible by ensuring that peoples' housing needs are considered when they come into contact with a range of public authorities.

Where they become aware that someone is homeless or at risk of homelessness these authorities are now legally required, with consent, to notify the LHA, which will then contact the individual and begin the process of determining whether they require support.

The MHCLG has updated its guidance to help public authorities understand how to administer the duty to refer. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-duty-to-refer#history>

Not all public authorities have a statutory duty to refer, with GPs a notable omission. However, there is a welcome voluntary commitment that housing associations will refer an individual or household to a local authority. Further information can be found here: [http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/doc.housing.org.uk/Commitment\\_to\\_refer\\_QA\\_final.pdf](http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/doc.housing.org.uk/Commitment_to_refer_QA_final.pdf)

For further details on the Duty to Refer, see the Homeless Link blog 'Can the 'duty to refer' prevent homelessness?' <https://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/blogs/2018/oct/09/can-duty-to-refer-prevent-homelessness>

## Welfare

### Managed migration

The Government have laid regulations around the process that they will adopt to move claimants from legacy benefits to Universal Credit.

In summary, the process as originally drafted was (fuller details of this process can be found in this Homeless Link blog: <https://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/blogs/2018/jul/17/moving-safely-to-universal-credit>)

- a four to six months preparation period for claimants
- a notification letter, and reminders, will be issued informing claimants that they will need to make a new Universal Credit claim by a specific day. People will have a minimum of 1 month to claim Universal Credit
- If a claimant does not make a new Universal Credit claim by the deadline day, their existing benefits will end, unless there is evidence of 'complex needs' or 'vulnerability.'

After extensive lobbying by the voluntary sector, and recommendations from the SSAC, the process has been revised to ensure that people have a minimum of three months to claim Universal Credit successfully. DWP will also test different communication methods, and have increased the ability to receive back payments if people miss deadlines.

There remain a large number of concerns with the regulations. In particular, DWP have put the emphasis on moving onto Universal Credit onto claimants. If claimants do not engage, and are not picked up by DWP vulnerability markers, they will lose their benefit income.

These regulations are likely to be voted in Parliament in November. Homeless Link is working with other organisations to ensure that concerns are addressed.

Homeless Link's response to the SSAC consultation can be found here.

<https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Homeless%20Link%20managed%20migration%20evidence%20to%20SSAC%202018.pdf>

The SSAC report, and the Government response, can be found here.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-universal-credit-managed-migration-regulations-2018-ssac-report-and-government-statement?utm\\_source=40c5af66-8215-4479-af37-59e099a85d7f&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm\\_content=immediate](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-universal-credit-managed-migration-regulations-2018-ssac-report-and-government-statement?utm_source=40c5af66-8215-4479-af37-59e099a85d7f&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate)

### **Reports on Universal Credit, Universal Support and sanctions**

A number of reports have been released responding to evidence/inquiries into the effects of changes to welfare.

The Public Accounts Committee released their report on Universal Credit. The report

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmpublic/1183/118302.htm>

highlighted that:

- The introduction of Universal Credit is causing unacceptable hardship and difficulties for many of the claimants it was designed to help.
- DWP's dismissive attitude to real-world experience is failing claimants, and
- The Department needs to work with third party organisations to help shape the new programme in light of the real life experiences of recipients.

The Work and Pensions Committee released their report on Universal Support.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/work-and-pensions-committee/news-parliament-2017/overhaul-universal-support-17-19/>

The report found that although 'the original vision of universal support was to offer claimants support both making their initial universal credit claim and then ongoing support, the reality is that DWP will currently only fund a single two-hour session of Personal Budgeting and Digital Support at the start of a universal credit claim - for many claimants this is 'woefully inadequate'. The report called that DWP should only move claimants onto universal credit when Universal Support delivery partners have the capacity to offer tailored support to every person making a claim for the benefit.

The Work and Pensions Committee also released their report on Sanctions.

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmworpen/955/95502.htm>

The report concluded that 'the human cost of continuing to apply the existing regime of benefit sanctions – the "only major welfare reform this decade to have never been evaluated" – appears simply too high. The evidence that it is achieving its aims is at best mixed, and at worst showing a policy that appears "arbitrarily punitive". Amongst other recommendations, the report stated that Government should also "immediately stop imposing conditionality and sanctions on anyone found to have limited capability for work, or who presents a valid doctor's note" stating they cannot work. Instead, it should work with experts to develop a programme of voluntary employment support for those who can get into work.

MEAM's evidence for the Universal Support inquiry can be found here:

<https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/MEAM%20submission%20-%20Universal%20Credit%20rollout.pdf>

### **Health and social care**

#### **NHS Long Term Plan and homeless people**

On 18 June, the Prime Minister set out a funding settlement for the NHS in England for the next five years. The NHS has been asked to set out a long term plan for the future of the NHS

setting out areas for improvement over the next decade, and plans to meet them over the five years of the funding settlement.

We responded to the online call for views in three ways:

- The inclusion health sub-group made a joint submission to the NHS Long Term Plan <https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/NHS%20Long%20Term%20Plan%20response.pdf>
- We contributed to wider VCSE HW Alliance submission to NHS Long Term Plan
- Homeless Link/St Mungo's made a joint submission to NHS Long Term Plan <https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Homeless%20Link%20%26%20St%20Mungo%27s%20NHS%20Long%20Term%20Plan%20consultation%20response.pdf>

We continue to work with officials and our Health and Wellbeing partners to inform the Long Term Plan.

### **Long term funding of adult social care**

Homeless Link submitted evidence to the Economic Affairs Committee inquiry on social care funding in England: <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/lords-select/economic-affairs-committee/news-parliament-2017/social-care-call-for-evidence/>

While we recognised the current focus on securing sustainable funding for older people's care and support, we had a number of concerns regarding access to social care for people who are homeless or living in supported accommodation. Our key points were:

- Budgetary pressures on social care and wider support services for homeless people and people with multiple needs are resulting in high levels of unmet need.
- Fragmentation of services makes it difficult for people and the professionals supporting them to navigate the system and secure the necessary care and support.
- Funding for social care for homeless people and people with multiple needs must not be lost in the broader discussion about social care funding.
- Levels of social care and support funding need to meet current and future need.
- Social care funding should be invested in the roll-out of Housing First.

Our response can be found here: <https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Social%20care%20funding%20in%20England.pdf>

### **Women**

*Women and Rough Sleeping* research was published by St Mungo's in October 2018. This research finds that women's experiences include sexual abuse, violence and stigmatisation.

- Women sleeping rough tend to be younger and are significantly more likely than men to be aged 25 or under.
- Women sleeping rough are more likely than men to need support for mental health problems.
- Women are more likely to sleep rough for short periods than men.

St Mungo's is calling on the government to take urgent action to recognise the issues faced by women living on our streets and do more to support them away from rough sleeping, as well as prevent them becoming homeless in the first place. A copy of the report can be found at <https://www.mungos.org/publication/women-and-rough-sleeping-a-critical-review/>

Agenda has published a report, *Making Places Work for Women: Gender and Systems Change*, identifying that national policy change and local, place-based systems change are required to ensure better outcomes for women with multiple and complex needs. The report finds that too often, services are configured in silos, creating gaps for women to fall through and services, where they do exist, are rarely gender-informed in their design, commissioning and delivery. The report can be found at <https://weareagenda.org/wp->

[content/uploads/2018/10/Making-Places-Work-for-Women\\_Gender-and-Systems-Change\\_October2018-FINAL.pdf](http://www.meam.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Making-Places-Work-for-Women_Gender-and-Systems-Change_October2018-FINAL.pdf)

MEAM launched a report in September on the experiences of women in MEAM Approach and Fulfilling Lives areas, *Jumping Through Hoops*. The report highlights areas of good practice, but it also suggests that much more work is needed. You can download a copy here:

[http://www.meam.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Jumping-Through-Hoops\\_report\\_FINAL\\_SINGLE-PAGES.pdf](http://www.meam.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Jumping-Through-Hoops_report_FINAL_SINGLE-PAGES.pdf)