EFFECTIVE ACTION

RESETTLEMENT
FROM HOMELESSNESS SERVICES
A SUMMARY FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

homeless link

EFFECTIVE ACTION
TO END HOMELESSNESS...

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RESETTLEMENT FROM HOMELESSNESS SERVICES: A SUMMARY FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

INTRODUCTION

What is resettlement?

Resettlement is the move a homeless person makes from temporary housing or the streets into more permanent, often independent, accommodation.

Resettlement has typically been achieved in stages, with clients moving from hostels to supported housing before being given the opportunity to live independently. As the homelessness sector adopts a more personalised approach to support, linear resettlement pathways are being replaced by flexible responses, for example moving clients directly from the streets to independent accommodation if this meets their needs.

Resettlement also includes the support that is provided to sustain people in their tenancies, for example from floating support teams.

Why is resettlement an issue?

Resettlement is an area of concern for many homelessness services: housing demand exceeds supply in many parts of the country; changes to welfare benefits are making it harder for claimants to access the PRS; and access to social housing may be more restricted as councils introduce revised allocations policies under the localism agenda. In addition, funding cuts have reduced the resources available within services to support homeless people through the resettlement process.

A lack of resettlement creates a number of risks. Long stays in temporary accommodation increase the risk of eviction and abandonment. There is also a risk of dependency on support which makes successful resettlement harder to achieve. The silt-up of temporary accommodation means fewer beds become available for rough sleepers, increasing the risk of deteriorating health and well-being for those on the streets. There is also an issue of cost if people who could live independently have no option but to remain in more expensive supported accommodation.

This guidance gives an overview of the role of local authorities in resettlement. See Appendix 1 for a comprehensive checklist of resettlement planning and implementation.

For Homeless Link's full resettlement guidance see:
www.homeless.org.uk/effective-action/resettlement

STRATEGIC PLANNING

A local strategic approach to resettlement is required because of the number of agencies involved in delivery and because clients' needs change over time. Reviewing and, where necessary, reconfiguring services will help to minimise silt-up and ensure that an appropriate and timely range of move on options is available.

Move On Plans Protocol (MOPP)

The Move On Plans Protocol (MOPP) toolkit enables local authorities to audit resettlement needs in homelessness services. An audit can show, for example, where clients do not have access to the right move on options, leading to the silt-up of temporary projects. The MOPP gives local authorities a basis from which to develop new resettlement options. Analysis of the review might indicate that access to rent bonds or a change in referral pathways is needed or gaps in specialist provision might be highlighted, for example 'wet' supported housing or specialist floating support.

Many local authorities have introduced housing pathways to streamline the process of move on by monitoring empty bed spaces and allocating supported accommodation from a central system. It is worth noting that inflexible pathways can create unintended consequences. If, for example, only the outreach team has referral rights into hostels, people may have to sleep rough to access this accommodation. If rent deposit schemes can only be accessed by supported housing tenants, people may have to live in hostels and supported housing when they were able to live independently much earlier. The MOPP can help to draw out these issues so that alternative processes can be introduced.

Access the MOPP here: www.homeless.org.uk/mopp

In addition to reviewing move on for existing residents, the point at which resettlement becomes available during homeless people's engagement with services should be considered. If a service is seeing people as they become homeless but before they sleep rough (e.g. sofa surfers), could that service be given referral rights into housing or access to rent deposits? This could enable early intervention and prevent street homelessness. If resettlement is too late or too linear, the support required is likely to increase in intensity and, therefore, cost.

Private Rented Sector

Getting access to the PRS and building relationships with landlords is a challenge for homelessness services. As local authorities can now discharge their homelessness duty into the PRS there will be increasing engagement with this sector from statutory services. A local strategic approach can minimise the risk of multiple homelessness agencies working separately to engage the same landlords. There may also be opportunities for homelessness agencies and local authorities to pool resources and information about engaging with landlords, ensuring properties are of a decent standard, informing tenants of their rights and responsibilities, tackling rogue landlords and so on.

As demand for PRS exceeds supply in many areas, competition between services to access PRS properties will be an issue. It is to the benefit of all agencies concerned that PRS landlords have a positive experience of accepting homeless tenants. A strategic approach

should identify which homelessness agencies are working with the PRS locally and look for opportunities to pool resources e.g. to achieve the most effective publicity, promotion and engagement with landlords. This may include development of social letting agencies or private rented schemes with expertise in resettling homeless people.

> **Crisis** has a dedicated PRS website that includes a wide range of information and resources relevant to developing a strategic approach: www.privaterentedsector.org.uk

> The **DCLG** specialist advisors' 'Working with the PRS & Developing a PRSO Policy Toolkit for Local Authorities' is coming soon at: www.nhas.org.uk

Resettlement via a single point of access
Local authorities are increasingly using a single point of access (also known as a gateway or pathway) so that all move on between local authority funded housing is administered by one team, for example via an online referral system. This allows services to flag up imminent voids when clients are being resettled into non-statutory housing.

This approach can streamline referrals and promote equal access, unlike informal procedures which may prioritise referrals based on staff contacts rather than client need. It also allows central collection of data about voids. There are risks that if the system fails, if workers don't use it correctly or if the administering team falls behind, silt-up will occur even while there are empty bed-spaces available. Regular review and user feedback can address these risks.

Checklist
- ➢ Address issues with services silting up in partnership with the voluntary sector
- ➢ Consider using the MOPP
- ➢ Coordinate services engaging with the PRS
- ➢ Keep the single point of access under review

THE IMPACT OF HOUSING AND WELFARE REFORMS
Recent and imminent policy changes will require all agencies to adjust their approach to resettlement. For example, the introduction of local welfare assistance schemes to replace crisis loans and community care grants will impact on services' ability to fund resettlement. They will need to prepare people for monthly budgeting under Universal Credit. Reforms also impact on resettlement options, with the Shared Accommodation Rate for under-35s and limits to LHA already restricting the move on options available.

Homeless Link's Welfare Aware pages: www.homeless.org.uk/welfare-aware

Checklist
- ➢ Share information and updates on policy reforms e.g. via email to membership of homelessness forums
- ➢ Arrange for staff, e.g. Housing Options managers, to attend team meetings and brief frontline staff
- ➢ Hold free training sessions to disseminate key information

RESETTLEMENT OPTIONS

Ideally routes should be developed into housing with different lengths of stay and levels of support or independence, in order to meet the varying needs of individuals, for example:

- Social housing (council or housing association)
- Private rented sector (including shared houses)
- Residential detox & rehab
- Supported housing (including specialist provision e.g. drinkers' projects, foyers)
- Sheltered housing
- Reconnection (with support)

Checklist

➢ Review the type of services being commissioned against resettlement needs
➢ Offer training to frontline workers on how to use Choice-Based Lettings or other referral systems
➢ Agree effective procedures for homelessness services to refer into alternative move on routes such as detox & rehab or sheltered housing
➢ Consult with local agencies to develop a reconnection protocol, which may include funds for travel or new documents

Reconnections guidance: www.homeless.org.uk/effective-action/Reconnectingroughsleepers

RESETTLEMENT PLANNING, PREPARATION & COSTS

Services should have a planned approach to resettlement that integrates with local resettlement strategy and includes practical, emotional and social support. Where clients are moving between services in a pathway, the local authority can help to coordinate a shared programme of pre-tenancy training so that clients can access training at each stage and avoid duplication. Services and individuals will also need to find ways to fund the cost of transport, deposit, rent in advance and other resettlement costs.

There is a practitioners' checklist at Appendix 1 of this document or refer to the comprehensive resettlement guidance: www.homeless.org.uk/effective-action/resettlement

SUPPORT AFTER RESETTLEMENT

There is a risk of resettlement breaking down, leading to repeat homelessness. Support during and after resettlement, taking into account practical, emotional and social needs, can reduce this risk. If continuous support is not required, there should be a plan so that the client knows how to request support if their situation changes. With access to preventative support, crisis and repeat homelessness can be avoided.

Checklist

➢ Review provision of floating support and mentoring & befriending schemes
➢ Use repeat homelessness data to identify and fill gaps tenancy support provision
➢ Consider introducing more flexible, personalised services to meet individual needs www.homeless.org.uk/personalisation

APPENDIX 1: RESETTLEMENT CHECKLIST

Considerations for the Local Authority

☑ Issues with services silting up are addressed by the local authority and voluntary sector

☑ The local authority has looked at using the MOPP

☑ There is a coordinated approach between services engaging with the PRS

☑ The local authority keeps its single point of access under review

The impact of housing and welfare reforms

☑ Frontline staff are aware of changes to welfare benefits and housing policy

☑ Risk areas for the resettlement process have been identified

☑ New or revised information and procedures are in place

☑ Information on the changes has been shared with clients

☑ Support is available to clients e.g. monthly budgeting

☑ Service managers ensure information and training is updated as changes happen

Resettlement options

☑ Staff & clients understand basic tenancy law and know where to get advice

☑ Staff & clients know how to apply for different social housing options

☑ Support and checklists are available for clients when viewing properties

☑ Staff know to request a later tenancy start date to give the client time to plan their move and establish any impact on benefits, especially for Universal Credit claimants

☑ There is a checklist for staff and clients to ensure the property is ready for occupancy

☑ Staff have the skills and tools to support clients with Choice Based Lettings

☑ Clients are supported and encouraged to attend viewings

☑ Staff & clients know how to access local PRS schemes

☑ The service has explored options for direct referrals to landlords and incentives to accept homeless clients e.g. offering post-resettlement support and point of contact

☑ The service supports clients to evidence exemptions from the shared accommodation rate for 25-34 year olds

☑ The service has considered the needs of particular groups e.g. young or elderly people

☑ Staff & clients have information about specialist resettlement options, eligibility criteria and how referrals are made.

Resettlement planning & preparation

- ☑ Staff & clients know what resettlement options are available

- ☑ Staff have contacts with other agencies and know how to refer clients into their resettlement pathways

- ☑ Staff know how to use the local authority's housing pathway and how to report problems

- ☑ There is an assessment and review procedure that supports clients to move on

- ☑ The service has a point of contact at the local authority to help identify solutions for clients with complex needs

- ☑ Clients are given clear and realistic information about resettlement

- ☑ Peer mentors talk about their experience of resettlement

- ☑ The extent of staff support during and after resettlement is clearly explained

- ☑ The extent of service support with resettlement costs and transport is clearly explained

- ☑ Staff discuss clients' aspirations alongside the practical aspects of resettlement

- ☑ The social and emotional needs of clients are discussed

- ☑ Practical ways of reducing stress and isolation are identified

- ☑ Staff and clients look for ways to develop new social networks (education, volunteering, sports, community groups etc)

- ☑ Staff are trained in skills such as Motivational Interviewing or CBT

- ☑ Staff & clients can refer/have access to mentoring and befriending schemes

- ☑ The service has looked into developing a mentoring and befriending scheme where none exists locally

- ☑ Return visits to the service are discussed, risk assessed and plans are agreed

- ☑ The service has looked into training for ex-clients as peer mentors

- ☑ Staff send a house-warming card and consider keeping in touch via email, phone calls or post

- ☑ Clients are given a phone card or stationery and stamps in their starter pack

- ☑ The service has a flexible programme of pre-tenancy training that meets different levels of readiness for independence

- ☑ Staff seek client input and feedback on their pre-tenancy training

- ☑ Pre-tenancy training starts well in advance of resettlement

- ☑ Staff also offer support to clients who are moving between supported accommodation

☑ Local services look at using consistent pre-tenancy training as clients move between services

☑ Staff support clients with a local area induction to visit the new area and find local amenities and identify 'safety net' support services

Meeting the costs of resettlement

☑ Staff are aware of changes to welfare benefits and have made alternative plans where needed e.g. to replace crisis loans and CCGs

☑ Staff & clients plan for costs including deposits, rent, transport, key meters and household goods

☑ Staff & clients know how to apply to the local welfare assistance scheme

☑ The service has explored alternative funding for resettlement including Credit Unions, rent deposit schemes, starter packs and donations in kind

☑ Staff & clients know how to access rent deposit guarantee schemes

Support after resettlement

☑ There is a plan in place for support after resettlement

☑ Clients have the information they need to access support at a later date.

☑ The service has procedures to risk assess and plan for return visits from ex-clients and has considered options such as peer mentoring and volunteering

☑ Support workers are able to provide transitional support if requested when a client moves into another supported accommodation project

☑ Staff & clients know how to make a referral for floating support

☑ Services involved in resettlement have explored ways of personalising their service

☑ Staff & clients know how to access mentoring and befriending schemes

☑ The service has looked into developing a mentoring and befriending scheme where none exists locally

Innovative approaches

☑ Services regularly review their approach and look for ways to be innovative in their resettlement practice

☑ Staff know about different schemes and keep an open mind about ways to approach resettlement, especially for clients with complex needs or a long history of homelessness

☑ Clients' wider needs, e.g. employment, are taken into account when planning move on.

Resettlement guidance in full: www.homeless.org.uk/effective-action/resettlement