

# ENDING HOMELESSNESS TOGETHER

**10 YEARS, 10 STEPS, 1 AMBITION**



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### PHOTOS

The photographs in this document do not necessarily represent the quotes and case studies featured.


**Cover** Chapter 1/FreshStart St Austell.  
Preparing plants for the Places of Change garden at Chelsea Flower Show.  
Photo by Chris Saville / apexnewsplix.com.  
**This page** Irma at Thames Reach talks to a client.

## FOREWORD

**Over the past two decades successive initiatives have helped our country make real progress. We have heard the stories of people who experience homelessness and understood that it blights lives. We have decided to take action. From initiatives to tackle rough sleeping, families stuck in bed and breakfast or temporary accommodation, to investment in hostels to make them “Places of Change” and help for people to keep their homes during the recession: we have shown that we can work together across public, private and voluntary sectors to bring progress.**

The 500 organisations that make up the Homeless Link network have a greater ambition, building on this success – let’s end homelessness together – for good. Representatives of all the main parties helped us launch our Vision to Action plan in 2006 which set out to describe how this could be achieved. Since then the Labour Government, Conservative Mayor of London and Liberal Democrat council leaders have backed the first major step on the road – the ambition to end rough sleeping in this country by 2012. In the past, the arrival of the Olympics in a country has seen homeless people pushed out of sight for a few weeks. In 21st century Britain we will do it differently. We have a world stage to show “yes we can end this social evil” and ensure that everyone has shelter – and a long term housing solution in place so they won’t need to return to the streets.

Homelessness touches not just rough sleepers but people who live insecurely – in unsafe places, squatting, sofa-surfing, stuck in hostels or waiting for repossession or eviction orders. During these challenging economic times more people are living at the margins, vulnerable to becoming homeless. We call for this to be the decade that ended homelessness. Over 60 years ago the Universal Declaration of Human Rights set out that everyone should have housing. Let’s make this our goal.

  
**Jenny Edwards, Chief Executive  
HOMELESS LINK**



"How can anyone who has not been homeless begin to know what it feels like to find a place at last where you can get indoors, be warm, get some regular food and more importantly be safe from the inevitable weekend beatings. The building is great but it is the people inside the building that make all the difference. They make you feel like a person and in some ways that's the start for you beginning to feel human again."

**David, moving to the YMCA, after 7 years on the streets & in squats**

# ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

**Homeless Link is the only national umbrella organisation for frontline homelessness charities in England. As the collaborative hub for information and debate on homelessness, we seek to improve services for homeless people and to advocate policy change. Through this work, we aim to end homelessness in England.**

Over the last 6 months we have consulted with our 500 member organisations, our National Advisory Council and homeless people from across the country to identify the areas that will make most difference to our ambition of ending homelessness.

We are particularly grateful for the insights of people using services, which have enriched our understanding of what will count most in preventing new people following the path into homelessness.

Much has been achieved, but we have more to do. In this document we recognise the progress that has already been made and set out the next steps. Our calls are to all political parties. In return, we pledge to provide all the support we can towards ending homelessness.

A fundamental cornerstone for ending homelessness and rough sleeping is the Place of Change programme and approach<sup>1</sup>. This encapsulates the ethos and approach of the sector in the 21st century. It provides welcoming high quality buildings, motivated staff, empowering services and the involvement of the people using the service. It is increasing the number of people moving on in a positive way into settled housing and training or employment. Much, but not all, of the great work that goes on in the sector happens in a Place of Change or within an organisation that has embraced the ethos of the programme

You can find more information about the work of the homelessness sector and the issues raised in the document on our website: [www.homeless.org.uk](http://www.homeless.org.uk)

<sup>1</sup> The Places of Change approach incorporates an £80 million 3 year capital investment programme from 2008-2011 by the Homes and Communities Agency. It builds on the success of the Hostels Capital Investment Programme, which provided £90 million capital funding over 2005-08

**PHOTO** Client at St Basils, photo by Robert Davidson

# TWO DECADES OF PROGRESS

There has been significant progress in tackling homelessness in the past 20 years. Successive governments have given priority to the issue, developing strategies and initiatives. They have worked in partnership with charities and local authorities to make change happen on the ground for the people who need it.

Homelessness services have been transformed since the late 1980s, the days of the old DSS “spikes” and charities working with large visible encampments of rough sleepers. Now they involve and change the lives of some of the most socially excluded people in the country. In London over 9,000 people have been helped off the streets since 2000.

## 90's

### 1996

The RSI was extended to other areas across England.

## 00's

### 1990

The Conservative Government established the Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI)

### 1997

The Labour Government makes rough sleeping top priority for the new Social Exclusion Unit

### 1998

Government target to cut rough sleeping by two thirds by 2002.

### 1999

Establishment of the Rough Sleepers Unit to coordinate all government programmes for rough sleepers.

### 2001

Target of two-thirds reduction in rough sleeping achieved (and later exceeded, hitting 75%)

### 2002

Homelessness Act 2002 – duty on all local authorities to have a homelessness strategy and extends ‘priority need’ categories.

Government target to end the long-term use of B&Bs for homeless families with children (achieved in 2004)

### 2003

Supporting People programme launched to deliver housing related support

National expenditure of £1.61bn in Supporting People services delivered a net saving of £3.41bn<sup>1</sup>

### 2004

Government target of ending B&B use for homeless families achieved.

### 2005

Government target to halve use of temporary accommodation by 2010

£90m Hostels Capital Improvement Programme (HCIP) to increase positive move on

Government launches national Change programme for homeless services delivered by Homeless Link

Do you want to end homelessness? Homeless Link's 10 point manifesto launched

### 2006

Ending Homelessness: from Vision to Action launched by Homeless Link, after consultation with the sector. Call for the Government to commit to end rough sleeping by 2012.

A8 nationals in London homelessness services shows for first time significant level of Central and East European street homelessness

### 2007

£70m Places of Change Programme and continued support for Change programme for services

### 2009

The London Delivery Board established to deliver ending rough sleeping in London

Making Every Adult Matter Coalition launched to tackle multiple needs across homelessness, offending, addictions and mental health

PROMPT toolkit launched to help local authorities and charities focus on preventing people becoming homeless on the streets

95% of homelessness projects now provide life skills support and help with returning to work<sup>2</sup>

9 in 10 of homelessness projects offered a Programme of positive activity in 2009, up from 6 in 10 in 2008<sup>3</sup>

### 2008

Government commits to end rough sleeping by 2012 and launches cross government plan No One Left Out – Communities ending Rough Sleeping

Mayor of London commits to end rough sleeping in London by 2012

### 2010

London Action Plan to end rough sleeping published

More local authorities make the pledge and draw up plans

### General Election...

<sup>1</sup> Capgemini for Communities and Local Government (2009) Research into the financial benefits of the Supporting People programme 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Homeless Link, Survey of Needs and Provision (SNAP) 2009

<sup>3</sup> Homeless Link, Survey of Needs and Provision (SNAP) 2009

# 10 STEPS TO END HOMELESSNESS

**WE CALL ON THE NEXT GOVERNMENT TO TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS TO END HOMELESSNESS:**

- 1** Build on the ambition to end rough sleeping in our country by 2012
- 2** Develop a national picture of 21st century homelessness and create the strategy to tackle it
- 3** Ensure a well promoted, effective and welcoming Housing Options and Advice Service, for all who need it in every area
- 4** Prevent homelessness during life transitions e.g. leaving care or discharge from hospital, prison and the armed services
- 5** Ensure that no one is left destitute and excluded from basic support in 21st century Britain
- 6** Tackle the deep social exclusion of people with multiple needs
- 7** Deliver top class access for homeless people to the right mental health, drug and alcohol support
- 8** Build on the sector's Places of Change approach by extending support for positive activities, learning, skills and employment
- 9** Reform how housing benefit, tax and other benefits work to support the journey into work and prevent homelessness
- 10** Increase housing supply and make better use of existing accommodation, halve the number of empty homes and strengthen the offer of the private rented sector

# 1

**BUILD ON THE AMBITION  
TO END ROUGH SLEEPING  
IN OUR COUNTRY BY 2012**

# 2

**DEVELOP A  
NATIONAL PICTURE  
OF 21ST CENTURY  
HOMELESSNESS  
AND CREATE THE  
STRATEGY TO  
TACKLE IT**



# WE CALL ON THE NEXT GOVERNMENT TO:

- Build on the ambition and strategy to end rough sleeping in our country by 2012
- Work with local authorities, voluntary agencies and develop strong cross government working
- Develop a national picture of 21st century homelessness and create the strategy to tackle it
- Ensure the 2011 Census collects data and produces specific reports on the prevalence of homeless people including those in hostels, night shelters and insecure accommodation throughout England.



Thames Reach street rescue service

# STOPPING HOMELESSNESS BEFORE IT BEGINS

## **WE WILL END HOMELESSNESS IF WE PREVENT HOMELESSNESS.**

This relies on people getting the right help at the right time, as early as possible. Getting this right will mean least cost to communities, public finances and human lives.

We can easily predict some of the pressures and life events that put people at risk of homelessness. This gives us a good chance to get effective advice and help to them.

We know that some people are more vulnerable because of their life history. This gives us the chance to target advice and support to their personal circumstances.

We know that some people find themselves excluded from services over and over again. This gives us the chance to offer help through organisations with a specialist expertise in overcoming this pattern of multiple exclusion.

Many people say that the first place they go for help is their local authority, but often they don't go or go very late. Encouraging people to ask for help in their local area and offering the right solutions catches problems before they become intensive, complex and costly.

# 3

## ENSURE A WELL PROMOTED, EFFECTIVE AND WELCOMING HOUSING OPTIONS AND ADVICE SERVICE, FOR ALL WHO NEED IT IN EVERY AREA



### FIRST STOP, RIGHT HELP

Local authorities have a crucial role in preventing and solving homelessness. Many people know that if they are homeless and in “priority need”<sup>1</sup> their local council provides accommodation. Many councils have moved quickly to promote support for homeowners at risk of losing their home.

Far fewer people are aware that everyone should be able to get help and advice from their local authority if they face a risk of homelessness. Some local authorities have extended their services in this area and helped people avoid homelessness. But in other places there is enormous scope to strengthen this preventative service and to promote it widely, particularly to single people.

We believe that it is right in these hard economic times to expect every local area to focus on making these services strong effective and well known. It is here that most can be done to prevent a fall into homelessness and the escalating social damage that so often goes with this.

#### WE CALL FOR THE NEXT GOVERNMENT TO:

- Commit to a well promoted, effective and welcoming Housing Options and Advice Service for all who need it in every area, regardless of whether or not they are defined as in “priority need”.

<sup>1</sup> Under homelessness law homeless households are in priority need if they have children, anyone is pregnant, vulnerable due to illness, disability or time spent in an institution, 16 or 17, or under 21 if they have been in care.

**PHOTO** IT training at CHC, photo by Robert Davidson

## HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION THROUGH EFFICIENT TAX AND BENEFITS

**44% of service users in an average homelessness project are affected by debt<sup>1</sup>.**

People are vulnerable to homelessness if their life changes. Maybe they lose a partner or a job. Perhaps their work is low paid and irregular. In these circumstances it is vital that the tax and benefit administration supports their ability to maintain their home through changing circumstances. Unfortunately all too often, behind a case of homelessness there is a story of confusing or late payments towards rent from housing benefit or problems arising from the paying back of tax credits.

These issues play their part in the debt and arrears that feature as the major issue for homeless people. They can block the way for many years for people to move out of homelessness to a stable home and employment. There are local authorities providing efficient and supportive services. If some can do it, why shouldn't all?

### **WE CALL ON THE NEXT GOVERNMENT TO:**

- Ensure that the rules and administration of the tax and benefits system work to prevent homelessness for people in low paid or irregular employment.

### **CASE STUDY: TELFORD AND WREKIN COUNCIL**

Telford and Wrekin Council in partnership with the Fairshare Credit Union and local housing associations are delivering the "Third, Third, Third Scheme". It aims to reduce the number of homeless people unable to get a housing association tenancy due to rent arrears. Households save with the Credit Union to obtain a loan towards one third of the arrears. The council pays another third of the debt with the final third being written off by the housing association. The scheme has been extended to those at risk of being evicted due to rent arrears, with an agreement for the tenant to pay an affordable amount towards their arrears. This is matched every three months by the Council and housing associations, reducing arrears and avoiding eviction proceedings. The Council is extending the scheme to the private rented sector.





# 4

## PREVENT HOMELESSNESS DURING LIFE TRANSITIONS, E.G. LEAVING CARE OR DISCHARGE FROM HOSPITAL, PRISON AND THE ARMED SERVICES

### TRANSITION POINTS: COVERING THE RISKS

It's clear that when people move from one stage of their lives to another; they have a higher risk of homelessness. Whether it's an 18 year old leaving the family home; a soldier leaving the army; someone leaving the care system or somebody leaving prison striving to go straight – there is a risk that they stumble before too long. Because we know the risk points we can prepare people better for the change and make sure there is somewhere to turn quickly if things go wrong.

#### YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING HOME AND CARE

**In 2008/09 the number of young people found to be statutory homeless in England alone was 4,080<sup>1</sup>.**

**A major review of youth homelessness by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 2008 found that at least 75,000 young people across the UK are in contact with homelessness services every year<sup>2</sup>.**

**The proportion of first-time rough sleepers in London with a care background has dropped from a high of 17% in 2001/02 to 7% in 2007/08<sup>3</sup>.**

Most of us make the step to live independently successfully but we all need some help on the way.

Young people who have experienced disruption, trauma or violence in childhood need more help than most. Some faced family homelessness when they were very young. They leave home or are thrown out without any plan or real information.

For many, the recession increases family tensions, financial pressures and levels of alcoholism, drug use or domestic violence. Jobs are harder to find and with 1 in 5 young people currently unemployed, homelessness is an ever greater risk.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/homelessnessstatistics/livetables/> - Live Table 632

<sup>2</sup> D Quilgars, S Johnsen & N Pleace (2008) Youth Homelessness in the UK, Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

<sup>3</sup> Broadway & National Centre for Social Research (2009) Profiling London's Rough Sleepers: A longitudinal analysis of CHAIN data.

Young people in this situation need suitable emergency accommodation, high quality temporary accommodation and move-on housing. Some local authorities have developed young people's housing plans and pathways. Some have excellent family mediation projects and night stop schemes. This approach needs to become universal and include 'pre-crisis' interventions with school children and their parents.

**"My name is Amy, I'm 16 and live in a Depaul UK hostel in Bradford. I didn't get on with my Mum as she has alcohol problems, she threw me out and I was left homeless. I felt angry and scared. I went to my social worker for help and she referred me to Nightstop...my host was lovely and made me feel at ease. She cooked me dinner and asked what I wanted for breakfast; I went to bed feeling safe...I stayed with various different hosts who were all lovely and reassuring, overall Nightstop made a big difference to me."**

Historically the care system has fed homelessness. There have been improvements but there is significant scope for more. In particular, there is a shortage of suitable accommodation for care leavers so many are left in insecure, poor quality and unsafe accommodation with little support. Bed and breakfast accommodation is rightly recognised as unsuitable for families. It is not suitable either for vulnerable single young people.

#### **WE CALL ON THE NEXT GOVERNMENT TO:**

- Invest in housing education, information and advice for young people and family mediation
- Promote the need for every area to have suitable 'time out' and short term services to prevent long-term homelessness
- Provide effective counselling, mental health and support services for people who have experienced abuse or neglect in childhood.



## **CASE STUDY:**

**ST BASILS IN BIRMINGHAM WORKS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 16-25. THEIR PREVENTATIVE SERVICES INCLUDE:**

**Home Options** helps young people review their options and their consequences. They have worked with more than 1000 young people and prevented 92% of them from needing emergency accommodation.

**'The Link'** city centre based housing advice service for young people provides information and direct links to accommodation based services. The Link sees more than 3,500 young people every year and has identified suitable placements for 80% of these.

**Family Mediation** supports young people and families to address underlying problems that may lead to young people leaving home unplanned way. Family Mediation works with 175 young people and their families every year and has supported 90% to remain at home and 10% to move in a planned way.

**PHOTO** Client at St Basils, photo by Robert Davidson



## BREAKING OUT: ENDING THE PRISON & HOMELESSNESS CYCLE

**30% of prisoners released from prison have nowhere to live.<sup>4</sup>**

**Ex-prisoners who are homeless on release are twice as likely to re-offend as those with stable accommodation.<sup>5</sup>**

**“When you come out of prison, I was asked “Where do you want to go?”... and they just gave me a train ticket. But they don’t put anything there for when you are going to arrive at your destination. All you have got is your clothes, a little bit of money and then you have got to fend for yourself. I wasn’t even told you could go to a probation office or go and see someone to help you get back into the civilised live from being inside.”<sup>6</sup>**

Prison and homelessness feed each other. The costs of this cycle are enormous. Each time someone leaves prison homeless, their chances of reoffending are higher.

There have been changes to prepare prisoners better. But far too many prisoners are still being released without the steps in place to ensure accommodation, benefits and a path into work. At the same time homeless people can face prison for minor but repetitive offences because they do not have a stable address and lifestyle to convince courts they can change their behaviour.

There have been excellent results from specialist housing services identifying and arranging accommodation for ex prisoners.<sup>7</sup> Ultimately few have been sustained because of costs. However, we believe that a full look at the social return on investment would reveal their true value in preventing crime and homelessness.

In London new arrangements aim to identify prisoners with a history of rough sleeping, to help housing advice teams prepare them for release. With so many short term sentences, it is vital prisons encourage staff to link with outreach teams and hostels.

Effective Places of Change, where projects seek to do more than provide a roof or bed and help people use their time purposefully, can reduce the risk of offending. Probation service work outside prison focuses on ex prisoners who have served sentences above a year. There is significant scope for the sectors to work more closely to prevent reoffending and homelessness together.

### WE CALL ON THE NEXT GOVERNMENT TO:

- Invest in housing advice for prisoners, identifying those most at risk of homelessness from the time they are admitted and making an ongoing offer of advice and support after release
- Improve pre release planning and preparation, working with local authorities, Jobcentre Plus and treatment agencies, so that housing, benefits and support are in place from the moment of release
- Ensure that work that takes place in hostels, day centres and other homelessness services, which prevents and reduces reoffending is recognised and supported by the offender management authorities.

4 Niven S & Stewart D (2005) Resettlement Outcomes on Release from Prison, Home Office Findings 248, Home Office

5 ODPM and Home Office (2005) Guide to Housing & Housing Related Support Options for Offenders and People at Risk of Offending

6 Revolving Doors, National Service User Forum, ‘Multiple Needs’ Service Users Perspectives, September 2009

7 NOMS South West set up a two-year pilot project, the South West Accommodation Gateway, which aimed to reduce re-offending and crime by preventing and reducing the homelessness of offenders in the community and on release from custody. It included three new community-based gateway services providing a single point of access to local accommodation for offenders in Plymouth, Dorset and Bristol, Between September 2006 and March 2007 over 250 offenders were accommodated.

**PHOTO** Thames Reach client



## LEAVING THE SERVICES, STAYING HOUSED

**Around 6% of rough sleepers and single homeless people are ex-armed services personnel.<sup>8</sup>**

Steps have improved preparation for people leaving the armed services, reducing the numbers who become rough sleepers. We acknowledge the work done by the armed services to improve the support and help on offer to people returning to civilian life. However, ex-service personnel still face too high a risk of becoming homelessness. Trauma and other problems can take years to emerge, causing relationship problems and homelessness.

Those who have served the country should be able to expect the right advice, support and help to ensure they do not risk homelessness from the time they enter the services to ongoing advice after they leave.

### WE CALL ON THE NEXT GOVERNMENT TO:

- Ensure all armed service personnel are linked to specialist housing advice from the time they join the service, intensifying over the year before discharge
- Provide rapid access to help for people experiencing post traumatic stress and other mental health problems at any point after discharge.

<sup>8</sup> Homeless Link (2009) Survey of Needs and Provision (SNAP) and Centre for Housing Policy, University of York (June 2008) The Experiences of Homeless Ex-service Personnel in London

**PHOTO** Roundabout client, photo by Robert Davidson

## ENDING HOSPITAL TO STREET DISCHARGE

Homeless people have some of the highest rates of ill health in the country. Their use of Accident and Emergency and their length of stay in hospital is double that of the general population. Their health problems, after treatment, are not likely to be resolved if they are discharged back to a situation of homelessness.

The admission of a homeless person to hospital is an opportunity to prevent further homelessness. Too often it is a revolving door, where their multiple health and other needs are never fully addressed and they will be readmitted before too long. This is the chance to make life changes, building on improved health with the right support and accommodation.

### WE CALL ON THE NEXT GOVERNMENT TO:

- Expect all hospitals to identify patients with a history or high vulnerability to homelessness; use guidance to develop an admission and discharge protocol for homeless people; and provide information and training to discharge staff.





# 5

## ENSURE THAT NO ONE IS LEFT DESTITUTE AND EXCLUDED FROM BASIC SUPPORT IN 21ST CENTURY BRITAIN

### NO ONE LEFT OUT

**In London, more than a quarter of people sleeping rough are from Central and Eastern Europe<sup>1</sup>.**

In the 21st Century no one should be destitute on our streets. Yet there are some groups of people who, falling on hard times, end up left homeless and destitute on the streets without effective help or routes out.

Over the past five years the problem of Central and East Europeans becoming street homeless has grown rapidly. When the EU expanded in 2004 and people were invited to the UK to work, special arrangements were introduced. These barred people from access to benefits (such as housing benefit or jobseekers allowance) unless they had worked continuously for a year under a special Workers Registration Scheme. The cost of registration, and the frequent lack of continuity in their employment, has left many with no shelter or basic income if they lose their work. Job Centres are reluctant to support job seekers with poor command of English to find work.

We now have a situation where more than a quarter of the people seen sleeping on the streets of London are from Central and Eastern Europe. Similar situations occur in other major cities and, out of public view, there are new rough sleeping encampments found in rural areas where agricultural jobs have been lost.

#### CASE STUDY: UPPER ROOM

**UR4jobs at the Upper Room in Hammersmith is one of the few organisations to offer Central and Eastern European Migrants support with training and employability. Over 930 people have registered with UR4Jobs since it opened in November 2006. It has assisted people into work and training; with health issues and travel home; with employment law and ID documents; psychological support in language of origin and specialist services for migrant women.**

While these are not the only destitute homeless on the streets they are by far the largest group. They are also explicitly excluded from the National Assistance Act, which enables local authorities to help genuine cases of destitution.



This worsening situation is an outrage to our standards of decency in a civilised 21st century nation. It is time to establish a baseline beneath which we will not allow anyone to fall.

#### WE CALL ON THE NEXT GOVERNMENT TO:

- Take immediate steps to end exclusions from support linked to the Workers Registration Scheme
- Amend and strengthen the National Assistance Act so there are no excluded groups
- Work with local government to ensure all homeless and destitute people from Central and Eastern Europe receive short term support to enable them to find work or to make a dignified return home connected to appropriate services
- Establish “destitution-proofing” for new Government proposals which could inadvertently result in destitution, particularly around withdrawal or exclusion from safety net benefits.



## SUPPORTING THE JOURNEY OUT

**Many, but not all, of the people who experience homelessness, have multiple issues to tackle. The longer someone is homeless, the more likely it is that they will develop a multitude of problems.**

For some people short term focused help will get them back to stable life and work very quickly. But most people using homelessness services need more than a roof. They need the right support for their own situation, developing their ability to take control of their own lives and future. The right help needs the right people to offer it, people who have the training and understanding of how to help people change their lives without becoming stuck in dependency. Increasingly it is people with a past personal experience of homelessness who are being recruited for this work.

Some homeless people are extremely vulnerable, with a range of complex and multiple needs. They need ongoing support to address underlying problems that contribute to and are exacerbated by homelessness: mental health distress and disorders, alcohol and drug misuse, offending and challenging behaviour, gambling and money problems. Even with the highest quality support, it may take some years for them to leave homelessness behind and they may need ongoing support in their future accommodation.

Recognising these issues must never mean that we do not also recognise each person's individuality, personal strengths and potential. People fall into homelessness from all backgrounds. But they all have the capacity to escape it; to make a positive impact on other's lives and contribute to communities: 'giving something back'.

PHOTOS (left and above) SIFA Fireside



# 6

## TACKLE THE DEEP SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF PEOPLE WITH MULTIPLE NEEDS



### MULTIPLE NEEDS, MULTIPLE EXCLUSION

**41% of clients in an average homelessness project have multiple needs<sup>1</sup>.**

A proportion of homeless people, especially those who have slept rough for months or years, develop physical and mental health problems, engage in drug and alcohol abuse and some become involved in anti-social behaviour and offending.

Multiple needs and multiple exclusion from services often go hand in hand. Homeless people have often had bad experiences of authority and been turned away when they have asked for help. Services that, for example, require appointments, detailed information giving, or long and patient waiting effectively exclude those who are vulnerable because of the complexity of their needs.

Homeless people with multiple needs face chronic exclusion. They can be viewed as “hard to help” or just too expensive. Too often they fall between gaps in service or are referred around services with no-one taking responsibility. As a result they miss out on the help they need to make positive changes to their lives. This ‘recycling’ around services is costly and wasteful to society and communities. It consigns people to the continued misery of homelessness.

**The London Delivery Board, working with CLG and boroughs, has focused on the 205 most entrenched long-term rough sleepers. After 9 months 67 remain sleeping rough.**

<sup>1</sup>

Homeless Link, Survey of Needs and Provision (SNAP) 2009

**PHOTOS (left)** Clients at CHC **(right)** Client at Roundabout, both by Robert Davidson



Client at Roundabout, Sheffield.  
Photo by Robert Davidson

Often the main contact and way of escape out of homelessness lies through contact with the voluntary sector; perhaps someone working for a homelessness, drugs, mental health or offenders organisation. In the areas where public and voluntary sector organisations work successfully in partnership resources can be pooled and used flexibly. This can be the start of a journey leading to real life improvements for someone who has been stuck “outside” for too long. Too often advocates for high need clients face frustrating battles to try to get them access to the services needed for their health, addictions, mental health, social care, offending, skills and employment.

To change this Homeless Link, Mind, Drugscope and Clinks have joined forces in the Making Every Adult Matter coalition and we have jointly issued a four point call for action ([www.meam.org.uk](http://www.meam.org.uk)).

#### **WE CALL ON THE NEXT GOVERNMENT TO:**

- Identify people with multiple needs and exclusions at the local level using national guidance
- Accept the social and economic case for action
- Commit to publish a Green Paper on multiple needs and exclusions that sets out the national policy framework with clear expectations for cooperation between local authorities, criminal justice agencies, health services and the voluntary sector in defining, supporting and tracking the progress of adults with multiple needs and exclusions
- Measure national progress.

# 7

## **DELIVER TOP CLASS ACCESS FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE TO THE RIGHT MENTAL HEALTH, DRUG AND ALCOHOL SUPPORT**

## MEETING HEALTH NEEDS

**94% of homeless projects report having clients with mental health problems and in an average homeless project 32% of clients have mental health problems.<sup>1</sup>**

**42% of clients in an average homelessness project have drug problems and 39% have alcohol support needs.<sup>2</sup>**

**Peer research by Homeless Link found that around half of homeless people prefer to use GPs and half to use A&E. They wanted more 'walk in' health services and better access to services to help with mental health and drug and alcohol needs.<sup>3</sup>**

Homeless people often experience poor health. Those with a history of rough sleeping have some of the worst health in the country.

**The average age of death of people recorded as homeless on coroners' reports was 42.<sup>4</sup>**

Data on the health of homeless people specifically is not collected routinely and so rarely affects decisions around local priorities. Those with the least settled lives are least likely to be registered with a GP, to appear in local area targets or to have effective access to highly structured appointments based services. As a result the health emergency services are too often the first port of call.

**The health sub-group of the Mayor's London Delivery Board on rough sleepers is establishing a Pan-London Commissioning Support and Advice team for health services for rough sleepers.**

Many homeless services support people with mental health, drug, alcohol or dual diagnosis problems.<sup>5</sup> But in too many areas there are major difficulties gaining access to specialist mental health and drug and alcohol services. There is a shortage of treatment and detoxification services, in particular for the treatment of alcohol problems.

There are some excellent examples of services that work successfully with people with mental health, alcohol and drug problems. But frequently the thresholds for mental health services are very high. They tend to operate in a way that excludes vulnerable homeless people. Those with dual diagnosis of drugs and mental health face particular problems. Too often no service will take lead responsibility for their care.

There needs to be a shift in services approaching drink, drugs and mental health as separate issues to seeing them as part of the individual's range of needs and address them as a whole within an integrated approach.

### WE CALL ON THE NEXT GOVERNMENT TO:

- Audit the health of homeless people in each local area and develop a national picture
- Develop a national health and homelessness strategy that ensures homeless people:
  - have access to mainstream health provision and specialist mental health and drug and alcohol support where needed;
  - receive community care assessments as appropriate and
  - receive acute services providing high quality care.
- Promote closer integration between housing, social care and health care providers to create sustainable accommodation for those with most complex needs.
- Require Primary Care Trusts to assess the health needs of homeless people in their area, include these in Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs) and respond with appropriate local strategies, plans and provision.

1-2 Homeless Link (2009) Survey of Needs and Provision

3 Homeless Link Peer Research in response to Your Health, Your Care, Your Say: Commissioned by the Department of Health

4 Grenier, P. 1996. Still Dying for a Home.

5 Dual diagnosis describes people who have mental health problems and drug or alcohol problems.

### CASE STUDY: KING GEORGES HOSTEL, ECHG

King Georges works with chaotic drug users with complex needs. The hostel is committed to giving people a second chance and is willing to take back residents even after threats of violence, or inappropriate behaviour towards staff.

People entering the hostel acknowledge they have a problem with drugs and want to deal with it and attend an intensive 6 week initial assessment. This reduces risk, improve motivation, and prevents eviction and abandonment.

King Georges provides a range of activities, including sport. They have created a fitness programme with British Military Fitness. There has been a big reduction in drug use. "I'm completely clean now. It's got back to what I was like when I was a kid. I feel normal and I look forward to every day" Dave, after 20 years of addiction, is now looking for a job.



## **BUILD ON THE SECTOR'S PLACES OF CHANGE APPROACH BY EXTENDING SUPPORT FOR POSITIVE ACTIVITIES, LEARNING, SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT**

## **TRANSFORMING LIVES: PLACES OF CHANGE**

**Places of Change projects have shown a 60% increase in the number of people moving on positively<sup>1</sup>. This includes:**

- **500 now in work**
- **600 entering further education**
- **1,000 in pre-employment training**
- **400 in volunteering.**

The last decade has seen a sea change in services. The Places of Change movement which has transformed so many of our hostels and day centres is about helping people out of homelessness: from the street to independence. It is about the empowerment and giving a voice to people on that journey, enabling them to shape services.

The Supporting People programme<sup>2</sup> has enabled services to develop and improve. It has brought the voluntary and public sectors together to the aim of providing services that, at their best can offer flexibility to fit the individual. It is vital that these improvements are sustained and developed further in the future.

This is the challenge now that powers have been substantially devolved to the local level. Supporting People funding is now being gradually subsumed into the new structure for setting priorities, Local Area Agreements. Will the new linked commissioning framework (the Area Based Grant) encourage joint working, linked funding and continue the commitment to looking beyond those people who have statutory rights to services so that the many other people with support needs can be helped to make progress in their lives?

With the threat of public spending cuts ahead we believe it is vital that homeless and vulnerable people do not lose out as a result of being low down the list of local priorities. Retaining Supporting People as a named funding stream within the Area Based Grant arrangements would help ensure that those groups who have historically been provided with few resources and who have frequently fallen below local authority radars are given the help and support they need and deserve.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/places\\_of\\_change\\_programme](http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/places_of_change_programme)

<sup>2</sup> Introduced in 2003, the national Supporting People programme covers the cost of supporting vulnerable adults in accommodation and has been particularly important in funding the support of people whose level of need falls below the threshold that entitles them to social services and other statutory assistance.



**“I like the hostel, I don’t want to be thrown out, it’s the best hostel I’ve been in. You’ve got a keyworker who cares about you. You’ve got people to help you.”**

**Client, medium sized hostel**

Homelessness agencies working with a Places of Change ethos focus on improving outcomes for homeless people, helping them realise their potential, and challenging and motivating them to move out of homelessness. Capital investment in buildings from Government and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) has underpinned the Places of Change programme.

There still remain many areas that the programme has not yet reached. In some areas people struggle to deliver responsive services in inadequate premises. In a few areas there is still dormitory style accommodation.

Every area should have holistic services with a Place of Change ethos for people who are homeless or vulnerable to homelessness, and also the wider community.

**Successful services contribute to:**

- developing skills and employment;
- addressing health inequalities
- tackling mental health and substance misuse
- reducing re-offending and improving community safety
- extending sports and cultural opportunities
- financial inclusion
- community cohesion.

**CASE STUDY: BRIGHTER FUTURES, STOKE ON TRENT**

**Brighter Futures runs the Clubhouse Network for anyone with experience of mental health problems. Members take part in training & other activities e.g. art workshops, support with reading, writing and IT skills, and complementary therapies.**

- **In 2009 there were 15,104 visits by members**
- **100 people were supported into “working membership”, volunteering to take on cleaning, recruitment, running their own groups and encouraging members to go on walks**
- **The team supported 11 people into paid work, helped 37 people reduce their debt and 49 people to deal with benefit enquiries.**



**CASE STUDY: TWO SAINTS**

**Southampton’s Two Saints’ Learning Service, The Base, engages with disadvantaged or reluctant learners. It offers support in gaining recognised accredited qualifications, employment opportunities and increased confidence and motivation. Since the project started in 2008:**

- **24 learners have moved to part or full time employment**
- **17 learners have completed First Aid training**
- **26 learners have completed a Level 2 Food Hygiene Qualification**
- **31 learners have applied for jobs and created CVs**
- **12 learners have enrolled on Part or Full Time College Courses**
- **18 learners have completed the CITB Construction Card.**

**PHOTO** Client at Two Saints, photo by Ryan Emo

Some services to help homeless people have successfully drawn in wider community support. Then their work can become central to sustaining communities.

#### **CASE STUDY: CHC**

**CHC delivers a range of services to homeless people as well as the wider community in its new purpose-built centre in Brent. People come for training, advice or support.**

**It runs a range of classes and training. Homeless people engage in these alongside local residents. The project has strong links with local employers and last year supported 60 service users into employment, mainly jobs in construction, hospitality and retail.**

**It also has a strong community mission. The Youth Engagement Service (YES) was developed in response to the local community's concern about intimidation by a group of young people engaged in anti-social activities. Its activities include a fashion show, documentary film and sports. Its youth leaders work with the police to engage with other young people through sports and other activities.**

#### **WE CALL ON THE NEXT GOVERNMENT TO:**

- Ensure every area has holistic services with a “Place of Change” ethos for people who are homeless or vulnerable to homelessness backed by capital and revenue investment
- Work cross-government to achieve a comprehensive package of support covering all the different elements of the work of homelessness services
- Continue to identify the Supporting People element within the Area Based Grant so that funding to non-statutory groups can be tracked and services retained
- Ensure all inspection regimes, in particular the Comprehensive Area Assessment, monitors and reports on Local Authorities and local partnerships' responses to the needs of homeless people
- Introduce a cross government Public Service Agreement target relating to the social exclusion of homeless people.



CHC's purpose built centre  
Photo by Robert Davidson



## POSITIVE ACTIVITY, SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT

Lack of employment is a major cause and consequence of homelessness. Developing skills, preparing for work and finding a job are important steps out. Surveys regularly show that at least 70% of homeless and former homeless people would like to be in paid employment.

**77% of homeless people say they are ready to work now, with 97% wanting to work in the future<sup>3</sup>.**

While some homeless people have previously held responsible jobs, many homeless people have few, or no, qualifications. Programmes to help homeless people move from benefits to work need a tailored approach. This should take account of their skills, interests, circumstances and needs. There must be a fresh approach, engaging and helping people furthest from the labour market.

There are still significant problems in getting skills and employment agencies to work with homeless people. Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) contracts with employment agencies should encourage them to work with people who are homeless, partnering with homelessness services to reach them.

**“Without Shekinah Mission and the Steady Work Programme, I would probably be dead... Shekinah has provided me with support for everything. They don’t judge you and aren’t interested in the past – just in now and in the future. I was doing plastering and bricklaying which was perfect for me as I have always enjoyed DIY. Following on from the work (on the programme), I was involved with on the Chelsea Flower Show, I am now working part-time for Shekinah managing a social enterprise in Plymouth that is involved in cleaning, decorating and maintaining properties. It’s wicked. It’s going really well, so I hope that it will be able to afford me full time in 3 or 4 months and I will be in charge of a team.”**

**Lucy, former addict**

For many people who have spent some time homeless, a staged approach is essential. The offer of, not just a bed, but a reason to get out of it, is the starting point of the turnaround. Positive activities, such as undertaking volunteer work, and informal learning, can be crucial early steps towards the longer term goal of an increased skills set, improved self-esteem, and then paid employment.

<sup>3</sup> Off the Streets and Into Work, 2005, No Home, no Job: Moving on from Transitional Spaces

**PHOTO** Planting in the Key Garden, Chelsea Flower Show 2009. Photo by Robert Davidson



Many homelessness projects offer activities including gardening, photography, music, art, and sports. While agencies have often used charitable donations to work in this area, the economic downturn is making it harder to sustain this.

There has been recent concern about the potential impact of the Independent Safeguarding Authority arrangements on the employment of formerly homeless people in the sector. We believe it is important to recognise some employment roles as stepping stones to wider employment opportunities.

### WE CALL ON THE NEXT GOVERNMENT TO:

- Agree a national strategy to tackle the high levels of long-term unemployment amongst homeless people
- Ensure that targets and expectations of skills and employment bodies encourage them to work with homeless people
- Recognise within the safeguarding arrangements the place of transitional rehabilitative employment with an appropriate attitude to risk
- Ensure that the National Skills Strategy recognises the importance of informal learning for homeless and excluded people
- Ensure that there are resources for positive activities programmes for homeless people.

# CASE STUDY:

## THAMES REACH, GIVING REAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORK (GROW)

GROW encourages and trains people with an experience of homelessness to apply for jobs at Thames Reach and other homelessness charities. Thames Reach aims to recruit at least 25 per cent of its workforce from among this target group by 2012 and currently has 20%.

Fintan's problems started when his marriage broke down and his wife left him. That's when the drinking began and he became homeless for 18 months. He ended up in a hostel. He had a stark choice:

**"If I didn't rebuild my life, I was heading for the coffin. Two homeless friends died in my arms, one of them from a drug overdose. I've got two children and one grandson who has just turned four. I realised that if I didn't stop drinking I could lose them."**

Fintan joined the GROW programme and completed nine months' on-the-job training. He is now employed by Thames Reach and offers support to hostel residents.

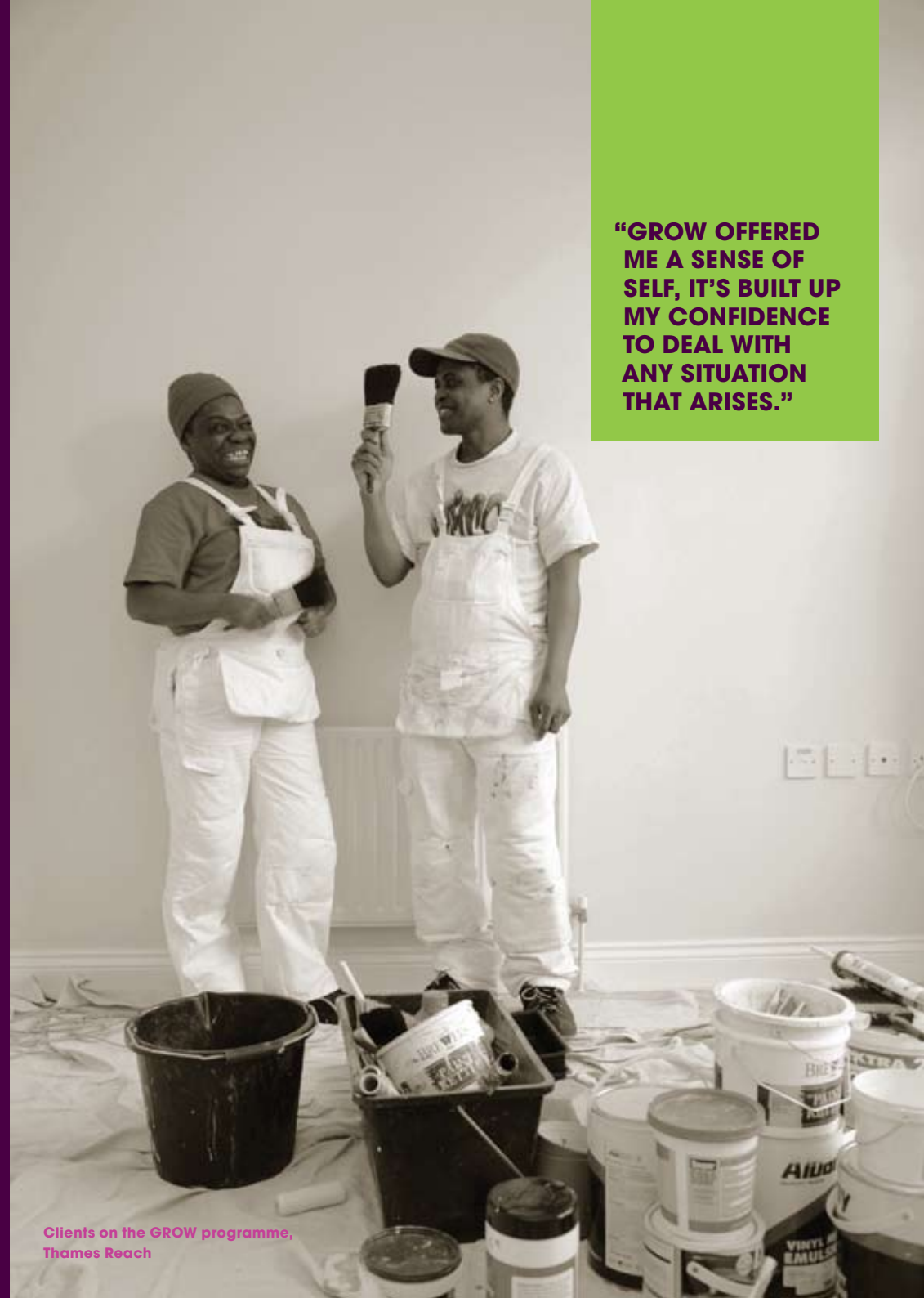
**"The traineeship gave me an understanding and insight into the services of the charity and prepared me for work - something it's great to be doing again."**

Other GROW participants gave the following feedback:

**"It gave me a purpose to wake up in the morning. I didn't feel like an outcast any more."**

**"I just want to give something back to Thames Reach. Programmes like this are one in a million."**

**"It's given me my life back."**



**"GROW OFFERED ME A SENSE OF SELF, IT'S BUILT UP MY CONFIDENCE TO DEAL WITH ANY SITUATION THAT ARISES."**

Clients on the GROW programme,  
Thames Reach

# 9

## REFORM HOW HOUSING BENEFIT, TAX AND OTHER BENEFITS WORK TO SUPPORT THE JOURNEY INTO WORK AND PREVENT HOMELESSNESS

### REFORMING HOUSING BENEFIT TO SUPPORT THE JOURNEY INTO INDEPENDENCE

When a person who is on benefit returns to work, their level of benefit is reduced, commensurate with their level of earnings. This is called a benefits 'taper'. Currently the taper or 'withdrawal' rate for housing benefit is extremely high. People who have showed great motivation to move out of homelessness and who have taken the step to get work can find the loss of benefits creates real financial problems. This can particularly hit after the first year of work because of tax changes. In the worst cases services see people returning to homelessness, having lost tenancies and with increased debts.

**"It is all about getting that first job and they are vulnerable jobs. Any kind of employment and your benefits get swept away. Getting them back takes forever, so they think I am not getting back in work. The government on the one side says get back to work and at the same time the same benefits system will screw you blind."**<sup>1</sup>

For vulnerable people returning after a long period of unemployment, transition to work can be difficult, with periods when they may not earn. There is currently provision for an individual's rent to be covered by housing benefit in their first four weeks of employment, providing a frequently essential transition from unemployment to work. However it needs to be expanded to give people a chance to get on a better financial footing and provide greater security during the early weeks and months in work.

For other people the route out of homelessness involves study and qualifications. Housing Benefit restrictions hold back people from taking this route, by restricting housing benefit for those in education for more than 16 hours a week. In addition, the single room rate for under-25 year olds impacts on young people's ability to find accommodation. The Local Housing Allowance for private tenants needs review to ensure it is set at a realistic level to cover rents.

#### WE CALL ON THE NEXT GOVERNMENT TO:

- Review and reform the Housing Benefit system so that it actively enables people into work.



# 10

**INCREASE HOUSING SUPPLY  
AND MAKE BETTER USE OF  
EXISTING ACCOMMODATION,  
HALVE THE NUMBER OF EMPTY  
HOMES AND STRENGTHEN  
THE OFFER OF THE PRIVATE  
RENTED SECTOR**

## SOMEWHERE TO LIVE

**“I just want a place of my own and want to go to work. I’d love it...”**  
**Service User, St Mungo’s**

### MORE HOMES THAT PEOPLE CAN AFFORD TO LIVE IN

While homelessness is often more than a housing issue, it is a housing issue too.

Over the last two decades there have been tremendous changes in the nature and cost of housing. Whether people pay rents or mortgages many are struggling to pay their housing costs or find a home at all.

Housebuilding over many decades has not kept up with the increasing demand for homes as the number of households increased. Social housing, which was in the past relatively available to people, has been reduced by sales under the Right to Buy and not replaced.

**In the 1970s, 80s and 90s the number of households increased by 30% while the level of house building fell by 50%.<sup>1</sup>**

**There were 1,763,140 households on local authority housing waiting lists in April 2009, this is around a 40% increase in the last five years.<sup>2</sup>**

**In 1981 32% of households lived in the social rented sector reducing to 18% by 2003 and has remained at the same level since then.<sup>3</sup>**

**In 2009 there were 1 million fewer homes to rent than there were in 1979.<sup>4</sup>**

We know that the shortage of homes at affordable rents holds people in homelessness limbo for too long. It means that too many people remain stuck in hostels and other forms of temporary accommodation and it blocks their ability to move on and rebuild their lives at high cost to public finances.

**45% of people in hostels in England and Wales are ready to move on, but unable to access accommodation.<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> DCLG, Overview of policy for housing demand and supply, [www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1503524](http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1503524)

<sup>2</sup> Communities and Local Government, Rents, Lettings and Tenancies, Live Tables, Table 600, [www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/rentslettings/livetables/](http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/rentslettings/livetables/)

<sup>3</sup> Shelter Factsheet – Housing Tenure, 2009

<sup>4</sup> T Lloyd (2009) Don’t bet the house on it: No turning back to housing boom and bust, Compass

<sup>5</sup> Homeless Link (2005) National Move-on Research, 2005.

The programme to build new social housing is important and has become more challenging to achieve in the recession. With the rise in repossession, fall in mortgage lending, loss of employment and house prices remaining out of reach for many people, the demand for social housing is high. It is clear that there must be a major expansion of the supply of new affordable homes to rent. This will take time to deliver and homelessness pressures are with us now. We need to make better use of the housing we already have as well as building more.

A top priority must be to make sure that there is a decent home for everyone, reflecting their ability to pay.

#### **WE CALL ON THE NEXT GOVERNMENT TO:**

- Draw up a long term national housing strategy
- Increase the supply of homes for affordable rent, with the goal of tackling the backlog of need and the projected rise in households.

### **MEETING EMERGENCY AND HIGH SUPPORT HOUSING NEED**

We know that some people simply need a short-term solution to stop their problems getting worse before returning to their normal way of life. Research shows around 1 in 4 local authorities in England have no emergency response in place for single homeless people.<sup>6</sup> This risks people having to leave their local area to get help, reducing their chances of keeping their work and social connections that could help them back to stability.

We must also not forget the need for long-term supported and specialist accommodation. This accommodation is essential for those who need long-term ongoing support, such as older homeless people and those with enduring mental health issues. Supported accommodation can also be a crucial stepping stone for vulnerable people prior to moving on into their own accommodation and enabling them to sustain their tenancy.

#### **WE CALL ON THE NEXT GOVERNMENT TO:**

- Ensure that every local authority has in place a response to emergency housing need and rapid help to get people back into accommodation
- Invest in specialist accommodation for people with complex and ongoing needs requiring high levels of support.

<sup>6</sup> Homeless Link, Responding to Emergency Housing Need, October 2009

### **BRINGING EMPTY HOMES INTO USE**

It is estimated that over three quarters of a million homes are lying empty, half of these for long periods. Homes lying empty are not just a wasted housing resource; they blight neighbourhoods, attract petty crime, devalue neighbouring property and are an environmental mistake. It's time we put this right.

Much of this could be changed by public bodies. The public sector owns about 100,000 empty homes and has leases on many more.

#### **The UK Borders Agency spent £1 billion on empty properties during 2008/09.<sup>7</sup>**

In addition to empty homes there are also empty commercial properties that could be used for housing. The Empty Homes Agency has suggested that there is the potential for 420,000 new dwellings to be created.

Some homelessness agencies have inspiring programmes that provide homeless people with the accredited skills to work in construction and refurbishment. Some are part of self build and "sweat equity" schemes that bring them a tenancy at reduced rent.

#### **WE CALL ON THE NEXT GOVERNMENT TO:**

- Draw up a national plan to halve the number of homes left empty
- End council tax subsidies for empty homes
- Require Government departments to release empty properties for use
- Ensure the Homes and Communities Agency investment and strategies support empty homes being brought back into use
- Promote short life and self-refurbishment models for bringing empty homes back into use.

### **A GOOD OFFER IN THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR**

The long decline of the private rented sector has started to reverse; it is increasing size and the proportion of families it houses. However, there are still challenges including property quality, management standards and security of tenure.

The private rented sector can be a good offer for people wanting to move out of homelessness to live independently. It can provide a wider range of choices of area and style of accommodation. But we also know that it needs to be

## CASE STUDY: CYRENIANS, NEWCASTLE – SELF BUILD PROGRAMME.

The Cyrenians has established a construction skills academy for homeless people, run with a local building contractor. Trainees have gone on to be involved in re-furbishing and new-build accommodation at their headquarters. All those involved studied for NVQ Level 2. Within the first 20 weeks of the first project almost all of the “self-builders” had moved into their own homes. The Cyrenians has set up a new company TCUK Property Services.

“The self-build project has given me the chance to get my life back on track. I honestly thought I was going to be unemployable for the rest of my life because of my drug problem and criminal history. Now at the end of the project I have been offered a job which I’m delighted about” Stuart ‘Self-Builder’



the right offer, otherwise it risks leaving tenants vulnerable to poor housing, unaffordable rents, eviction and repeat homelessness. At the same time, landlords who have no help with managing tenants with support needs, or who face delays in housing benefit payments, can become reluctant to take tenants with a history of homelessness or vulnerability.

**The private rented sector has grown from 10% of all households in England in 2000 to 14% by 2008.<sup>8</sup>**

Where local authorities have taken a strategic approach to working with local landlords many common problems can be overcome. Landlords can offer longer term tenancies, accept tenants reliant on housing benefit, and get assistance with repairs and managing tenants in need of support.

There remains the problem of a small proportion of unscrupulous landlords, exploiting people who are most vulnerable, including some of the new migrant communities. Enforcement action has been uncoordinated across many agencies. This needs addressing but there also needs to be a strategy to deliver decent low cost rented accommodation for people on low incomes who do not have priority for social housing.

### WE CALL ON THE NEXT GOVERNMENT TO:

- Introduce a new licensing system for all landlords, written tenancy agreements, regulation of lettings and management agents and effective complaints and redress procedures for tenants, as recommended in the Rugg and Rhodes<sup>9</sup> review of the private rented sector
- Promote local authority private landlords forums to help raise quality and security of this accommodation and improve access and good management for vulnerable tenants, including those who were previously homeless
- Ensure that private rented sector access schemes, e.g. rent deposit schemes are widely available
- Strengthen coordinated action against slum landlords housing vulnerable households, including migrant workers, in extremely poor quality property and identify decent alternative models.

<sup>7</sup> Hansard source (Citation: HC Deb, 7 January 2010, c528W)

<sup>8</sup> Communities and Local Government (2009) Housing in England 2007-09

<sup>9</sup> J Rugg & D Rhodes, (2008) The Private Rented Sector: its contribution and potential, Centre for Housing Policy, The University of York.

# OUR PLEDGES TO THE NEW GOVERNMENT

- 1** We will work with energy and commitment as your partners to prevent and end homelessness
- 2** We will seek out and share the approaches and solutions that make the most positive difference
- 3** We will gather evidence of trends and developments in homelessness and share these with you
- 4** We will tell you where we think policies need to change to prevent or end homelessness, with evidence and offer effective solutions
- 5** We will search for areas where services are weak or need development and help them understand what and how to change
- 6** We will bring the voice of people who have experienced homelessness into our work, events and strategies
- 7** We will consult and listen to our member organisations, drawing on their views and knowledge to communicate with you
- 8** We will advocate honestly and robustly, and if we don't persuade you we will continue to work positively within the current policies
- 9** We will value the trust you place in us by investing public funds and seek always to be efficient and impactful
- 10** We will give credit to the role of Government in making substantial progress on the path to ending homelessness



## TEN YEARS ON...

We look back with disbelief on the days when people slept in shop doorways. Everyone knows that, if there are housing pressures in their lives, they go to the local housing options and advice service for practical help, just as they go to a doctor if they are coming down with an illness.

People understand housing choices. It's part of the social education of children at school. There is good knowledge in advice centres about local good quality housing alongside strong connections and referral rights to the services people might need to keep a home.

There are clear paths into a wide range of homes people can afford, whether they prefer to rent or buy. Many more new homes have been built. There has also been a lot of hard work and investment to make sure that empty buildings were turned into homes. This programme created a lot of local jobs. Many more people, including some who used to be homeless, now earn their living refurbishing homes. It's helped reduce climate change, helped reduce fuel poverty and create thriving and economically active local communities.



The volatility in the housing market has dropped, partly as supply increased, but also because there's a range of options to help people to step up or down in the shares of their home that they own or rent.

The private rented sector is thriving; the old slum landlords couldn't operate any more. Tenancies are often long term. Landlords know that they can use a responsible social lettings agency to manage their property and sort out any problems. If a tenant needs support, it is provided through specialist agencies who help vulnerable tenants feel at home in their community.

**Of course people still have problems. But it doesn't mean that they end up on the streets.** We finally worked out what we had to do at the points where there was a risk of homelessness and got buy in from the people who needed to act. The institutions that were the old feeder routes of homelessness – the armed services, care and prisons – took on a new approach. Now they start work as soon as someone arrives, providing information and advice, working out who might be most at risk when they leave. The period before they leave is a time of intensive support and connection to services, so the transition is seamless. If arrangements break down, there is a backstop helpline and reconnection.

**We recognised that children who had the toughest start in life are the most vulnerable to end up homeless.** Now they get intensive support, counselling and advice to help them come through to independence with the best chance of success. There's high quality advice they can turn to if they hit a difficult patch in their lives, preventing them falling into social exclusion.

Of course these plans don't always work. People have arguments, get drunk, relationships founder, and young people row with their parents and leave suddenly. The next step can be a friend's sofa for a while or direct to a park bench. **But we have a principle – that no one should have to spend a second night on the street.** If they don't find their way to a housing options and advice service, an outreach service will reach them, bring them into shelter and work through their options and the expectations of them.

Some people don't have the full rights of citizens. Maybe they have moved here to work but lost their job. We don't allow anyone to be left destitute. If people can make a rapid move into work, they are helped to do that. Otherwise, provided it's safe, they are reconnected with services back home.

Many communities have a centre that is part of the Places of Change movement. They offer a range of activities that coach people to move on in their lives, develop, increase their motivation and get linked to support or services they need. Some are open only in the day, some provide accommodation to help people stabilise their lives. Their doors are open and they are at the heart of the local community. Many public agencies support their work. They can see that this holistic model, and the relaxed and purposeful atmosphere of the centres, really delivers the outcomes they hope to see for communities who used to be left out.

Of course the changes to the tax and benefits system have helped. They ensure that people coming into work after a break, or for the first time, are supported through what may be a part time, low paid or uncertain start. This means that more people can move through into the stable and fulfilling jobs that give them real satisfaction.

Yes, there are still some people who have complex problems. They can be very challenging for communities and their neighbours and families. But the national network of small specialist services has real expertise in working with these issues. Addictions, offending and violence have their roots in mental ill health. The right approach from the right people in small scale services makes a difference to many lives. These services are well funded and supported. Everyone sees that it makes sense, saving our communities from harm, our public costs and greatly improving the lives of the people concerned.

**TEN YEARS...  
IT'S NOT SO FAR.  
BUT KNOWING WHERE WE  
WANT TO BE - THAT GIVES  
US A STRONG CHANCE TO  
ARRIVE THERE.**



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**[www.twitter.com/homelesslink](https://www.twitter.com/homelesslink)**

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