



House of Commons  
Communities and Local  
Government Committee

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# Homelessness

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**Third Report of Session 2016–17**





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*Report, together with formal minutes  
relating to the report*

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## Communities and Local Government Committee

The Communities and Local Government Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Department for Communities and Local Government.

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The following was also a member of the Committee during the inquiry:

Jo Cox MP (*Labour, Batley and Spen*) (Died 16 June 2016)

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Evidence relating to this report is published on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Mark Etherton (Clerk), Helen Finlayson (Second Clerk), Craig Bowdery (Committee Specialist), Tamsin Maddock (Committee Specialist), Tony Catinella (Senior Committee Assistant), Eldon Gallagher (Committee Support Assistant), Gary Calder (Media Officer) and Alexander Gore (Media Officer).

### Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Communities and Local Government Committee, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 4972; the Committee's email address is [clgcom@parliament.uk](mailto:clgcom@parliament.uk).

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## Summary

We launched this inquiry in light of evidence that homelessness was increasing. We wanted both to get a clearer picture of levels of homelessness and to understand the pressures that affect homeless people. Throughout our inquiry, it was clear that the term 'homeless' covers a wide range of circumstances. The most visible form of homelessness is rough sleeping, with people sleeping and living on the streets, in parks and in shop doorways. However there is also a significant number of people who are homeless but are in temporary accommodation and night shelters, or rely on a series of short-term arrangements and the kindness of friends and family. Whilst less visible, it is essential that the 'hidden homeless' are taken into account in any discussion on how homelessness can be reduced.

We have found that homelessness is undoubtedly increasing. The Department recognises that its statistics are not all currently robust enough to be given the status of national statistics, but the picture is clear. It is important to have reliable evidence on the groups among which the increase is occurring. Data from CHAIN (the Combined Homelessness and Information Network), a multi-agency database recording rough sleeping in London, indicates that the greatest proportional increase in homelessness was among those who had been homeless for two consecutive years, suggesting that current intervention measures are not succeeding in preventing homelessness from becoming entrenched. We are therefore calling for enhanced monitoring of local authorities' homelessness reduction work.

There is a variety of factors causing the increase in homelessness, principal among them is the cost and availability of housing. The ending of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) in the private rented sector is a major cause: once an AST has ended, tenants are often unable to find anywhere that they can afford. The demand for housing pushes rents up, so the gap between rents charged and the level of Local Housing Allowance available increases. The challenges of the private rented sector are exacerbated by a shortage of social housing. It is widely accepted that the country needs to be building more homes and we support the Government's aspirations for home ownership, but many people simply cannot afford to buy a home, even with the support mechanisms introduced. In areas where there is a clear local need, homes for affordable rent must be built.

Much of our evidence covered the role of local authorities and how they allocate limited resources to support homeless people. We are supportive of local authorities and recognise the challenges they face, and many local authorities work hard to protect some of their most vulnerable residents. But it is not acceptable that the level of support offered to vulnerable people can vary significantly across the country. We heard that many homeless people seeking support from their council are made to feel as if they were at fault and that councils can take steps to discourage applications. People who are judged as not being in priority need, and therefore not owed the full homelessness duty, are also poorly served. Councils have a duty to provide advice and guidance to such people, but too often this advice and guidance is meaningless and ineffectual. The Government should review and reinforce the statutory Code of Practice to ensure it outlines clearly the levels of service that local authorities must provide and encourages regular training

of staff to ensure a sympathetic and sensitive service. We also considered the practice of local authorities housing homeless families in areas outside their administrative boundaries. We believe that this should only ever be an action of last resort. We would like to see a clear statement of intent from the Government with regards to the levels of service that homeless people can expect to receive from their local council. This must be reinforced with monitoring so that homeless individuals across the country can benefit from effective support and an end to their homelessness at the earliest opportunity. We are confident that the Private Member's Bill tabled by Mr Blackman, and co-sponsored by all the other members of the Committee, will contribute to achieving this.

Our inquiry also considered the experiences of especially vulnerable groups and people with multiple complex needs. A particular concern is the prevalence of poor mental health and we call on the Government to produce an action plan to address this. We also note the vital work done by refuges supporting victims of domestic violence and ask that the Government consider providing additional resources. We are currently awaiting the outcome of the Government's review of welfare reforms and the impact on supported accommodation but the Government should give certainty to the sector as a matter of urgency. We believe that all supported accommodation schemes should be exempt from the proposed reduction in rents.

On the strength of what we have learned throughout our inquiry, we have concluded that the scale of homelessness in this country is such that a renewed, cross-Departmental Government strategy is needed. We agree with Howard Sinclair, Chief Executive of St Mungo's, that "Homelessness is everyone's issue and it is not inevitable". All Departments need to contribute to the ending of homelessness by subscribing to a common approach. We will revisit many aspects of our report in twelve months' time to see what progress has been made.

# 1 Introduction and background

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1. There has not been a Select Committee inquiry into homelessness since 2005,<sup>1</sup> and we launched this inquiry in December 2015 in light of evidence that homelessness, particularly rough sleeping, was increasing. The details of the situation were however unclear as some of the Government's published data had recently been judged by the UK Statistics Authority as not robust enough to be considered accurate national statistics. We therefore wanted both to get a clearer picture of levels of homelessness and to understand the pressures that affect homeless people.

2. The problem of homelessness is multi-faceted. Much of the difficulty in quantifying it stems from the fact that the term 'homelessness' encompasses a wide range of experiences. Rough sleeping (people living and sleeping on the streets and in shop doorways) is the most visible form of homelessness, but there are many more people homeless than those on the streets. These 'hidden homeless' include people in night shelters, and also large numbers of people who have unstable arrangements such as sofa-surfing with friends and family. There have also been reports of people spending the night travelling on buses to avoid the streets.<sup>2</sup>

3. Throughout our inquiry, we have tried to look beyond the headline figures to understand the actual experiences of homeless people. Each homeless person has their own story and perspective. We received a wealth of written information from a wide range of organisations and individuals, and we supplemented this with visits and informal discussions: we visited a homeless charity and night shelter in London, a charity working with young homeless people in Birmingham and met young people who had been in care and were later homeless. Everyone we met spoke with openness and honesty and we would like to thank all contributors to this inquiry.

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1 ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee, Third Report of the Session 2004–05, [Homelessness](#), HC 61-I

2 "[Charity gives London's young homeless tickets to sleep on night buses](#)", The Guardian, 24 September 2015

## 2 Official statistics

4. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) publishes three sets of data on homelessness: statutory homelessness, prevention and relief and rough sleeping. On 30 June 2016, statutory homelessness and prevention and relief were combined into a single release. Local authorities owe a statutory duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) to secure suitable accommodation for unintentionally homeless households who are in a priority need category. This is often referred to a ‘main homelessness duty’ (we consider this in greater detail in Chapter 4). The 30 June release shows that between 1 January and 30 March 2016, local housing authorities received 29,120 applications for assistance. Of these, 14,780 households were accepted as being owed the main homelessness duty – a nine per cent increase on the same quarter in the previous year. London saw a particular rise, with a thirteen per cent increase from Q1 2015 (4,390) to Q1 2016 (4,940).<sup>3</sup>

5. The DCLG also collects data on prevention and relief efforts by local authorities, which are now included in the same statistical release as statutory homeless figures. Homelessness *prevention* involves councils helping people to avoid homelessness through measures such as helping them to secure alternative accommodation or to stay in their current home. Homelessness *relief* is when an authority has been unable to prevent homelessness but has helped someone to secure accommodation, even though it was not under a legal obligation to do so. According to the 30 June release, an estimated 212,600 cases of homelessness prevention or relief took place outside the statutory framework in England in 2014/15—of these 198,100 were estimated to be preventions and 14,400 cases of relief. The total number of cases of homelessness prevention and relief increased by 38 per cent between 2009/10 and 2013/14 from 165,200 to 228,400, before falling back to 212,600 in 2015/16.<sup>4</sup>

6. The Department’s other set of homelessness statistics records levels of rough sleeping. Rough sleeping counts and estimates are single night snapshots of the number of people sleeping rough in local authority areas. Local authorities decide whether to carry out a count or an estimate. According to the data, the autumn 2015 total of street counts and estimates in England was 3,569, an increase of 30 per cent from the 2014 figure of 2,744. In 2015 44 local authorities conducted a count and 282 provided an estimate. London’s total in 2015 was 940 rough sleepers, or 26 per cent of the total figure for England.<sup>5</sup>

7. DCLG’s statistics suggest that homelessness is increasing. However the scale of homelessness is greater than that captured in the statistics. Witnesses from leading charities argued that they only show the formally documented cases. Kate Webb from Shelter told us that:

overall there is very poor recording of who is homeless. This is largely because a lot of people try to self-serve and will sofa-surf or stay with friends and family for as long as possible ... The best figures we have are on people who are accepted by their local authority and are owed the full rehousing duties

3 Department for Communities and Local Government, [Statutory homelessness, January to March 2016, and homelessness prevention and relief 2015/16: England](#), 30 June 2016

4 Department for Communities and Local Government, [Statutory homelessness, January to March 2016, and homelessness prevention and relief 2015/16: England](#), 30 June 2016

5 Department for Communities and Local Government, [Rough Sleeping Statistics Autumn 2015, England](#), February 2016, p2

... Local authorities should be recording everyone who approaches them as homeless, but we know that often some people are sent out of the door first, so they never make it onto the books.<sup>6</sup>

8. Howard Sinclair, Chief Executive of St Mungo's, believed that the CHAIN (Combined Homelessness and Information Network) database in London gave a far more useful picture of rough sleeping:

The national rough sleeping figure is a snapshot taken by local authorities on one night, the vast majority of whom estimate as opposed to count. In London there is a 365-days-a-year database that has information inputted. We have long argued that CHAIN should be rolled out nationally to get a truer picture of rough sleeping across the country. The information in London is much better and up to date.<sup>7</sup>

9. CHAIN is a multi-agency database recording information about rough sleepers and the wider street population in London and is commissioned and funded by the Greater London Authority (GLA) and managed by St Mungo's. While the DCLG's figures on rough sleeping are based on rough sleeping counts and estimates carried out on one night in October and November each year, CHAIN is a continuing record of all contact by outreach teams, every day of the year. According to the most recent CHAIN report, between April 2015 and March 2016 there were 8,096 people seen sleeping rough in London—far more than the 940 reported in the DCLG's autumn 2015 figures on rough sleeping. CHAIN also breaks numbers down into three categories: *flow* (new rough sleepers: 5,276 people in 2015/16), *stock* (rough sleepers for at least two consecutive years: 1,828 people in 2015/16) and *returner* (previous rough sleepers who have returned to the streets: 992 people in 2015/16).<sup>8</sup> This allows services to identify trends such as that the greatest proportional increase between 2014/15 and 2015/16 was in the stock group (from 1,595 in 2014/15 to 1,898). Intervention efforts and services can therefore focus on addressing their needs.

10. In December 2015 the UK Statistics Authority published an assessment of the DCLG's data, which found that the figures were not robust enough, that only the statutory homeless figures could be considered 'national statistics', and that the other two releases were "potentially misleading". The assessment also concluded that presenting the statistics as three separate statistical reports with no coherent narrative to draw the statistics together, or to place them in context, diminishes their value.<sup>9</sup>

11. The Department told us that it would be considering the recommendations made by the Statistics Authority in planning future work.<sup>10</sup> When we asked Marcus Jones MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Local Government), about the statistics, he replied:

[DCLG] officials are currently working with the UK Statistics Authority to try to improve the statistics that we have further. For example, we are currently looking at publishing prevention and relief statistics together, to give a clearer

6 Qq2-3 [Kate Webb]

7 Q2 [Howard Sinclair]

8 Greater London Authority, [CHAIN Annual Report: Greater London, April 2015 – March 2016](#), June 2016, pp3-4

9 UK Statistics Authority, [Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics: Statistics on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in England](#), December 2015

10 Department for Communities and Local Government ([HOL149](#)) para 40

picture of how homelessness prevention and the number of people who are owed the homelessness duty work ... the better data that they have, the better we can do with prevention.<sup>11</sup>

12. We welcome the commitment to improve the data collected on homelessness, and note the recent publication of combined data on statutory homelessness along with prevention and relief data. When we sought confirmation from the Minister that all of the Government's homelessness statistics would reach the standard required by the Statistics Authority by the end of the year, he was not able to give us that assurance.<sup>12</sup> It is essential that the Government collects reliable statistics to guide decision makers and influence policy. ***The Government must take steps to improve data collection and implement the recommendations of the UK Statistics Authority as a matter of urgency. The aim should be to ensure that figures capture trends more accurately to reflect more than just the total number of homeless people, and the approach taken by CHAIN should be rolled out further across the country. The scale of hidden homelessness must also be appreciated: people who are homeless but have not approached local authorities for help and those who do seek help but are turned away before a formal application is made (discussed further in Chapter 4) are still homeless and should be taken into account in national statistics. The DCLG should give consideration to how this group can be captured effectively in the data it collects. We will monitor the Department's progress improving their statistics, and will return to the issue in twelve months' time.***

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11 Q233

12 Qq234-236

### 3 Factors in the increase in homelessness

13. Homelessness is not caused by any one single issue, and tackling it therefore requires a multi-faceted approach. There are however observable trends in the causes of homelessness that should be recognised and addressed. The causes of homelessness can be roughly divided into those that are structural or societal, and those that are personal or individual. Both may contribute in individual cases as personal problems can often be exacerbated by the structural challenges of the housing system. Jon Sparkes from Crisis argued:

The structural reasons are around not being able to afford a property to live in, for whatever reason: the price of the property, level and reliability of income, and level of benefits versus rental on properties, so big structural reasons. Then there are the personal reasons that we are probably more familiar with, such as relationship breakdown, addiction and mental health issues, and then the very predictable reasons for people who leave the care system or who leave the prison system. There are probably some typical groups there, but they merge in to each other a lot.<sup>13</sup>

#### The private rented sector

14. The ending of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) can be a major cause of homelessness. An AST is the default legal category of residential tenancy in the private rented sector in England. Most tenancies have an initial fixed term of six or twelve months, with the landlord able to choose whether or not they are renewed at the end of the fixed term. Landlords are also able to evict tenants by issuing a Section 21 ‘no fault’ possession notice, which may require tenants to vacate the property at short notice (two months). DCLG note that “In 2015, 30% of households accepted by local authorities as owed the main homelessness duty reported that the reason for their homelessness was the loss of an AST. This compares to 13% ten years earlier”.<sup>14</sup> In many areas of the country, rents are increasing far faster than tenants’ ability to pay. Kate Webb from Shelter described how it had changed:

[The numbers of homeless people who were previously in private rented accommodation have seen] a 250% increase over the past five years. For statutory homeless ... it always used to be things like relationship breakdown or friends and family not being able to provide accommodation for someone. Overwhelmingly over the past five years, it has become the very prosaic issue of someone losing a tenancy in the private rented sector and simply being unable to find anything else that is affordable.<sup>15</sup>

15. The housing lawyer Giles Peaker added that “An increasing proportion of our clients seem to be employed, part-time, possibly low waged, but have ended up losing a private sector tenancy. It is often a rent increase, and that is it”.<sup>16</sup>

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13 Q8 [Jon Sparkes]

14 Department for Communities and Local Government ([HOL149](#)) para 14

15 Q9 [Kate Webb]

16 Q9 [Giles Peaker]

16. We hosted a screening of the film ‘Half Way’ and took evidence from its director Daisy-May Hudson. The film tells the story of the Hudson family who lost their home of thirteen years when their landlord terminated the tenancy. Ms Hudson explained:

My mum, my sister and I were privately renting for 13 years, and our landlord was Tesco. Because they were not really interested in raising the prices with inflation, our rent remained relatively stable. After 13 years we got a letter to say that Tesco were selling off their assets. At that time, when we tried to look for suitable accommodation in the area that was affordable for my mum—she was working but we were a single-parent family—there was nothing that was in our price range, and so at that point we had no option but to declare ourselves homeless to the council.<sup>17</sup>

17. Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is a flat rate level of housing benefit payable to claimants living in the private rented sector. LHA rates are based on the 30th percentile of markets rents within a Broad Market Rental Area for different bedroom sizes – it is also subject to national caps. LHA is means-tested; a claimant’s personal entitlement will depend on their individual circumstances. Many witnesses pointed to the disparity between LHA rates and the actual rents charged by landlords. South Cambridgeshire District Council for example highlighted that “A significant barrier to accessing the private rented sector is the difference between LHA rates and typical rent levels. Typically rents are at least £250pcm more than the LHA rates across all property sizes, making the private rented sector unaffordable for those on a low income.”<sup>18</sup> Westminster City Council has the largest private rented sector in England with very high rents, and there is a £536.54 disparity between the average weekly rent of a three bedroom home and the capped LHA rate.<sup>19</sup> The comparative rents and LHA levels in Brighton & Hove are shown below.

**Table 1: Brighton & Hove monthly average private sector rents and LHA levels**

Property type	Average monthly rent	Local Housing Allowance level	Difference
1 bedroom flat	£912	£663	£249
2 bedroom flat	£1,264	£834	£430
2 bedroom house	£1,294	£834	£460
3 bedroom house	£1,534	£998	£536
4 bedroom house	£1,976	£1,471	£505

Source: Brighton & Hove Council ([HOL36](#))

18. In the Summer Budget 2015 the Government announced that working-age benefits, including the LHA, would be frozen for four years.<sup>20</sup> This is likely to exacerbate the gaps between LHA rates and rents charged. Bristol City Council pointed out that while LHA rates will be frozen for four years, average rents in the city continue to rise, with an 18 per cent increase in 2015 alone<sup>21</sup> (Rightmove put the increase figure at 9.2 per cent for 2015).<sup>22</sup>

17 Q174 [Daisy-May Hudson]

18 South Cambridgeshire District Council ([HOL17](#)), para 2.1

19 Westminster City Council ([HOL84](#)), table 1

20 HM Treasury, [Summer Budget 2015](#), July 2015, para 1.137

21 Bristol City Council ([HOL38](#))

22 “[Bad news for tenants in Bristol – rents were up 9.2% last year and are set to increase in 2016](#)”, Bristol Post, 12 January 2016

19. The private rented sector is often the only viable option for tenants who do not qualify as priority need. However it is clear that access to stable accommodation in the private rented sector has become unaffordable for many people. Kate Webb from Shelter told us:

We did a very revealing piece of work at the tail-end of last year where we spoke to teachers in London schools. They were saying to us that five or 10 years ago they felt that they had a good sense of who in their classes would be homeless, but now it is impossible to predict; it is people with stable but low-paid jobs, and they are now in the situation where they cannot assume that the children they are teaching have a bed to sleep in. That has become commonplace for many people on low incomes.<sup>23</sup>

20. The cost of the private rented sector is not the only challenge. Reports suggest that many landlords are unwilling to let properties to tenants in receipt of housing benefit, and even fewer to those who are homeless. A report by Crisis, *Home: No less will do*, found that only 45 per cent of landlords were willing to let to tenants in receipt of housing benefit, and 18 per cent to homeless households. Of those who were willing to let to homeless households, 75 per cent were currently letting less than 10 per cent of their stock to homeless people and 27 per cent said that they were letting fewer properties to homeless people than they had two years previously.<sup>24</sup>

**21. In light of the shortage of social housing (discussed further below), the private rented sector is an essential means to help people escape and avoid homelessness. However for many the financial barriers and instability of tenancies are too great. The Government should explore measures to give greater confidence both to tenants and to landlords to encourage them to let to homeless people. Local Housing Allowances levels should also be reviewed so that they more closely reflect market rents. Landlords should be encouraged to offer longer Assured Shorthold Tenancies which allow tenants to leave early without penalty.**

## Availability of social housing

22. The challenges of the private rented sector are exacerbated by a shortage of social housing. In 2013 the charity Centrepoin commissioned a study from Cambridge University which found that by 2021, at current rates of construction, there could be a shortfall of submarket rent homes (council housing, housing association properties, private rented sector units available at the rate of local housing allowance) of over 900,000.<sup>25</sup> Shelter pointed out that the total number of social homes in England has fallen by 26 per cent since 1979 (from 5,540,000 to 4,076,000). The charity argues that England requires at least 250,000 homes to be built a year, and that 30 per cent of these need to be low-rent homes.<sup>26</sup>

23. In the 2015 Spending Review, the Government announced a plan for 400,000 affordable housing starts by 2020/21, with a strong emphasis on home ownership. This will include 200,000 Starter Homes, 135,000 Shared Ownership properties, 10,000 homes that will allow a tenant to save for a deposit while they rent and at least 8,000 homes for older people and people with disabilities.<sup>27</sup> The Spending Review did not include any

23 Q9 [Kate Webb]

24 Crisis, [Home: No less will do](#), February 2016, p10

25 Centrepoin ([HOL31](#)), para 14

26 Shelter ([HOL94](#)), paras 23-24

27 HM Treasury, [Spending Review and Annual Statement 2015](#), November 2015, para 1.146

funding for the building of new homes for social rent. The Housing and Planning Act 2016 places a duty on local authorities to promote the supply of Starter Homes.<sup>28</sup> Howard Sinclair from the charity St Mungo's told us:

The dialogue is about affordable housing. The people who end up homeless and on the streets cannot afford affordable housing. There has to be a commitment to social housing where it is needed, and that has completely dropped off the discussion across all political parties. Yes, a supply of housing will inevitably trickle through, but that will take years and years. In London and Bristol ... there is no social housing to rent.<sup>29</sup>

24. We reiterate our conclusions from our report earlier this year on housing associations and the Right to Buy.<sup>30</sup> **We note that there is a clear demand for low cost home ownership which is answered in part by Starter Homes but not all people are in a position to afford this step. There is therefore a case for the development of homes for affordable rent which we encourage the Government to act on by working with local authorities to deliver the homes that are needed at a local level.**

25. Witnesses from local authorities described the gap between demand and supply. Hazel Summers from Manchester City Council told us that the city has a high number of single homeless and rough sleeping people so one-bedroom properties are in particular demand: "This week there are 22 general needs one-bedroom flats available and there are 4,616 people who are waiting for that flat who have a housing need of some kind".<sup>31</sup> Cllr Daniel Astaire stated that Westminster City Council currently has a 25 year waiting list for four-bedroom properties.<sup>32</sup>

26. We have also received evidence that suggests that the availability of social housing for homeless people and those at risk of homelessness has been further limited by an operating environment that encourages housing associations to become increasingly commercial. According to SHORE (Sussex Homeless Outreach Reconnection & Engagement), housing associations have had to become more risk averse:

financial pressures are leading to social landlords becoming more selective over which tenants they take on, threatening an increasingly large number of people on lower incomes with homelessness. For rough sleepers with multiple and complex needs, reductions in social housing reduces their housing options close to zero.<sup>33</sup>

27. Nick Hooper from Bristol City Council supported this view:

We are aware that housing associations and RPs are becoming understandably more concerned about risk and, therefore, it is more difficult to persuade them

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28 Housing and Planning Bill 2016, [section 5](#)

29 Q17 [Howard Sinclair]

30 Communities and Local Government Committee, Second Report of Session 2015–16, [Housing associations and the Right to Buy](#), HC370, para 83

31 Q93 [Hazel Summers]

32 Q92

33 SHORE ([HOL41](#))

to take some sorts of households... Housing associations are increasingly looking for economically active households and particularly people who are going to pay their rent and so forth. It is an emerging significant issue.<sup>34</sup>

28. We asked Daisy-May Hudson, Ross Symonds and Mateasa Grant, who had all previously been homeless, what one thing the Government could do to improve levels of homelessness. They all said that building more social housing was essential.<sup>35</sup>

29. Affordable social housing is of fundamental importance in tackling homelessness. We support the Government's aspirations for home ownership, but many people simply cannot afford to buy a home, even with the support mechanisms introduced. We remain concerned that the priority given to Starter Homes is likely to reduce the number of homes available for rent at affordable levels. We also note that the term 'affordable housing' has become contentious and open to interpretation. We therefore reiterate our finding from our earlier report and note that the increasing levels of homelessness since its publication further underlines the importance of affordable rented housing being available.<sup>36</sup> **We recognise the need to develop Starter Homes to meet the demand for low cost home ownership but recognise the need for appropriate new homes for affordable rent. *The Government should therefore review the definition of affordable housing to reflect local needs.***

## Changes to the welfare system

30. Since 2010 there has been significant reform of the welfare system reducing the level of support for low income households and those at risk of homelessness. In the Summer Budget 2015, the Government announced that working-age benefits including the LHA would be frozen for four years<sup>37</sup> and that the household benefit cap would be reduced from £26,000 to £20,000 (£23,000 in London).<sup>38</sup> The Budget also announced that entitlement to housing support for new claims in Universal Credit would be removed from 18–21 year olds who are out of work (from April 2017).<sup>39</sup> The Department for Work and Pensions has confirmed that vulnerable young people will be exempt from this change.<sup>40</sup> ***We urge the Government to recognise that many 18–21 year olds are at significant risk of homelessness, and to make provision for those who have been in work but have lost their job to have a 'grace period' of, say, one to two months before the housing element of Universal Credit is withdrawn.*** As part of the October 2010 Spending Review the Government announced that the Shared Accommodation Rate (which limits the amount of housing benefit payable to the equivalent of a room in a shared house) would be extended to cover single people under the age of 35 from April 2012 (the implementation date was subsequently brought forward to 1 January 2012).<sup>41</sup> It previously applied to those under 25.

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34 Q93 [Nick Hooper]

35 Q212

36 Communities and Local Government Committee, Second Report of Session 2015–16, [Housing associations and the Right to Buy](#), HC370, para 80

37 HM Treasury, [Summer Budget 2015](#), July 2015, para 1.137

38 HM Treasury, [Summer Budget 2015](#), July 2015, para 1.152

39 HM Treasury, [Summer Budget 2015](#), July 2015, para 1.159

40 PQ 9834 [Housing Benefit: Young People], 14 September 2015

41 HM Treasury, [Spending Review 2010, Cm 7942](#), October 2010, box 2.6, page 68

31. The Homelessness Monitor is an annual report funded by Crisis and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation with the aim of providing an independent analysis of the impacts of policy and economic changes on rates of homelessness. The 2016 Homelessness Monitor identifies the weakening of welfare provision, including the Government’s restriction of housing benefits and tax credits to only take account of two children, as a cause in the increase in homelessness: “there are concerns that families with more than two children may find both affordable rented *and* social rented housing, not only in London, but also in much of the rest of the country, beyond their means”.<sup>42</sup> The Monitor also describes the findings of a survey of local authorities carried out in 2015 to identify whether the reforms of the 2010–15 Coalition Government had impacted on levels of homelessness: two thirds (67 per cent) of local authorities in England reported that these changes had increased homelessness locally, with no respondents reporting that homelessness had consequentially decreased. When asked about the expected impact of the roll out of Universal Credit, 73 per cent anticipated that it would further increase homeless levels. The changes to the arrangements of rental payments were cited as the principal cause.<sup>43</sup>

32. Since 2008 and the introduction of LHA, housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector have received benefits directly, rather than them being paid to their landlord. We received evidence from a landlord with homes in Wiltshire that highlighted that “There is much more risk in taking a person on benefits as getting direct payments is not available until they are 8 weeks in arrears”.<sup>44</sup> There is evidence to support the view that the removal of the direct payment of rental payments to landlords has increased levels of homelessness. A House of Commons Library Briefing Paper cites research carried out by the Department for Work and Pensions in 2010 that the direct payment of LHA to claimants had resulted in increased rent arrears (and evictions) of private sector tenants.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, evidence we received from the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield Hallam University states that, in a survey of 1,000 private landlords, they found that the direct payment of housing benefits to claimants rather than landlords made them less willing to rent to benefit claimants and/or homeless people. Furthermore, two thirds of those landlords who were currently renting to these tenants only did so on the condition that benefits were paid direct to them.<sup>46</sup>

33. When asked about the direct payment of benefits to claimants rather than landlords, Marcus Jones MP told us:

The system of allowing the rent to go to the tenant and then the tenant paying the landlord is an extremely important thing in terms of the Government’s welfare reforms. The Government have been quite clear that we want to move people, where we are able to, from welfare into work, and, once somebody goes into work, they are in a position where they are responsible for paying all of their different household bills, including their rent—usually on a monthly basis—and that is the principle behind which the changes have been made in relation to the move to universal credit.<sup>47</sup>

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42 Crisis, *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2016*, January 2016, page 15

43 Crisis, *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2016*, January 2016, page 16

44 Kathy Miller ([HOL03](#))

45 *Statutory Homelessness in England*, [Briefing Paper 01164](#), House of Commons Library, 5 July 2016, page 7

46 Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield Hallam University, ([HOL43](#)), para 12

47 Q258

34. **The Government's position is that claimants should receive the benefits they are due, and then take responsibility for their own arrangements to meet the costs of their outgoings. However we are concerned that this policy is having a direct impact on levels of homelessness. *All recipients of housing support should have the option of having their housing benefits paid directly to their landlord, reducing the likelihood of them falling into arrears and increasing landlord confidence and willingness to let to tenants at risk of homelessness.***

35. When we asked Giles Peaker, Chair of the Housing Law Practitioners Association, what the future of homelessness would be if no action was taken, he was unequivocal:

Will it get worse? Yes. Will it get worse faster? Yes. That is already happening, and is just going to continue ... One thing that could be done is to stop making it worse. That is the simple answer. There are some immediate triggers facing us ... The roll-out of the reduced benefit cap is going to have a fairly dramatic effect across the country, whereas the first £26,000 one basically affected London. £23,000 and £20,000 outside of London is going to have a dramatic national effect, really taking large swathes of public sector tenancies out of affordability for families in that situation. If the rents continue to increase whilst there is the LHA freeze, without wishing to be overly melodramatic, we are heading towards a serious crisis.<sup>48</sup>

36. **The impact of the welfare reforms of recent years have increased pressure on levels of homelessness.**

## 4 The role of local authorities

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37. Local authorities do not have a duty to provide accommodation for all homeless people, only for those who are judged to fall within certain categories of ‘priority need’. The categories of priority need are specified in section 189 of the Housing Act 1996 and were expanded in 2002. They are:

- a) People with dependent children who are residing or might reasonably be expected to reside with them, for example, because the family is separated solely because of the need for accommodation; or
- b) People who are homeless or threatened with homelessness as a result of any emergency such as flood, fire or any other disaster; or
- c) Where any person who resides or who might reasonably be expected to reside with them, is vulnerable because of old age, mental illness, handicap or physical disability or other special reason; or
- d) Pregnant women, or a person who resides or might reasonably be expected to reside with a pregnant woman;
- e) All 16 and 17 year olds;
- f) 18–20 year old care leavers;
- g) Vulnerable care leavers;
- h) Vulnerable former members of the armed forces;
- i) Vulnerable former prisoners; and
- j) People who are vulnerable because they are fleeing violence.

38. When assessing an application for homelessness support, local authorities in England must determine whether the applicant is in priority need based on their vulnerability. A 1998 case, *Pereira v Camden Council*, set the test for vulnerability as being that a person should be considered vulnerable if being homeless would make them suffer more than ‘the ordinary homeless person’. In 2004 subsequent case law refined this definition so that the comparator is ‘an ordinary street homeless person’. Applicants for homelessness support must therefore demonstrate that they are more vulnerable than an extremely vulnerable person. Someone seeking support from their council who falls into one of the above categories and is judged as not being intentionally homeless is entitled to secure permanent accommodation. If an applicant does not qualify under one of the priority need categories, the council has a lesser duty of providing advice and assistance to help them find accommodation. Single people and couples without children who are not vulnerable according to the statutory criteria are therefore unlikely to be in priority need and qualify for the main housing duty.

### Gatekeeping and support

39. Local authorities have a duty to make the necessary inquiries to ascertain what level of duty they owe an applicant. We have received much evidence however that suggests that

this does not always happen. In the face of increasing demand on services and decreasing funding, some councils have been ‘gatekeeping’ access to services by not making the necessary inquiries. Kate Webb from Shelter told us:

People underestimate how tenacious you have to be to get a homeless application taken ... There is a lack of accountability around it. We cannot avoid the fact that there is a sharper form of gatekeeping as well, where people are just being incredibly poorly served by a public service. We have had pregnant clients, who should be automatically regarded as in priority need, told that they are not pregnant enough. There is no such question in the legislation. We have heard of some local authorities who will come out and announce to the waiting room that if you continue with an application, you will be re-housed in Birmingham. Of course, that is never confirmed in writing, but as a verbal declaration it sends a clear statement about whether you should continue to make an application. It is undoubtedly a hostile environment if you are trying to make an application.<sup>49</sup>

40. Giles Peaker told us that some local authorities use ‘housing options’ support schemes as a gatekeeping mechanism:

The problem is typically [local authorities] not just making an application difficult, but an attempt to filter people away from getting a homeless application made, let alone accepted. That has unfortunately been, in part, the role of what some local authorities have been calling their housing options routes ... Typically we find people saying that you have to go through the housing options route for 14 days or 28 days before they will take a homeless application. If someone is at risk of homelessness, that application has to be made when they present, otherwise it is gatekeeping.<sup>50</sup>

41. Mr Peaker also described to us the level of support usually received by applicants who are not judged to be in priority need:

Protection or help outside of that group is extremely limited. There is a duty to provide advice for people who are homeless but not in priority need. This typically amounts to a list of letting agents and being told to go away ... Outside of the full statutory protection, which is typically families or people with very particular vulnerability, there is very limited support indeed.<sup>51</sup>

42. We also took evidence from Mateasa Grant, someone with first-hand experience of council gatekeeping and extremely low levels of support and guidance. Ms Grant was made homeless in 2013. When she approached her council for support she was judged as not being in priority need and only given leaflets about local charities. Following her experience, she started working with Crisis as a mystery shopper and approached different councils posing as a homeless person seeking support:

As I approached them under cover, I was an 18 year-old girl who had been kicked out of her house by her parents. Generally the stereotype around that would most probably be that it was my fault; that is the reason why I was

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49 Q31 [Kate Webb]

50 Q31 [Giles Peaker]

51 Q10

homeless. A lot of the time I was advised to work out what my problems were with my home life. I was never asked if I was being abused by my parents or what the problem was ... There would be times I would be given numbers for organisations and the numbers were incorrect or I would have to find the information myself. A lot of the time, as well, they would just tell me to go to Google. If I am homeless without access to the internet or any money or a smartphone, I do not know how I am supposed to access Google.<sup>52</sup>

43. The mystery shopper exercise carried out by Crisis revealed that in 50 of the 87 visits carried out, the help offered was inadequate. In 29 cases the ‘applicant’ was turned away without any help being offered or the opportunity to speak with a housing advisor, despite all of the mystery shoppers posing as very vulnerable individuals.<sup>53</sup> Jon Sparkes from Crisis told us that:

it was not simply that the law was wrong. There were many cases in the mystery shopping where the treatment of that individual was simply unprofessional or even inhumane. Being professional as opposed to unprofessional, or humane as opposed to inhumane, does not cost anything more.<sup>54</sup>

44. ***The Government should consider setting a statutory duty to provide meaningful support to single homeless people who can prove a local connection.***

45. In the film ‘Half Way’ we saw how the Hudson family approached their local authority for assistance once they had received an eviction notice from their landlord. However, the council would not help them until they had been declared homeless at the end of the eviction notice period. Shelter told us that:

Local authorities have a duty to make inquiries if they believe an applicant is threatened with homelessness within 28 days. However, the high levels of demand for assistance in some areas, means that homelessness is often left to reach crisis point: authorities routinely advise people to await the bailiffs before they make a statutory application.<sup>55</sup>

46. Witnesses from local authorities, by contrast, provided examples of councils seeking to deliver services in a less hostile way. Cllr Daniel Astaire from Westminster City Council told us that his authority was:

looking at what other services you join up with, how you point people in the direction of employment and skills-related services, and how you make sure that homelessness—which is the symptom of other problems—is tackled in a more holistic way. We are more welcoming with people. We also recognise that when people are coming to the housing options service they are at their most vulnerable and your service should reflect that.<sup>56</sup>

47. However, we also heard evidence that, despite local authorities’ best intentions, the application process can be challenging for homeless people. Nick Hooper from Bristol City Council told us:

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52 Qq 177-178

53 Crisis ([HOL74](#)) para 5.5

54 Q35

55 Shelter (HOL94) para 41

56 Q71 [Cllr Astaire]

In Bristol, it has become more difficult to provide a welcoming and first-stop response to people. When somebody is homeless on the night, we will absolutely do the assessment and find them accommodation, but if somebody might be threatened with homelessness because they have had a notice served by their landlord, because of the volume of inquiries that we are now getting there is a temptation to ask the person to come back again at the point where the risk is greater. That is pretty unproductive.<sup>57</sup>

48. We recognise that councils are under extreme pressure to deal with an increasing demand in a climate of reduced funding—Birmingham City Council for example receives around 6,000 homeless applications every year.<sup>58</sup> In Westminster, the council does not have enough available homes to house all those in priority need and so has to make use of temporary accommodation, at a cost of £4 million. Cllr Astaire summed up the challenge for local authorities: “At the same time as being a caring council and one that understands people’s needs, we also have to make sure that we look after the needs of our city and our taxpayer”.<sup>59</sup>

49. There are many local authorities that go beyond their statutory requirements, and they should be commended. The London Borough of Newham for instance has introduced Personal Housing Plans: agreements between the authority and applicant when the applicant is at risk of losing their home within 56 days. Both parties agree to a range of actions designed to prevent homelessness.<sup>60</sup> In Camden, the council also prioritises early intervention to tackle homelessness before it occurs. Rough sleepers and those at risk of homelessness are identified by outreach teams, and are then provided supported accommodation through the Camden Adult Hostel Pathway with support being provided to progress towards independent living.<sup>61</sup> We consider the experiences of homeless people in more detail in the next Chapter.

**50. We acknowledge that the task facing local authorities is significant and that under the current legislation, sorting and prioritising some applicants over others is required. However it is not acceptable that the level of support offered to vulnerable people can vary significantly across the country. We welcome and applaud initiatives such as those at Newham and Camden, but remain concerned that some other local authorities have not been so proactive. As we have heard from witnesses who have been homeless: at a time when they are most vulnerable, people deserve to be treated with compassion and understanding rather than as if they were at fault. We therefore call on the Government to monitor local authorities in order to promote best practice, to identify authorities which are not meeting their statutory duties and implement a code of practice to which local authorities should adhere. We will continue to monitor the work of local authorities and will return to the issue in twelve months and may consider commissioning independent research of local authority practises.**

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57 Q71 [Nick Hooper]

58 Q71 [Jim Crawshaw]

59 Q72 [Cllr Astaire]

60 London Borough of Newham ([HOL135](#)) para 4.2

61 London Borough of Camden ([HOL134](#)) para 2.3

## Councils placing households outside of their administrative boundaries

51. Homeless households found to be unintentionally homeless and in priority need are owed the full housing duty. Section 208 of the Housing Act 1996 requires that where it is “reasonably practicable”, local authorities should secure accommodation within their administrative boundary. However, the combination of a limited supply of social housing and rising costs in many areas (particularly in London) means that some authorities are increasingly looking to house homeless households in cheaper areas outside their administrative boundaries. According to Shelter, the number of households placed outside their home area has increased by over 200 per cent since 2010. Shelter express concern that out of area placements were not suitable for all. Moves can be severely disruptive to work, schooling or support needs and the charity argues that “families are given no choice in terms of location, and are sometimes made an out-of-area offer on the day they are made homeless, with no time to consider a move”.<sup>62</sup>

52. Westminster City Council was subject to legal action when it attempted to house the family of Titina Nzolameso in Bletchley near Milton Keynes. The Supreme Court found that the council had failed to consider the family’s needs or offer alternative solutions:

There is little to suggest that serious consideration was given to the authority’s obligations before the decision was taken to offer the property in Bletchley. The temporary lettings team ... did not ask any questions aimed at assessing how practicable it would be for the family to move out of the area. Nor were any inquiries made to see whether school places would be available in Bletchley and what the appellant’s particular medical conditions required.<sup>63</sup>

53. Cllr Daniel Astaire told the Committee that “The Nzolameso case was not about whether or not we could house families outside of the borough; it was about the process that was adopted to get there. I do not think anyone is debating the principle of whether we can house people out of borough.”<sup>64</sup> **Housing people away from their homes and support networks should be an action of last resort, but we appreciate the pressures that councils are under and do not oppose out of area placements in principle. Nonetheless we are concerned that some authorities do not always follow the statutory guidance and fully consider the needs of the family being placed, or whether there might be a nearer available home.**

54. Cllr Astaire described the pressures that authorities such as Westminster face. He told us that in the past his authority had accepted between 300–400 applications a year as being owed the full housing duty. In 2012 this went up to 812 and has now stabilised at around 700. Cllr Astaire explained that while some of these households could be accommodated in the local private sector, finding homes that were affordable to tenants in receipt of LHA was “nigh-on impossible”. For this reason, he argued that when a council considered whether a placement was suitable for a family, the affordability to the family must also be considered.<sup>65</sup> This view is shared by other London Boroughs, such as Wandsworth and Kensington & Chelsea, which argue that the Code of Guidance for

62 Shelter ([HOL94](#)) paras 33-34

63 Quoted in “[Tenant wins battle to stop Westminster council moving her out of London](#)”, The Guardian, 2 April 2015

64 Q79

65 Q73 [Cllr Astaire]

local authorities needs to be amended to place a greater weight on affordability, both to the household and to welfare benefit budgets.<sup>66</sup> Westminster City Council also advocates amending the Code of Guidance so that councils can place families in affordable areas “without fear of legal challenge”.<sup>67</sup> **Local authorities seeking to house homeless families face a significant challenge, especially in high value areas such as London. However the needs of the individuals must be fully considered. When this has not happened, it is entirely appropriate that they should be able to challenge the decisions taken by their local council. The Secretary of State should write to all local housing authorities to reiterate councils’ duties as outlined in the Code of Guidance and emphasise the duty of care that local authorities owe to some of their most vulnerable residents.**

55. Jim Crawshaw told us that Birmingham City Council had received around 130 households placed into the city by other authorities, usually from London. When a council chooses to place a household in another area, it should notify the receiving authority, but this does not always happen. Mr Crawshaw also pointed to the pressure that the placements have on the receiving authority. Councils with high living costs placing families in less expensive areas is affecting the availability and affordability of housing in those areas. Birmingham has recently started to place its families outside of the city boundaries as it is unable to find accommodation in the city.<sup>68</sup> Thurrock Council state that local rents have risen as a result of London boroughs paying higher rents and offering financial incentives to landlords, sometimes as much as £4,000.<sup>69</sup> Similarly Braintree District Council expects

more competition from other Local Authorities (from London or nearer to London) as they seek to discharge their housing duty to the private sector. This creates a ‘ripple effect’—Chelmsford already use property in Braintree to help discharge their homelessness duty and we expect this to increase.<sup>70</sup>

56. *The impact on the areas receiving homeless households from other parts of the country should be recognised, and the Government should monitor local authorities to ensure that such placements only occur as a last resort. The practice and process of housing homeless families in areas away from their support networks, employment and schooling should be monitored. Local authorities should be required to demonstrate that the families are supported to make the moves successful, the receiving authority has been notified, the placement is as close to the family’s former home as possible and all the family’s needs have been fully considered. The Government should also consider what guidance should be given to local authorities where families move from low cost areas of the country to higher cost areas and subsequently present themselves as homeless after short periods of time in privately rented accommodation. We recognise that this might need new secondary legislation.*

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66 Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and Wandsworth Borough Council ([HOL23](#)) para 3.2

67 Westminster City Council ([HOL84](#)) para 1.3

68 Q81 [Jim Crawshaw]

69 Thurrock Council ([HOL53](#))

70 Braintree District Council ([HOL39](#)) para 5.3

## 5 The service-user's perspective

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57. Throughout our inquiry we have sought to understand the perspective of those who have had first-hand experiences of homelessness. To supplement our evidence sessions, we hosted an online forum on the Money Saving Expert website to invite people to share their stories,<sup>71</sup> we visited the night shelter at The Connection at St Martin-in-the-Fields, we toured the homeless services in Birmingham provided by the council and the charity St Basil's, we met clients of the Children's Society who had been homeless after being in care, and we invited three formerly homeless people to give evidence. While it was clear that each person we spoke to had had a very individual experience and had required tailored levels of support, some common themes emerged.

### Being treated with respect and compassion

58. One of the clients of The Connection described how working with the charity had given him back the hope that he had lost on the streets. The Connection had provided him with the support he needed to overcome his drug addiction, arranged access to medical care, helped him gain employment and when we met him he had just moved into his new flat. In contrast however, we also heard evidence of services failing homeless people. Daisy-May Hudson and her family were made homeless and spent a year in temporary accommodation until they were offered a suitable home. In their film 'Half Way', the family describe their treatment by the local authority as dehumanising and alienating. Ms Hudson told us:

You just feel like you are in this completely isolating experience and the only person that you can speak to is someone on the phone, and really they are just rushing to get you off the phone anyway. There are a lot of things that can be done to help you feel human again at a time when all your sense of being has been taken away.<sup>72</sup>

59. Homeless people can be made to feel that they were part of the problem rather than the victims of circumstance. Mateasa Grant told us about the lack of sympathy when she approached her council for help:

It demotivates you from the moment you walk in the building. My personal experience was when I first sat down and spoke with a stranger and exposed myself to them, I got laughed at in my face by more than one person in the same building. From there I am not really going to want to then expose myself furthermore and I am not going to really want to talk to anybody in that department about the experiences that I was going through, if I feel like I am just going to be subjected to laughter. It is a demotivating process.<sup>73</sup>

60. Daisy-May Hudson told us that the "assumption that you have done something wrong before they even really know your case, particularly on your first day of being homeless, is really tough." In her experience council staff:

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71 <http://forums.moneysavingexpert.com/showthread.php?t=5422675#topofpage>

72 Q179 [Daisy-May Hudson]

73 Q180 [Mateasa Grant]

do not understand that one sentence that is said to you over the phone or on a letter has such huge ramifications for your whole life and your family's whole life. Maybe there needs to be more training in understanding the impact of their words or the impact of their decisions, because while they can leave their office and go home and go back to their house, we are waiting on every single thing that they are saying.<sup>74</sup>

## Choice and autonomy

61. There is very little choice for homeless service users. We met with three young men who had been working with the Children's Society and had been in care and then homeless at a young age. They described to us how they felt that their autonomy had been taken from them and that their concerns were not listened to. One told us that he was placed in a bail hostel alongside criminals and drug-takers when he had just turned 18. Another was repeatedly told that he should live with his mother even though he knew that that relationship had broken down irrevocably. When this proved to be the case, despite his protests and although he was then 18, he was then housed in another family.

62. Daisy-May Hudson told us that when her family were in temporary accommodation, her council offered them a flat which was two hours away from the school attended by her sister who was part-way through her GCSEs. It was also on an estate where there had recently been a fatal stabbing. When the family refused the allocation, they were told that in doing so they would make themselves intentionally homeless and the council would have no further duty to support them. The family sought a review of the decision and were "given a form with three lines to respond as to why the property is not suitable". They submitted a large amount of evidence, including from the family doctor and the current school, as to why the allocation was not suitable but the council did not consider it sufficient. It was only when the family challenged the decision in the courts that the council agreed to look for alternative accommodation. Ms Hudson explained "What I have noticed is there is a recurring pattern that as soon as you try to dispute anything with the council, they will say you have made yourself intentionally homeless and they can just clear you off the list as quickly as possible".<sup>75</sup>

## Quality of service

63. In 2013 the Gold Standard Programme was launched by DCLG with the intention of "supporting local authorities to improve their frontline housing services and increase opportunities for early intervention and prevention of homelessness".<sup>76</sup> The programme awards councils gold, silver or bronze status according to their progress in meeting certain challenges. However reports suggest that many councils have not actively engaged with the programme.<sup>77</sup>

64. Ross Symonds, who spent five weeks homeless in Bristol, described the difficulty he had getting a meeting with support services:

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74 Q211 [Daisy-May Hudson]

75 Q193 [Daisy-May Hudson]

76 National Practitioner Support Service ([HOL154](#))

77 "[Town halls struggle with 'bureaucratic' homelessness scheme](#)", Inside Housing, 12 February 2015

You turn up and they would say, “There is nobody available today. Can you come back tomorrow?” You would arrange a time and then go back the next day, and they would go, “No, they cannot see you today. There is training,” or “something has happened”, or “something has overrun”. You would come back the next day and the same thing would happen and then you would get a text message. I must have walked 10 miles a day just on the streets ... It was just hugely frustrating.<sup>78</sup>

65. We received similar evidence from Oliver Hilbery from the Making Every Adult Matter coalition. He told us that it was not uncommon for homeless people to have “10, 12 or 15 case workers” and that services were designed as if those using them were not vulnerable and with a range of challenges and concerns including physical and mental health and substance addictions (vulnerable groups and those with multiple complex needs are discussed further in the next Chapter).<sup>79</sup> We found that many homeless services expect users to fit around them rather than catering to the very specific and multiple needs of their client group. Mateasa Grant was told to use Google to find solutions to her homelessness despite being without access to the internet.<sup>80</sup> The Hudson family were expected to be available for appointments at short notice despite work commitments.<sup>81</sup> Ross Symonds spent his day walking from appointment to appointment and had to queue from 4pm to get a bed at a shelter that did not open until 7pm.<sup>82</sup>

66. In Birmingham we saw a positive example of partnership working between the local authority and the charity St Basils. Together they have developed and implemented the Positive Pathways programme to tackle youth homelessness. They provide a range of prevention, accommodation and support services to give young homeless people and those at risk of homelessness the stability, skills and training they need to break the cycle of homelessness.<sup>83</sup> We heard that young people are never told to ‘take it or leave it’ and that all options are discussed and considered jointly. The Positive Pathway model is being adopted by other local authority areas. According to research by Homeless Link, 64 per cent of English authorities either have or are developing a Pathway approach.<sup>84</sup> ***The Government should take steps to encourage and facilitate the development of Positive Pathway schemes across the country.***

67. **As a Committee we are supportive of local authorities and the work they do. We understand the financial pressures they are under and the difficult choices they have to make. But treating someone as a human does not cost money. We have received too much evidence of councils and their staff treating homeless people in ways that are dismissive and at times discriminatory. This is unacceptable. *The Government should review and reinforce the statutory Code of Practice to ensure it outlines clearly the levels of service that local authorities must provide and encourages regular training of staff to ensure a sympathetic and sensitive service. Services should put users first with a compassionate approach that gives individuals an element of choice and autonomy.***

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78 Q196

79 Q132 [Oliver Hilbery]

80 Q178

81 Q198 [Daisy-May Hudson]

82 Q198 [Ross Symonds]

83 St Basils ([HOL21](#)) para 1.1

84 St Basils ([HOL21](#)) para 1.4

## 6 Vulnerable groups and multiple complex needs

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68. As discussed in paragraph 38, in order to receive homelessness support, an applicant must be judged as being more vulnerable than ‘an ordinary street homeless person’, which can be an extremely high level. Many homeless people are affected by one or more of poor mental health, substance addiction or experience of abuse. However we have found that while services can be very effective at addressing a single complex need, they may struggle when an individual has multiple needs.

69. When we visited Crisis Skylight in Birmingham, we met several homeless people who told us that services worked in silos without consideration of a person’s wider needs. One young man described visiting a doctor with depression and alcohol abuse and being signed off work without further treatment. He then lost his job and his home and moved into a hostel, where his needs worsened because he did not get the support he needed. He felt that if the doctor had helped him address his issues when he first sought help, he would not have ended up homeless. A Client Needs Survey conducted by St Mungo’s in 2015 found that “41% of St Mungo’s supported housing tenants said relationship breakdown had contributed to their homelessness, 39% said a mental health issue had contributed and 35% said drug use had ... All of these problems are known to overlap and reinforce one another”.<sup>85</sup> Services tend to focus on a single need, such as mental health or drug addiction, rather than on multiple needs and how the different needs interact with one another. Oliver Hilbery told us “In many situations for people with multiple needs, they simply have so many contacts with the statutory and voluntary sectors that they do not know where to turn”.<sup>86</sup>

70. Mr Hilbery also told us of the difficulties some services have in dealing with dual diagnoses: “There is a real difficulty in the mental health field about supporting individuals who are drinking or using drugs, for example. Once people have been turned away from that system once, it makes it very hard for them to go back and engage again”.<sup>87</sup> Given that significant numbers of homeless people suffer both from poor mental health and substance addiction, this failure to meet multiple needs is troubling.

71. We heard from Ross Symonds about being homeless in Bristol and his difficulties accessing services (see paragraph 64). We also heard that services are not designed with the user’s needs at their centre and that providers can fail to take into account the lives and circumstances of their users:

As a system and a series of services, we expect individuals to act as people would act if they did not have these experiences in their lives. We expect to see them for an appointment at two o’clock next Thursday, for them to meet that appointment and to turn up, and of course that is just not how their lives work. In many cases, they are taking really rational decisions about whether

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<sup>85</sup> St Mungo’s (HOL99) para 2.3

<sup>86</sup> Q132 [Oliver Hilbery]

<sup>87</sup> Q132 [Oliver Hilbery]

to attend the benefits office to stop their sanction, to go for their mental health care need appointment or to do something else. It becomes very complicated for them.<sup>88</sup>

72. This makes it much harder for homeless people to access the help and support they need, and makes their homelessness more entrenched. Katharine Sacks-Jones from Agenda told us that “For someone worrying about where they are going to sleep that night that will take priority over addressing their mental health needs. When people do reach the point of trying to seek help, it often is not there or is not accessible to them”.<sup>89</sup> The costs of homelessness to the public purse are significant—the annual cost is estimated to be up to £1 billion. Research from Crisis has also shown that tackling single homelessness early could save central Government between £3,000 and £18,000 for every person helped. It is therefore imperative that support services better capture and address all of an individual’s complex needs to help them escape homelessness as soon as possible. They can only do this through a personalised approach, as described by Mr Hilbery:

We have a situation in a lot of the sectors across the multiple needs field, in which services will come out and say to individuals, “We do this; do you want some of it?” Really of course the question should be, “What do you need to do and how might we provide that for you?”<sup>90</sup>

## Mental health

73. Mental health problems are particularly high amongst homeless people. Homeless Link conducted a health audit of over 2,500 homeless people in 2014 called ‘The Unhealthy State of Homelessness’. They found that the proportion of homeless people diagnosed with mental health problems (45 per cent) was nearly double that of the general population (around 25 per cent). 36 per cent of those surveyed suffered from depression (compared to three per cent of the general population) and there were also higher than average instances of bipolar disorder, personality disorder, schizophrenia and post-traumatic stress disorder. Twelve per cent cited a dual diagnosis.<sup>91</sup> Witnesses described mental health problems as being “both a cause and a consequence of homelessness”.<sup>92</sup> Those with pre-existing conditions are at greater risk of homelessness, and the longer someone is homeless the more likely it is that they will develop mental ill health. Research from St Mungo’s has found that four in ten people who sleep rough have a mental health problem, and that these people are over 50 per cent more likely to be stuck sleeping rough for longer than a year.<sup>93</sup>

74. As discussed earlier in this report, accessing services can be a challenge for homeless people. There is a further difficulty in mental health support services as many people have diagnosed needs, but fall short of the required threshold to qualify for specialist support. Mr Hilbery told us that:

The issue for a lot of people with multiple needs is that their mental health needs fall just below the threshold of access to secondary care. Indeed, a lot of

88 Q132 [Oliver Hilbery]

89 Q132 [Katharine Sacks-Jones]

90 Q139 [Oliver Hilbery]

91 Homeless Link, *The unhealthy state of homelessness: Health audit results 2014*, 2014, page 8

92 Q130 [Katharine Sacks-Jones]

93 St Mungo’s, *Stop the Scandal: an investigation into mental health and rough sleeping*, February 2016, page 3

their needs will fall just below the threshold for access to a range of services. They might have a learning disability that is just below threshold and a mental health need that is just below threshold, which pushes them straight back into the primary care field as being their only way forward.<sup>94</sup>

75. Helen Mathie from Homeless Link also explained that:

They may not reach those thresholds for the referral routes, but also the structure of some mental health services is quite rigid and the lack of flexibility can be a real problem. As we have discussed, we are working with people who may well be very vulnerable. They may have other problems going on with their lives, which makes it challenging to engage in the kind of way that services expect people to engage in, so maintaining treatment pathways and turning up for appointments at set times.<sup>95</sup>

**76. Given the prevalence of mental ill health among homeless people, especially those sleeping rough, it is essential that mental health support services maintain the flexibility needed to deliver effective treatment and that the sum of multiple needs is considered. We recognise that resources for many services are stretched and call on the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Department of Health to review the funding of mental health services for homeless people with a view to maximising their effectiveness at helping people out of homelessness as early as possible. We therefore call on the Government to produce a detailed action plan on how it intends to address the mental health needs of homeless people, including the delivery of outreach support to rough sleepers and assessing the vulnerability of applicants for homeless support. We see this as a priority for the cross-Departmental Ministerial Working Group and will be seeking an update in twelve months' time.**

## Vulnerable women and girls

77. There are particular challenges for homeless women, who are at a greater risk of sexual violence, prostitution or engaging in unhealthy relationships in order to access accommodation. The Nia Project argues that women who are homeless or at risk of homelessness will often take almost any measure, including measures that increase their vulnerability to predatory and exploitative individuals, in order to avoid being street homeless.<sup>96</sup> Women At The Well, a women-only drop-in centre in Kings Cross, explain that many of their clients report engaging in unwanted sexual liaisons to avoid rough sleeping and to ensure they secure accommodation each night.<sup>97</sup> Agenda reported that 28 per cent of homeless women have formed an unwanted sexual partnership to get a roof over their heads, and 20 per cent have engaged in prostitution to raise money for accommodation.<sup>98</sup>

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94 Q130 [Oliver Hilbery]

95 Q131 [Helen Mathie]

96 Nia Project ([HOL19](#))

97 Women At The Well ([HOL35](#))

98 Agenda ([HOL133](#)) para 1.4

78. Victims of domestic violence and abuse have an increased risk of becoming homeless. St Mungo's reports that 44 per cent of their female clients had experienced domestic violence, and 19 per cent had experienced abuse as a child.<sup>99</sup> Katharine Sacks-Jones from Agenda told us that:

experiences of domestic abuse can be highly traumatising and lead to women developing mental health problems or to developing problems with drugs and alcohol, which can then make them vulnerable to homelessness. There are obviously some really practical reasons as well. Women often become homeless fleeing a violent relationship so, in trying to escape that relationship, they become homeless. When women are homeless, they are vulnerable to further abuse and violence.<sup>100</sup>

79. It is clear that homeless women can be subject to particular challenges and risks. However support services do not always cater for the specific needs of vulnerable females, so women may be less likely to engage with services. The Nia Project highlight a survey of homeless women conducted by Crisis which found that while 60 per cent of the homeless women surveyed had slept rough, only 12 per cent had engaged with any street outreach teams.<sup>101</sup> The charity argued that "because homelessness is dominated by an assumption of male service users, it is often the case that services are shaped more with male service users in mind". Women accessing mixed-gender services "may find they are confronted with former buyers and pimps as they try to access such services", because the men might be waiting outside even if there are certain times of day dedicated to women.<sup>102</sup> Similarly, Women At The Well highlight that many of their clients "report that workers are unskilled and inexperienced in dealing with issues associated with women such as self-harm and eating disorders" and that "Disclosing abuse and violence may be difficult both because of the nature of their experiences and due to additional cultural factors, to a male key worker".<sup>103</sup>

80. We heard from Helen Mathie from Homeless Link that only around 11 per cent of homeless accommodation in England offers women-only provision.<sup>104</sup> Katharine Sacks-Jones told us that the refuges for women fleeing domestic violence are overstretched and not able to accommodate women with complex needs, such as mental ill health or substance addiction, so such women are turned away. Mainstream, mixed-gender homelessness provision does not offer a safe environment and so "For women with complex needs who are fleeing domestic violence, there is a gap and they can fall between services. Neither on the domestic violence side nor the homelessness side do they cater for their needs".<sup>105</sup> **Women who have been victims of domestic violence are particularly at risk of becoming homeless, and there is currently insufficient support to help them escape homelessness. We therefore call on Government to ensure that sufficient resources are available to meet the very real need. We also recommend that the Government review the level of refuges and hostel accommodation for single people and consider providing additional resources for further provision in areas of highest need.**

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99 Agenda ([HOL133](#)) para 1.3

100 Q145

101 The Nia Project ([HOL019](#)) para 1.1

102 The Nia Project ([HOL019](#)), para 4

103 Women At The Well ([HOL35](#))

104 Q146 [Helen Mathie]

105 Q146 [Katharine Sacks-Jones]

## Care leavers

81. Crisis note that 24 per cent of homeless people have been in care,<sup>106</sup> which suggests that further support to help the transition from being in care to independence is needed. We heard from three clients of the Children’s Society who were all formerly in care and had experienced homelessness. They told us about a lack of structure to the transition when leaving care. Children in care and in full time education receive support from their local authority until they are 25. However if they are not in education, this support ends at 18. They emphasised to us the “sudden cliff-edge” they encountered when support was withdrawn from them. They also highlighted the fact that very few young people can now afford to leave home at 18 and so continue to receive support from their parents, yet for care leavers the safety net is removed with no option of returning for further support, help or guidance. Care leavers are by definition vulnerable and require additional support (this issue is also considered in the Education Committee’s report on the mental health and well-being of looked-after children).<sup>107</sup> **Consideration should therefore be given by the Government to review the transition to independence.** One of them suggested that care leavers be exempt from council tax until they were 21 to mirror the support other young people would be likely to receive from their family. *To help reduce the risk of homelessness for children leaving care, the Government should consider a policy whereby they should not be required to pay council tax until they are 21.*

## Entrenched homelessness and the Housing First model

82. Originating in the USA and now popular in many European countries, the ‘Housing First’ approach does not require people to address their wider social care and support needs before they are put in long term accommodation, or while they are in it. The approach argues that housing is a basic human right and should be provided immediately and on an open-ended basis. Research conducted by the University of York on the effectiveness of the Housing First model explains that:

People using Housing First services are much more likely to have severe mental illness, poor physical health, long-term limiting illness, physical disabilities and learning difficulties than the general population. They are often highly socially marginalised, stigmatised and lack social supports and community integration. They are likely to be economically inactive and to have histories of contact with the criminal justice system. Rates of problematic drug and alcohol use are also high ... Housing and support are also separated, i.e. getting access to housing and remaining in housing is not conditional on accepting support or treatment. Service users are also not expected to stop drinking or using drugs in return for accessing or remaining in housing.<sup>108</sup>

83. Professor Sarah Johnsen argued that Housing First pilots should be extended in England and told us that:

There is really now consistent compelling evidence internationally from a number of countries that have implemented it using very robust randomised

<sup>106</sup> Crisis (HOL74), para 6.3

<sup>107</sup> Education Committee, Fourth Report of Session 2015–16, *Mental health and well-being of looked-after children*, HC481

<sup>108</sup> University of York, *Housing First in England: Research Executive Summary*, February 2015

control trial studies and so on to show that it is an extremely effective intervention with people with long-term experiences of homelessness and complex needs, particularly substance misuse issues and/or mental health problems.<sup>109</sup>

84. The Housing First model appears to have had a positive impact in Finland, where the government delivered two successive Housing First building programmes (PAAVO I 2008–11 and PAAVO II 2012–15). As part of the programmes around 2,500 new dwellings were constructed and 350 new professionals were hired. An international review of the PAAVO programmes explains that “By investing in prevention, and in housing guidance in particular, it has been possible to prevent approximately 200 inhabitants per year from becoming homeless. Most importantly, long-term homelessness has decreased by approximately 1,200 persons from 2008 to 2014, and homelessness continues to decrease”.<sup>110</sup> However we are cautious about investing further in Housing First in England because of the severity of England’s homelessness challenge and the scarcity of funding and of social housing. Many people have been on social housing registers for over ten years and are therefore likely to be concerned by what might be seen as a means of jumping the queue. We acknowledge and commend the work delivered through existing Housing First pilots but we believe that resources should be focussed on supporting more mainstream efforts to tackle homelessness and prevent instances of entrenched homelessness.

### Ex-offenders and those with No Recourse to Public Funds

85. There is a close relationship between offending and homelessness. Nacro, the crime reduction charity, explain that

One in five individuals being released from custody said they had no accommodation to go to on release, and almost half of homeless people in one survey had been in prison or a young offender’s institution at one point. 15% of newly sentenced prisoners reported being homeless before custody and 12% of prisoners depend on housing benefit to help with their rent before they enter custody. Having suitable accommodation is the cornerstone to effective resettlement, providing stability for the individual to rebuild a positive life.<sup>111</sup>

86. Despite this close relationship, ex-offenders and those leaving prisons do not always receive the support they need. We heard from Nick Hooper of Bristol City Council about a new initiative to manage resettlement from prison but that “What used to happen to us quite often is, on a Friday afternoon, they would turn up at the housing advice point, having been sent there by the prison”.<sup>112</sup> We also note reports following an inspection of HMP Bronzefield, a women’s jail in Surrey, that prisoners had been given tents and sleeping bags on their release in the absence of accommodation. A Ministry of Justice spokeswoman is quoted as saying that “the responsibility for making sure there is housing available ultimately lies with the local authority”.<sup>113</sup> This lack of coordination between the Ministry of Justice and the Department for Communities and Local Government is extremely worrying.

109 Q226

110 Ministry of the Environment, *The Finnish Homelessness Strategy: An International Review*, March 2015, page 3

111 Nacro (HOL143) para 1

112 Q107 [Nick Hooper]

113 “*Women released from private prison are forced to live in tents*”, The Times, 13 April 2016

87. We are also concerned by the effects of some Home Office policies. Non-EEA nationals may have a right to reside in the UK, but not be entitled to receive any public funds or support. With no recourse to public funds, they are at high risk of becoming homeless or destitute without access to welfare benefits or statutory housing services. Henry St Clair Miller from the No Recourse to Public Funds Network told us that the numbers of homeless people who have no recourse to public funds is not recorded. However the NRPF Connect database records data from 36 local authorities and as of 1 April 2016 “2,305 households were being supported with an additional 4,234 dependants. This is a huge cost. It is a cost to those 36 local authorities of £712,000 per week in accommodation and subsistence expenditure, so about £37 million per year”.<sup>114</sup> By restricting individuals’ access to public funds, the Home Office is increasing both levels of homeless and spending by local authorities.

88. Homelessness among EU citizens is also an issue. St Mungo’s highlight data from the CHAIN reporting of homelessness in London where rough sleepers from Central and Eastern Europe have increased 77 per cent from 1,526 to 2,695 between 2011/12 and 2014/15. The charity explains that:

EU migrants now have very limited access to housing benefit and so if they are not working it can be extremely difficult for them to pay any rent. This also makes it very hard for them to access hostel or supported housing services which depend on income from housing benefit to cover housing costs ... Consequently, homelessness services must find different ways of working in order to effectively support different groups off the street. This takes time and resources which are not always available.<sup>115</sup>

89. The Regional Asylum Activism project explains that asylum seekers awaiting a decision on their refugee status are effectively not allowed to work. They receive £36.95 a week (£5.28 a day), from the Home Office to pay for their food, clothing, toiletries, transport and other essential items. This support, known as Section 95 support, is equivalent to 52 per cent of Income Support. At the end of July 2015, more than 3,500 people had been waiting more than six months for an initial decision on their application. Regional Asylum Activism argue that many people whose applications are successful, nonetheless become destitute because they are given 28 days to leave their Home Office accommodation, and that this is too short a time to secure a new home and work.<sup>116</sup> We support the restriction of access to the welfare system to those who have a right to reside in this country and efforts to return people who have no such right to their country of origin. However we must also acknowledge that the policies behind the Home Office’s actions affect councils’ spending and levels of homelessness. As Mr St Clair Miller explained, “if the game plan around driving up more voluntary return does not work, it is not actually the Home Office that carries that financial risk or that risk to society. That is a risk for local authorities, the voluntary sector and the homelessness sector. There has to be some pushback and some balance in this area of work”.<sup>117</sup>

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114 Q154

115 St Mungo’s ([HOL99](#)) paras 3.16-3.17

116 Regional Asylum Activism North West ([HOL75](#))

117 Q158

## 7 Cross-Government working

90. On the strength of what we have learned throughout our inquiry, we have concluded that the scale of homelessness in this country is such that a renewed, cross-Departmental Government strategy is needed. We support the view expressed by Howard Sinclair, Chief Executive of St Mungo's that "Homelessness is everyone's issue and it is not inevitable".<sup>118</sup> All Departments need to contribute to the ending of homelessness by subscribing to a common approach. We heard much evidence that this is not the case currently. Jon Sparkes from Crisis told us that "there is very little evidence that the influence of DCLG is spreading to the other Departments".<sup>119</sup> We agree.

91. Crisis argued that tackling homelessness requires a cross-government approach but that current practice is "at best not joined up, and at worst contradictory." The charity cites an example:

the Department of Health has recently committed £40 million, via DCLG, to improve hostel accommodation for homeless people. At the same time, DWP plan to cap the amount of housing benefit people living in homelessness hostels can receive, leaving some of the same accommodation providers unable to provide a viable service. This is a clear instance of policy across government departments not working towards a shared objective.<sup>120</sup>

92. We received a significant amount of evidence that emphasised the vital role that supported accommodation plays in supporting homeless people, and how the Government's welfare reforms are putting this work at risk (see paragraphs 30–36). In the Summer Budget 2015, the Government announced that all social housing rents would be reduced by 1 per cent a year for four years from 2016. The Government also announced in the Autumn Budget 2015 that there would be a cap on LHA levels for social housing tenants which would apply to new tenancies entered into after April 2016, with Housing Benefit recipients affected from April 2018. Supported housing secured a one-year delay on both of these measures while a review of the funding of supported housing is carried out, but there remains significant uncertainty over future income levels.

93. In 2014–15 Derventio Housing Trust supported over 1,000 people, 99 per cent of whom were single homeless people. With most of their rents paid via housing benefit, the Government's reforms are expected to affect their income very significantly. Their annual turnover in 2014/15 was £3,838,883, and they estimate that the welfare reforms would cost them £3,359,376 per annum, and cause them to close all of their supported housing.<sup>121</sup> SHORE also told us that the proposed cap has "effectively blighted existing supporting housing projects in the meantime, and put on-hold any plans to develop more in the future", as the ongoing uncertainty discourages investment.<sup>122</sup> We are currently awaiting the outcome of the Government's review of welfare reforms and the impact on supported accommodation and urge the Government to give certainty to the sector as a matter of urgency. ***The Government should exempt all supported accommodation schemes from***

118 Q21 [Howard Sinclair]

119 Q21 [Jon Sparkes]

120 Crisis ([HOL74](#)) paras 4.1-4.2

121 Derventio Housing Trust ([HOL42](#)) paras 9-10

122 SHORE ([HOL41](#))

*the proposed rent cut so that those with multiple complex needs can continue to receive the help they need from these vital services. The outcomes of the current review of supported accommodation should be announced as soon as possible in order to give providers the certainty they need to plan ahead and deliver services.*

## Incentives to work

94. When we met the three young people who had worked with The Children’s Society, we were told how they were all advised against seeking employment whilst living in a hostel, as they would become liable to cover their rent costs which would be more than their income. Similarly Mateasa Grant told us:

I got a job within my first month of being in the hostel. Again, I was oblivious to the whole idea of housing benefit, how much you get paid, et cetera, until I was in that hostel and I realised that the rent that I was paying per week for the room that was being covered by the housing benefit was double the normal amount you would pay ... I could not believe it... When I did get the job the housing benefit was taken away, and then I would have had to pay the full amount ... Currently the average amount that I pay in the area I live is around about £115 a week. Where that hostel was was two hundred and something pounds a week.<sup>123</sup>

95. Ross Symonds had a similar experience and described to us the advice he was given:

There was talk about me going into secure accommodation at one point ... But he said, “If you go into somewhere like that and you get a job, you will not be able to afford to live there because the rent is just too high. You are better off waiting for somewhere private to come up.” ... That was the subtext. He was saying, “If you move in now you will not be able to work”.<sup>124</sup>

96. It is of fundamental importance that any homeless person that wants to seek employment should not be deterred in any way. Hostels charge higher rents to reflect the additional support they offer their tenants. Lord Freud, Minister of State for Welfare Reform, explained that:

It is almost certain that a hostel for homeless people will be designated as “specified accommodation”. Specified accommodation is that where the landlord provides or commissions care, support or supervision for their tenants. The needs of the tenants can often lead to higher housing costs and these are recognised in Housing Benefit.<sup>125</sup>

97. Housing Benefit can only meet the housing costs and not those of providing the additional support that it so important for homeless tenants. Lord Freud explained that if a resident in a homeless hostel gained employment, the amount they received in benefit will taper out at 65 pence for each pound above the ‘applicable amount’ (the amount for basic living expenses). We accept that the Government is making efforts to tackle the problem of disincentives, but the evidence we have received shows that these are not working. **It cannot be right that someone must choose between the support they need**

123 Qq202-203 [Mateasa Grant]

124 Qq203-204

125 [Letter from Lord Freud to Clive Betts](#) regarding homelessness, dated 30 June 2016

***and employment. To encourage homeless people to view employment as their route into independence and stability, support and rent costs should be separated and the Government should consider allowing housing benefit to be used for support costs for a short period of time or make available additional funding to facilitate the transition from homelessness to employment and independent living.***

## 8 Homelessness legislation

98. As discussed in paragraphs 37 and 38 above, homelessness legislation in England requires local authorities to make inquiries of those seeking support to ascertain whether they are in priority need. Those who are unintentionally homeless and in priority need receive the full housing duty, and those who are not receive the guidance and support that we have heard can amount to little more than a “list of letting agents and being told to go away”.<sup>126</sup> Single people without children are the most likely not to fall into the priority need categories. Priority need is assessed on basis of vulnerability, with the test being someone who is more vulnerable than an ‘ordinary street homeless person’ (see paragraphs 38 and 68). Mateasa Grant described being told she wasn’t “vulnerable enough”<sup>127</sup> but anyone who is vulnerable should be able to expect appropriate support. The legislation allows there to be a two-tier support system between those judged to be in priority need and those who are not.

### The legislative approach in Scotland and Wales

99. The Scottish and Welsh Governments have in recent years introduced new provisions to tackle homelessness. With effect from 31 December 2012, the priority need criterion for assessing homeless applications was abolished in Scotland. As a result, local authorities in Scotland have a duty to find permanent accommodation for all applicants who are unintentionally homeless. The changes were introduced in the Homelessness (Scotland) Act 2003, so the abolition had had a ten year lead-in time to allow councils to prepare for the change.

100. We asked Marcus Jones MP about the different legislative approach in Scotland, and he explained:

Our housing market is significantly different from the one in Scotland, and therefore I am not as sure that the system that is being employed in Scotland is one that we should look at too closely. We have looked very carefully at the work that they have done in Wales and the changes to the legislation.<sup>128</sup>

**101. We agree with the Minister’s assessment of the abolition of the priority need categories in Scotland. The Scottish housing market is significantly different to that in England, with, for example, a more stable private rental sector. For this reason, we do not advocate abolishing the priority need criterion.**

102. The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 introduced a duty on Welsh local authorities to provide housing advice and assistance to everyone within their local area, regardless of whether or not they were homeless or threatened with homelessness. The new homelessness provisions are focused on getting local authorities, in partnership with other relevant bodies, to prevent and relieve homelessness wherever possible. The 2014 Act treats differently those assessed as homeless and those threatened with homelessness. For applicants *threatened* with homelessness, the local authority has a duty to prevent them from becoming homeless. By providing mediation, financial support or guarantees of financial support or security measures for applicants at risk of abuse councils should take steps to prevent

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<sup>126</sup> Q10 [Giles Peaker]

<sup>127</sup> Q192

<sup>128</sup> Q264

the person's homelessness. The timeframe when a person can be considered to be at risk of homelessness was also extended from 28 to 56 days. For applicants who are assessed as *being* homeless, local authorities in Wales have a duty to help secure accommodation for a period of 56 days (or fewer if they feel reasonable steps to secure accommodation have been taken). After this period, the local authority only has a continuing duty to secure accommodation for those in priority need who have not become homeless intentionally.

103. The Welsh model of homelessness legislation and the priority given to prevention was welcomed by many homeless charities. Representatives from local authorities were also broadly positive but had concerns over the resource burden that the enhanced prevention duty could place on local authorities.<sup>129</sup> The Welsh Government told us that:

Additional funding was provided to Local Authorities to support the transition to the new legislation (provided for the first three years, however, reducing year on year)... In addition, a national training programme for front line staff was developed in partnership with Shelter Cymru and the Welsh Local Government Association. More than 600 people were trained, and this was supplemented by regional events which brought together Local Authority, Housing Association and Voluntary Sector staff for joint learning on the legislation and its implementation.<sup>130</sup>

104. We received evidence from South Cambridgeshire District Council which already seeks to prioritise prevention, but has found that the effectiveness of prevention measures is being eroded by the wider context of the local market:

Prior to 2010/11 the Council had a high success rate in preventing homelessness with close to a 100% success rate. From 2010/11 onwards the rate of unsuccessful preventions increased so that in 2011/12 117 preventions were unsuccessful. This increased to 122 unsuccessful preventions in 2012/13 ... even where a willingness to prevent homelessness exists (either through a statutory duty or through a Council's own philosophy), the overall success is dependent on the wider housing and welfare context. The availability and affordability of the private rented sector as a viable option is particularly crucial.<sup>131</sup>

105. The Minister told us:

I would say that the initial evidence shows that what they are doing in Wales looks promising. However, we need to see the data over a period to make sure that that data backs up what is promising evidence. We are certainly not ruling out looking at legislation and how that could change but we want to see how the data pans out and how it really works in Wales.<sup>132</sup>

106. We welcome the aspirations of the Welsh legislation and support efforts to prevent homelessness before it occurs. Extending the timeframe over which someone can be considered to be at risk of homelessness from 28 to 56 days is particularly important as it gives councils the time to provide meaningful support. We appreciate the Government's position of waiting for more evidence on the impact of the Welsh legislation and will be

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129 Q119

130 Welsh Government (HOL157) para 2

131 South Cambridgeshire District Council ([HOL17](#)) para 5.2

132 Q264

returning to the matter next year. We look forward to hearing from the Department on its assessment of the Welsh legislation in twelve months, including both on strengthening the duty to prevent homelessness and on measures to address applicants who are deemed to have behaved unreasonably.

107. A vital component in addressing homelessness is making sure that the support given to those at risk of homelessness and to those who are not in priority need, is meaningful. We heard regularly that many councils are doing their best to house those in priority need, while those not in priority need receive unacceptably variable levels of assistance. *We therefore support the Homelessness Reduction Bill 2016–17 sponsored by Mr Blackman and urge Government to support the legislation. The Government should introduce statutory monitoring of local authority housing departments to ensure they meet the requirements of a revised Code of Guidance that outlines service levels to ensure that every homeless person receives the support they need.*

108. In this report, we have called on Government to ensure that there is effective oversight and monitoring of local authorities. We recognise the pressures that councils are under and applaud the positive work that is taking place. However all homeless people deserve to receive the best possible support. In particular we would like to see monitoring of the quality of customer service in housing teams, the frequency of out of area placements and the process followed when housing families away from their home. This would most effectively be done by the Government, but we do not rule out the Committee seeking assurances directly from local authorities that our concerns are being met.

## Conclusions and recommendations

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### Official statistics

1. *The Government must take steps to improve data collection and implement the recommendations of the UK Statistics Authority as a matter of urgency. The aim should be to ensure that figures capture trends more accurately to reflect more than just the total number of homeless people, and the approach taken by CHAIN should be rolled out further across the country. The scale of hidden homelessness must also be appreciated: people who are homeless but have not approached local authorities for help and those who do seek help but are turned away before a formal application is made (discussed further in Chapter 4) are still homeless and should be taken into account in national statistics. The DCLG should give consideration to how this group can be captured effectively in the data it collects. We will monitor the Department's progress improving their statistics, and will return to the issue in twelve months' time. (Paragraph 12)*

### Factors in the increase in homelessness

2. *In light of the shortage of social housing (discussed further below), the private rented sector is an essential means to help people escape and avoid homelessness. However for many the financial barriers and instability of tenancies are too great. The Government should explore measures to give greater confidence both to tenants and to landlords to encourage them to let to homeless people. Local Housing Allowances levels should also be reviewed so that they more closely reflect market rents. Landlords should be encouraged to offer longer Assured Shorthold Tenancies which allow tenants to leave early without penalty. (Paragraph 21)*
3. *We note that there is a clear demand for low cost home ownership which is answered in part by Starter Homes but not all people are in a position to afford this step. There is therefore a case for the development of homes for affordable rent which we encourage the Government to act on by working with local authorities to deliver the homes that are needed at a local level. (Paragraph 24)*
4. *We recognise the need to develop Starter Homes to meet the demand for low cost home ownership but recognise the need for appropriate new homes for affordable rent. The Government should therefore review the definition of affordable housing to reflect local needs. (Paragraph 29)*
5. *We urge the Government to recognise that many 18–21 year olds are at significant risk of homelessness, and to make provision for those who have been in work but have lost their job to have a 'grace period' of, say, one to two months before the housing element of Universal Credit is withdrawn. (Paragraph 30)*
6. *The Government's position is that claimants should receive the benefits they are due, and then take responsibility for their own arrangements to meet the costs of their outgoings. However we are concerned that this policy is having a direct impact on levels of homelessness. All recipients of housing support should have the option of*

*having their housing benefits paid directly to their landlord, reducing the likelihood of them falling into arrears and increasing landlord confidence and willingness to let to tenants at risk of homelessness. (Paragraph 34)*

7. The impact of the welfare reforms of recent years have increased pressure on levels of homelessness. (Paragraph 36)

### The role of local authorities

8. *The Government should consider setting a statutory duty to provide meaningful support to single homeless people who can prove a local connection. (Paragraph 44)*
9. We acknowledge that the task facing local authorities is significant and that under the current legislation, sorting and prioritising some applicants over others is required. However it is not acceptable that the level of support offered to vulnerable people can vary significantly across the country. We welcome and applaud initiatives such as those at Newham and Camden, but remain concerned that some other local authorities have not been so proactive. As we have heard from witnesses who have been homeless: at a time when they are most vulnerable, people deserve to be treated with compassion and understanding rather than as if they were at fault. *We therefore call on the Government to monitor local authorities in order to promote best practice, to identify authorities which are not meeting their statutory duties and implement a code of practice to which local authorities should adhere.* We will continue to monitor the work of local authorities and will return to the issue in twelve months and may consider commissioning independent research of local authority practises. (Paragraph 50)
10. Housing people away from their homes and support networks should be an action of last resort, but we appreciate the pressures that councils are under and do not oppose out of area placements in principle. Nonetheless we are concerned that some authorities do not always follow the statutory guidance and fully consider the needs of the family being placed, or whether there might be a nearer available home. (Paragraph 53)
11. Local authorities seeking to house homeless families face a significant challenge, especially in high value areas such as London. However the needs of the individuals must be fully considered. When this has not happened, it is entirely appropriate that they should be able to challenge the decisions taken by their local council. The Secretary of State should write to all local housing authorities to reiterate councils' duties as outlined in the Code of Guidance and emphasise the duty of care that local authorities owe to some of their most vulnerable residents. (Paragraph 54)
12. *The impact on the areas receiving homeless households from other parts of the country should be recognised, and the Government should monitor local authorities to ensure that such placements only occur as a last resort. The practice and process of housing homeless families in areas away from their support networks, employment and schooling should be monitored. Local authorities should be required to demonstrate that the families are supported to make the moves successful, the receiving authority has been notified, the placement is as close to the family's former home as possible and all the family's needs have been fully considered. The Government should also consider*

*what guidance should be given to local authorities where families move from low cost areas of the country to higher cost areas and subsequently present themselves as homeless after short periods of time in privately rented accommodation. We recognise that this might need new secondary legislation. (Paragraph 56)*

### The service-user's perspective

13. *The Government should take steps to encourage and facilitate the development of Positive Pathway schemes across the country. (Paragraph 66)*
14. *As a Committee we are supportive of local authorities and the work they do. We understand the financial pressures they are under and the difficult choices they have to make. But treating someone as a human does not cost money. We have received too much evidence of councils and their staff treating homeless people in ways that are dismissive and at times discriminatory. This is unacceptable. The Government should review and reinforce the statutory Code of Practice to ensure it outlines clearly the levels of service that local authorities must provide and encourages regular training of staff to ensure a sympathetic and sensitive service. Services should put users first with a compassionate approach that gives individuals an element of choice and autonomy. (Paragraph 67)*

### Vulnerable groups and multiple complex needs

15. *Given the prevalence of mental ill health among homeless people, especially those sleeping rough, it is essential that mental health support services maintain the flexibility needed to deliver effective treatment and that the sum of multiple needs is considered. We recognise that resources for many services are stretched and call on the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Department of Health to review the funding of mental health services for homeless people with a view to maximising their effectiveness at helping people out of homelessness as early as possible. We therefore call on the Government to produce a detailed action plan on how it intends to address the mental health needs of homeless people, including the delivery of outreach support to rough sleepers and assessing the vulnerability of applicants for homeless support. We see this as a priority for the cross-Departmental Ministerial Working Group and will be seeking an update in twelve months' time. (Paragraph 76)*
16. *Women who have been victims of domestic violence are particularly at risk of becoming homeless, and there is currently insufficient support to help them escape homelessness. We therefore call on Government to ensure that sufficient resources are available to meet the very real need. We also recommend that the Government review the level of refuges and hostel accommodation for single people and consider providing additional resources for further provision in areas of highest need. (Paragraph 80)*
17. *Consideration should therefore be given by the Government to review the transition to independence [for children in care]. To help reduce the risk of homelessness for children leaving care, the Government should consider a policy whereby they should not be required to pay council tax until they are 21. (Paragraph 81)*

### Cross-Government working

18. On the strength of what we have learned throughout our inquiry, we have concluded that the scale of homelessness in this country is such that a renewed, cross-Departmental Government strategy is needed. We support the view expressed by Howard Sinclair, Chief Executive of St Mungo's that "Homelessness is everyone's issue and it is not inevitable". All Departments need to contribute to the ending of homelessness by subscribing to a common approach. We heard much evidence that this is not the case currently. Jon Sparkes from Crisis told us that "there is very little evidence that the influence of DCLG is spreading to the other Departments". We agree. (Paragraph 90)
19. *The Government should exempt all supported accommodation schemes from the proposed rent cut so that those with multiple complex needs can continue to receive the help they need from these vital services. The outcomes of the current review of supported accommodation should be announced as soon as possible in order to give providers the certainty they need to plan ahead and deliver services.* (Paragraph 93)
20. It cannot be right that someone must choose between the support they need and employment. *To encourage homeless people to view employment as their route into independence and stability, support and rent costs should be separated and the Government should consider allowing housing benefit to be used for support costs for a short period of time or make available additional funding to facilitate the transition from homelessness to employment and independent living.* (Paragraph 97)

### Homelessness legislation

21. We agree with the Minister's assessment of the abolition of the priority need categories in Scotland. The Scottish housing market is significantly different to that in England, with, for example, a more stable private rental sector. For this reason, we do not advocate abolishing the priority need criterion. (Paragraph 101)
22. We look forward to hearing from the Department on its assessment of the Welsh legislation in twelve months, including both on strengthening the duty to prevent homelessness and on measures to address applicants who are deemed to have behaved unreasonably. (Paragraph 106)
23. A vital component in addressing homelessness is making sure that the support given to those at risk of homelessness and to those who are not in priority need, is meaningful. We heard regularly that many councils are doing their best to house those in priority need, while those not in priority need receive unacceptably variable levels of assistance. *We therefore support the Homelessness Reduction Bill 2016–17 sponsored by Mr Blackman and urge Government to support the legislation. The Government should introduce statutory monitoring of local authority housing departments to ensure they meet the requirements of a revised Code of Guidance that outlines service levels to ensure that every homeless person receives the support they need.* (Paragraph 107)
24. In this report, we have called on Government to ensure that there is effective oversight and monitoring of local authorities. We recognise the pressures that councils are

under and applaud the positive work that is taking place. However all homeless people deserve to receive the best possible support. In particular we would like to see monitoring of the quality of customer service in housing teams, the frequency of out of area placements and the process followed when housing families away from their home. This would most effectively be done by the Government, but we do not rule out the Committee seeking assurances directly from local authorities that our concerns are being met. (Paragraph 108)

# Formal Minutes

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**Monday 18 July 2016**

Members present:

Mr Clive Betts, in the Chair

Bob Blackman	David Mackintosh
Helen Hayes	Mr Mark Prisk
Kevin Hollinrake	Mary Robinson
Julian Knight	

Draft Report (*Homelessness*) proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 108 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Third Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

*Ordered*, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[Adjourned until Wednesday 20 July at 10.00 a.m.]

## Witnesses

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The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

### Monday 14 March 2016

*Question number*

**Jon Sparkes**, Chief Executive, Crisis, **Howard Sinclair**, Chief Executive, St Mungo's, **Kate Webb**, Head of Homelessness Policy, Shelter, and **Giles Peaker**, Chair, Housing Law Practitioners Association

[Q1–69](#)

### Monday 18 April 2016

**Councillor Daniel Astaire**, Cabinet Minister for Housing, Regeneration, Business and Economic Development, Westminster City Council, **Jim Crawshaw**, Integrated Service Head, Homeless and Pre-Tenancy Services, Birmingham City Council, **Nick Hooper**, Service Director for Housing Solutions, Bristol City Council, and **Hazel Summers**, Strategic Director, Adult Social Services, Manchester City Council

[Q70–122](#)

### Monday 9 May 2016

**Katharine Sacks-Jones**, Director, Agenda, **Henry St Clair Miller**, Manager, No Recourse to Public Funds Network, **Helen Mathie**, Head of Policy, Homeless Link, and **Oliver Hilbery**, Project Director, Making Every Adult Matter

[Q123–172](#)

### Monday 6 June 2016

**Mateasa Grant**, Crisis "mystery shopper", **Daisy-May Hudson**, director of "Half Way" film, **Ross Symonds**, author of "Homeless in Bristol" blog

[Q173–213](#)

**Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick** and **Professor Sarah Johnsen**, Heriot-Watt University

[Q214–232](#)

### Monday 13 June 2016

**Marcus Jones MP**, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Minister for Local Government, Department for Communities and Local Government

[Q233–281](#)

**Jane Ellison MP**, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health, Department of Health, and **Peter Searle**, Director of Working Age Benefits, Department for Work and Pensions

[Q282–320](#)

## Published written evidence

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The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

HOL numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 1625 Independent People ([HOL0103](#))
- 2 AAT Maura Griffin ([HOL0139](#))
- 3 Agenda ([HOL0133](#))
- 4 Alexandre Posterity ([HOL0015](#))
- 5 Association of Housing Advice Services ([HOL0078](#))
- 6 Association of Retained Council Housing ([HOL0129](#))
- 7 Avalon Cabins Ltd ([HOL0160](#))
- 8 Aylesbury Vale District Council ([HOL0081](#))
- 9 Birmingham City Council ([HOL0107](#))
- 10 Bournemouth Churches Housing Association (BCHA) ([HOL0067](#))
- 11 Braintree District Council ([HOL0039](#))
- 12 Brent Council ([HOL0061](#))
- 13 Brighton & Hove City Council ([HOL0036](#))
- 14 Brighton Housing Trust ([HOL0057](#))
- 15 Bristol City Council ([HOL0038](#))
- 16 Cardiff University ([HOL0144](#))
- 17 Cardinal Hume Centre ([HOL0126](#))
- 18 Catchinglives ([HOL0112](#))
- 19 Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University ([HOL0043](#))
- 20 Centrepoint ([HOL0031](#))
- 21 Changing Lives ([HOL0114](#))
- 22 Chartered Institute of Housing ([HOL0033](#))
- 23 Citizens Advice ([HOL0115](#))
- 24 Citizens Advice Runnymede and Spelthorne ([HOL0022](#))
- 25 City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council ([HOL0026](#))
- 26 City of Lincoln Council ([HOL0117](#))
- 27 City of York Council ([HOL0068](#))
- 28 Crisis ([HOL0074](#))
- 29 Crisis ([HOL0153](#))
- 30 CSAN (Caritas Social Action Network) ([HOL0066](#))
- 31 David SmartKnight ([HOL0045](#))
- 32 DCLG ([HOL0149](#))
- 33 Department of Health ([HOL0164](#))

- 34 Depaul UK ([HOL0156](#))
- 35 Derventio Housing Trust ([HOL0042](#))
- 36 Devon & Cornwall Housing Options Partnership ([HOL0072](#))
- 37 Dr Katherine Shelton ([HOL0027](#))
- 38 Dr Rosalind Beck ([HOL0147](#))
- 39 Durham County Council ([HOL0058](#))
- 40 East London Housing Partnership ([HOL0092](#))
- 41 East Riding of Yorkshire Council ([HOL0070](#))
- 42 Emmaus UK ([HOL0059](#))
- 43 End Youth Homelessness ([HOL0065](#))
- 44 ERSA ([HOL0016](#))
- 45 ForViva ([HOL0069](#))
- 46 Gareth Wilson ([HOL0145](#))
- 47 Greater Manchester Housing Needs Group ([HOL0077](#))
- 48 Green Pastures ([HOL0018](#))
- 49 Guildford Borough Council ([HOL0101](#))
- 50 Halton Housing Trust ([HOL0029](#))
- 51 Harrow Council ([HOL0086](#))
- 52 Homeless Link ([HOL0097](#))
- 53 Homeless Link ([HOL0159](#))
- 54 Homelessness and Traumatic Brain Injury Research Group ([HOL0056](#))
- 55 Housing Consultant on Homelessness Andy Gale ([HOL0049](#))
- 56 Housing Justice ([HOL0040](#))
- 57 Housing Law Practitioners Association ([HOL0004](#))
- 58 Hugo Sugg ([HOL0110](#))
- 59 hyh ([HOL0128](#))
- 60 Ian Tyes ([HOL0001](#))
- 61 Inclusion London ([HOL0063](#))
- 62 Joseph Rowntree Foundation ([HOL0102](#))
- 63 Justlife ([HOL0155](#))
- 64 King's College London ([HOL0088](#))
- 65 Kirklees Council ([HOL0100](#))
- 66 LB Tower Hamlets ([HOL0096](#))
- 67 LB Waltham Forest ([HOL0095](#))
- 68 Liverpool City Council ([HOL0113](#))
- 69 Liverpool City Region Child Poverty and Life Chances Commission ([HOL0140](#))
- 70 Living Well Bromley ([HOL0124](#))
- 71 Local Government Association ([HOL0037](#))

- 72 Local Government Ombudsman ([HOL0048](#))
- 73 London Borough of Camden ([HOL0134](#))
- 74 London Borough of Ealing ([HOL0137](#))
- 75 London Borough of Newham ([HOL0135](#))
- 76 London City Mission ([HOL0142](#))
- 77 London Councils ([HOL0109](#))
- 78 Look Ahead ([HOL0120](#))
- 79 M Stevens ([HOL0007](#))
- 80 Manchester City Council ([HOL0034](#))
- 81 Mark Crossley ([HOL0012](#))
- 82 Mayday Trust ([HOL0148](#))
- 83 Midland Heart ([HOL0119](#))
- 84 Miss Kathy Miller ([HOL0003](#))
- 85 Mr Graham Sharp ([HOL0047](#))
- 86 Mr Gregory Elliott ([HOL0014](#))
- 87 Mr Jason Beckley ([HOL0002](#))
- 88 Mr Kevin Neil ([HOL0123](#))
- 89 Mr Zulfiqar Ali Mulak ([HOL0082](#))
- 90 Ms Helen Joberns ([HOL0163](#))
- 91 Ms Stella Headley ([HOL0152](#))
- 92 Nacro ([HOL0143](#))
- 93 National Housing Federation ([HOL0085](#))
- 94 New Horizon Youth Centre ([HOL0032](#))
- 95 Newcastle City Council ([HOL0055](#))
- 96 Nia ([HOL0019](#))
- 97 No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) Network ([HOL0025](#))
- 98 North East Regional Homelessness Group and North East Homelessness Think Tank ([HOL0051](#))
- 99 North East Regional Homelessness Group Offender and Homelessness Working Group ([HOL0073](#))
- 100 North London Housing Partnership ([HOL0091](#))
- 101 Northumberland County Council ([HOL0060](#))
- 102 Nottingham Citizens Advice ([HOL0006](#))
- 103 Nottingham City Council ([HOL0071](#))
- 104 Opportunity Nottingham ([HOL0083](#))
- 105 Pathway/Faculty for Homeless Health ([HOL0158](#))
- 106 Phoenix Futures ([HOL0161](#))
- 107 Plymouth City Council ([HOL0093](#))
- 108 Population Matters ([HOL0141](#))

- 109 Portsmouth and District Private Landlords Association ([HOL0138](#))
- 110 Reading Borough Council ([HOL0106](#))
- 111 Regional Asylum Activism Project ([HOL0075](#))
- 112 Residential Landlords Association ([HOL0111](#))
- 113 Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea / London Borough of Wandsworth ([HOL0023](#))
- 114 Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames ([HOL0146](#))
- 115 Runnymede Homelessness Task Group ([HOL0030](#))
- 116 Sedgemoor District Council ([HOL0130](#))
- 117 Shelter ([HOL0094](#))
- 118 SHORE (Sussex) ([HOL0041](#))
- 119 Social Finance ([HOL0054](#))
- 120 South Cambridgeshire District Council ([HOL0017](#))
- 121 South East London Housing Partnership ([HOL0062](#))
- 122 South East London Housing Partnership ([HOL0132](#))
- 123 Spelthorne Borough Council ([HOL0024](#))
- 124 St Basils ([HOL0021](#))
- 125 St Mungo's ([HOL0099](#))
- 126 Surrey Leaders Group (SLG) ([HOL0052](#))
- 127 Tameside Preventing Homelessness Forum ([HOL0080](#))
- 128 Thames Reach ([HOL0122](#))
- 129 The Children's Society ([HOL0131](#))
- 130 The Disabilities Trust ([HOL0136](#))
- 131 The National Practitioner Support Service ([HOL0154](#))
- 132 The Royal British Legion ([HOL0116](#))
- 133 The Salvation Army ([HOL0050](#))
- 134 The Vine Centre ([HOL0013](#))
- 135 Threshold ([HOL0076](#))
- 136 Thurrock Council ([HOL0053](#))
- 137 Trudy Baddams ([HOL0125](#))
- 138 Understanding Society, Institute for Social and Economic Research ([HOL0087](#))
- 139 University of Southampton ([HOL0162](#))
- 140 Welsh Government ([HOL0157](#))
- 141 West London Housing Partnership ([HOL0118](#))
- 142 West Midlands Police ([HOL0028](#))
- 143 Westminster City Council ([HOL0084](#))
- 144 Women at the Well ([HOL0035](#))
- 145 Women in Prison ([HOL0121](#))

- 146 YMCA England ([HOL0098](#))
- 147 York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Strategic Housing Board/Homelessness Forum ([HOL0108](#))
- 148 Zacchaeus 2000 Trust (Z2K) ([HOL0104](#))

## List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

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All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

### Session 2016–17

First Report	100 per cent retention of business rates: issues for consideration	HC 241
Second Report	Pre-appointment hearing with the Government's preferred candidate for the post of Chair of the Homes and Communities Agency	HC 41

### Session 2015–16

First Report	Devolution: the next five years and beyond	HC 369
Second Report	Housing associations and the Right to Buy	HC 370
Third Report	Department for Communities and Local Government's consultation on national planning policy	HC 703
First Special Report	Child sexual exploitation in Rotherham: Ofsted and further government issues: Ofsted Response to the Committee's Ninth Report of Session 2014–15	HC 435
Second Special Report	Private rented sector: the evidence from banning letting agents' fees in Scotland: Government Response to the Committee's Eighth Report of Session 2014–15	HC 434