

# Is the government on track to meet its manifesto commitment to ‘end the blight of rough sleeping’ by the end of this Parliament?

## National Housing Federation submission to the APPG for Ending Homelessness Inquiry for organisations

May 2022

### Summary

Rough sleeping essentially temporarily ended overnight with the government’s emergency accommodation measures during the first national lockdown. This shows what is possible with leadership and funding.

The impetus to accommodate rough sleepers should continue and be accompanied by adequate, ring-fenced funding to secure permanent homes and ongoing support for those rehoused and safeguard supported housing services to ensure that no-one returns to rough sleeping.

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of person-centred support services in housing and of taking a holistic and flexible approach to people’s needs in enabling them to carry on living independently. Support services help people experiencing homelessness access accommodation and to retain their housing long-term.

The pandemic has also revealed the urgent need to address the underfunding of housing and support services. In the longer term, we need investment to build the social housing the country needs. This should go alongside properly funded support services for wider homelessness prevention and benefits that cover the cost of rent. Only with this investment will the government meet its target of ending rough sleeping by 2024.

This submission considers whether the government is on track to meet its manifesto commitment to 'end the blight of rough sleeping' by 2024 by answering the following questions under the following headings:

1. Review of the commitment to end rough sleeping in England by 2024 – where are we now? ([skip to](#))
  - a. Do you think the Government will meet its manifesto commitment to ending rough sleeping by 2024? ([skip to](#))
    - i. What does successfully ending rough sleeping in England look like? ([skip to](#))
    - ii. How can we best measure this? ([skip to](#))
  - b. What progress has been made, and what government action to tackle rough sleeping since 2019 do you think has been most important/ impactful? ([skip to](#))
  - c. What examples of best practice to end rough sleeping can you share from a local, regional or national level in England? ([skip to](#))
  - d. What in your view are the general lessons to be learnt from Everyone In initiative in regards to tackling rough sleeping? ([skip to](#))
  - e. How do you think Everyone In could have been made more effective in terms of policy, law, and/or funding? ([skip to](#))
  - f. The government has promised in its 2019 manifesto to end rough sleeping by expanding successful pilots and programmes such as the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) and Housing First (HF) ([skip to](#))
    - i. What merits and limitations does the RSI have, and what impact do you consider it to have had on funding efforts to end rough sleeping? ([skip to](#))
    - ii. What role can Housing First play in helping the Westminster Government deliver its manifesto commitment to end rough sleeping in England by 2024? ([skip to](#))
  - g. What changes would you like to see in terms of national or local funding arrangements to tackle rough sleeping? ([skip to](#))
2. Meeting the needs of everyone sleeping rough: ([skip to](#))
  - a. Which cohorts of rough sleepers do you think have been supported out of rough sleeping? Has their homelessness been ended? If not what more needs to be done for these groups? ([skip to](#))
  - b. Which groups do you feel still lack access to the support they need or a meaningful intervention and what should be put in place to successfully end their homelessness? ([skip to](#))

In particular, views on any of the following groups would be helpful:

1. Survivors of gendered violence/domestic abuse ([skip to](#))
  2. Women ([skip to](#))
  3. LGBTQI+ groups ([skip to](#))
  4. Non-UK nationals ([skip to](#))
  5. Prison leavers ([skip to](#))
  6. Veterans ([skip to](#))
  7. Care leavers ([skip to](#))
  8. Complex needs ([skip to](#))
  9. Other groups ([skip to](#))
3. What is needed to prevent, secure and sustain an end to rough sleeping in England? ([skip to](#))
- a. In your opinion, what are the main national policy and practice changes still needed to sustain an end to rough sleeping in England beyond 2024? ([skip to](#))
  - b. In your opinion, what are the main local policy and practice changes needed to successfully sustain an end to rough sleeping in England by 2024? ([skip to](#))
  - c. Should government look beyond ending rough sleeping and commit to ending wider forms of homelessness beyond 2024? ([skip to](#))
  - d. What policies are needed to end all forms of homelessness for good, and what additional outcome measures could reflect this? ([skip to](#))

## Introduction

The National Housing Federation (NHF) is the voice of England's housing associations. Our members provide more than two and a half million homes and support for around six million people who typically have greater support needs than the general population, including three-quarters of all supported and sheltered housing such as homeless hostels, retirement and extra care housing, homes for people with learning or physical disabilities and people with autism, mental health step-down units and domestic abuse refuges. We influence, campaign and engage on behalf of our members. We create an environment where housing associations can deliver their social mission.

The pandemic has highlighted the need for secure, affordable homes, especially for those hardest hit: low-paid key workers, rough sleepers, families in temporary accommodation and people in unsuitable, unsupported or overcrowded homes. It

has also highlighted the need for support services, a robust welfare system, and safeguards for employment.

Housing associations play a key role in preventing and ending rough sleeping, and have been heavily involved in alleviating rough sleeping and homelessness during the pandemic. They have cooperated with partners to help keep people secure at home and get the support they need, and rehouse rough sleepers.

Rough sleeping essentially ended overnight for a temporary period with the government's emergency accommodation measures during the first national lockdown. This shows what is possible with leadership and funding.

We must not undo the progress made. The impetus to accommodate rough sleepers should continue and be accompanied by adequate, ring-fenced funding to secure permanent homes and ongoing support for those rehoused and safeguard supported housing services to ensure that no-one returns to rough sleeping.

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of person-centred support services in housing and of taking a holistic and flexible approach to people's needs in enabling them to carry on living independently. Support services help people experiencing homelessness access accommodation and to retain their housing long-term.

The pandemic has also revealed the urgent need to address the underfunding of housing and support services. In the longer term, we need investment to build the social housing the country needs, alongside properly funded support services for wider homelessness prevention and benefits that cover the cost of rent. Only with this investment will the government meet its target of ending rough sleeping by 2024.

## **1. Review of the commitment to end rough sleeping in England by 2024 – where are we now?**

**a. Do you think the Government will meet its manifesto commitment to ending rough sleeping by 2024? Please explain your reasoning in less than 500 words.**

**No.** The pandemic has highlighted the fact that secure, affordable homes, with support where appropriate are a viable means of ending rough sleeping. This was demonstrated by the success of the Everyone In initiative, which saw the government, councils and housing providers working together to match people with accommodation, and the ensuing Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme

(RSAP). With the introduction of a longer-term commitment to fund support as part of the Social Care White Paper, the government has demonstrated its awareness of the importance of stable funding to underpin housing with support.

However, statistics show 2,440 sleeping rough on a single night in autumn 2021. This is down by 9% from 2020 but is up 38% since 2010.<sup>1</sup> NHF research also shows that around 4.2 million households have a housing need that would be best met by social rented housing.<sup>2</sup> By investing in social rent and housing-related support, the government can extend its commitment to supporting people at risk of homelessness into sustainable, affordable housing beyond the RSAP.

Alongside this, the potential for the rising cost of living to put more people at risk of rough sleeping cannot be ignored. People whose income drops will rely on benefits to meet their living costs. To protect households, the government should strengthen the benefits system so people can meet daily costs and stay housed because they can meet their housing costs. It should correct the flaws in the system that can create financial strain such as the benefit cap and the five-week wait for Universal Credit (UC).<sup>3</sup> The government increased the standard UC and Working Tax Credit payment by £20 per week in April 2020. This helped people manage the loss of work and additional costs during the pandemic, but was removed in late 2021, at a time when the cost of living was rising again.

Social landlord evictions have fallen every year since 2014<sup>4</sup> and housing associations increasingly use personalised and flexible approaches to rent collection and tenancy sustainment support<sup>5</sup> but, in the main, private renters do not have access to this kind of support from their landlord.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2021/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2021>

<sup>2</sup> NHF, People in housing need 2021, <https://www.housing.org.uk/our-work/building-new-homes/people-in-housing-need/>  
<https://www.housing.org.uk/resources/people-in-housing-need/>

<sup>3</sup> NHF, No Time to Wait, 19 June 2020  
<https://www.housing.org.uk/resources/research-report-on-the-claimant-experience-of-universal-credit--and-how-to-improve-it/> ; <https://www.housing.org.uk/resources/universal-credit-claiming-during-coronavirus/>

<sup>4</sup> Table 8: Mortgage and landlord possession workload in the county courts of England, 1999 - 2021, Q4  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mortgage-and-landlord-possession-statistics-october-to-december-2021>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.housing.org.uk/resources/housing-associations-tenancy-sustainment-coronavirus/> ;  
<https://www.housing.org.uk/resources/universal-credit-coronavirus-crisis/> ; <https://www.housing.org.uk/news-and-blogs/news/housing-associations-evictions-statement/> ; <https://www.placeshapers.org/going-freestyle-what-happens-when-the-rulebook-is-taken-away/>

Another aspect to consider is the risk of a follow-up to the recent announcement on “exempt accommodation” that focuses on cutting subsidy rather than improving quality, which would deplete supported housing supply and push up homelessness. It is valuable that the government acknowledges the need to keep supply of supported housing so people with support needs have housing options.

**In the longer term, we need investment to build the social housing the country needs, alongside properly funded support services for wider homelessness prevention and tenancy sustainment and benefits that cover the cost of rent. Only with this investment will the government meet its target of ending rough sleeping by 2024.**

#### **i. What does successfully ending rough sleeping in England look like?**

Housing associations, working with government and other partners, can play an important role in ending rough sleeping. The NHF is keen to see **government support for a strategy to give rough sleepers long-term housing options. This would need to be backed by significant investment in support.** What is needed to deliver this in the short term is:

- A clear commitment and plan from government to ensure that every former rough sleeper will be supported into sustainable and affordable housing.
- Local authority coordination of appropriate provision, working with partners including housing associations to identify suitable accommodation.
- Guaranteed, ring-fenced support funding to ensure people receive appropriate support in their new home and can sustain their tenancy.
- Capital funding to secure additional accommodation where necessary and remodel existing provision.
- Up-to-date guidance on managing new lettings.

In the longer term, commissioned support and capital funding will need to be at adequate levels, flexible and multiyear in order to make housing provision sustainable.

To achieve successful schemes, commissioners should:

- Have a clear vision and shared approach with housing providers.
- Develop a strategic understanding of the level and range of need for long-term supported housing in their area.



- Create a robust strategic plan for how those housing needs should be met.
- Undertake active engagement with the supported housing market in their area, building strong relationships with providers and share risk with housing providers (for example, as regards voids), to encourage supported housing development.

These actions would deliver improved outcomes for people who require (supported) housing. They would also be better value for public funds because need would be more closely matched with the most appropriate (supported) housing solutions.

As observed, the longer-term commitment to fund support as part of the Social Care White Paper is a positive development, but some of this funding needs to be ring-fenced explicitly for rough sleepers and local planners guided to base their provision on local need rather than what is cheapest to build.

Assessments must be made into the needs of rough sleepers so there can be a clear view of what will be most appropriate for them, such as varying levels of supported housing, Housing First or Adult Social Care provision. These should be in appropriate locations and dispersed properties where appropriate.<sup>6</sup>

Future planning must therefore include not only those people who are currently accommodated but also those at risk of homelessness. **Homelessness prevention measures such as increased supply of affordable housing, benefits that cover the cost of rent, tenancy sustainment support, legal advice and family mediation are of capital importance.**

Housing associations can be part of ensuring a sustainable end to homelessness, provided that adequate funding is available and ongoing guidance fosters partnership working.

## ii. How can we best measure this?

Some success measures can be:

- Number of housing units delivered.
- Housing/tenancy retention statistics.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://localpartnerships.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Rough-sleeper-accommodation-guidance-final.pdf>

- Support provided matches needs assessment.
- Measures of successful prevention activities.
- Overall homelessness statistics (rather than point in time).

**b. What progress has been made, and what government action to tackle rough sleeping since 2019 do you think has been most important/impactful?**

The NHF welcomed the steps the government took to support people to manage the effects of the pandemic and weather the financial storm that could have otherwise put them at risk of homelessness. This included supporting residents in their homes, accommodating rough sleepers and changes to the welfare system. Some of these, however, could have been better targeted. Furthermore, the cost of living crisis puts this progress at risk.

Welcome homeless prevention funding in the 2020 Spending Review was targeted at local authorities with high numbers of homeless people, those at risk of homelessness, or those living in temporary accommodation.<sup>7</sup> However, it would have been useful to target prevention funding at the causes of homelessness and rough sleeping. It was positive that the £643m of funding for rough sleeping to fund 6,000 new places to live included recognition of the need for a “step change in support services”, to move people off the streets and support them to maintain a long-term tenancy, and included funding for support services. This funding was quickly converted into a fund for self-isolation accommodation for rough sleepers to protect them from the pandemic.

However, this money needed to be targeted as effectively as possible and the design of the new system for distribution needed to work for vulnerable people and housing providers. Unfortunately, there were a number of problems with the fund that made it difficult for local authorities and housing associations to apply. This included the short timescales for preparing bids and the long wait for funding awards. These issues were coupled with an inflexible completion date of the end of the financial year, which in the first year left housing providers with four months to complete development projects (see below for more analysis).

In its 2021 budget, the government reiterated its 2020- 21 funding for rough sleeping and funding that was announced at Spending Review for 2021-22. We welcomed the

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<sup>7</sup> [MHCLG, Press release: Government pledges further £310 million to tackle homelessness December 2020](#)



focus on homelessness prevention and the longer-term commitment to reduce homelessness. We were disappointed, however, not to see additional, long-term funding for all forms of supported housing, which is vital for allowing those with support needs to thrive in their home. We were also disappointed that there was no announcement on the second round of the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP). We had asked the government to open the next round of RSAP funding quickly, warning that further delays would make completion increasingly difficult.

The pandemic put enormous financial strain on residents, with Universal Credit (UC) claims and unemployment at the highest levels in years.<sup>8</sup> The government introduced important changes in the benefit rules including for carers, people self-isolating and the self-employed, to support incomes and ensure timely UC payments and streamlining direct rent payments. However, gaps remain, some of which particularly affect tenants and make payment of housing costs harder.

Some people impacted by the household benefit cap saw no increase in their income to help with the pandemic. People who lost their job at the start of the pandemic were impacted by the cap if they were still out of work, or only working a few hours a week, many months later. The government withdrew the £20 uplift to Universal Credit that had been a lifeline to many struggling to meet daily costs. NHF data also shows an increase in the percentage of tenants in arrears and the overall level of arrears for those on UC. In a survey of 22 social landlords in 2021, UC claimants among their tenants remained almost twice as likely to be in arrears as other tenants (just over 60% versus just under 36%). They are also in significantly higher levels of arrears.<sup>9</sup> Tenants struggle to maintain rent payments during the five-week wait,<sup>10</sup> so social landlords tend to see a correlation between the start of a UC claim and the beginning or increase of arrears.

In its 2021 budget, the government announced that it would bring forward exemptions to the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR), originally due to be implemented from October 2023. From June 2021, care leavers up to the age of 25 (increased from 22) and those under the age of 25 who have spent any three months

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<sup>8</sup> Resolution Foundation, Coping with housing costs, six months on..., 30 October 2020  
<https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/coping-with-housing-costs-six-months-on/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.housing.org.uk/resources/universal-credit-coronavirus-crisis/>

<sup>10</sup> NHF, No Time to Wait, 19 June 2020

<https://www.housing.org.uk/resources/research-report-on-the-claimant-experience-of-universal-credit--and-how-to-improve-it/>

in supported accommodation, and victims of domestic abuse and human trafficking, will be exempt from the SAR in Universal Credit and Housing Benefit. This is a positive announcement, as it will ensure that it will be more affordable for young people who have experienced homelessness and care leavers to live independently, will help young people move on from emergency accommodation more easily, and will help people experiencing domestic abuse and sexual exploitation to afford alternative housing.

Also, while it won't mitigate the full impact of the loss of the £20 Universal Credit uplift, particularly during the winter months and for people who aren't working, it is positive that the government recognised the need to support families on the lowest incomes by reducing the Universal Credit taper.

In response to the Chancellor's 2022 spring statement, the NHF welcomed the increase in the household support fund as it will help some people, but this fund comes with a high administrative burden for councils and given the application procedure it is likely to reach fewer people than a uniformly targeted national pot like Universal Credit. The fund cannot be spent on rent. Change is needed to create a more robust benefits system rather than piecemeal, temporary pots of funding.

**Given the cost of living increase and ongoing risk of homelessness, the government should continue to focus on critical issues, including:**

- **Addressing homeless people's long-term housing and support needs through continued multi-year funding that is at a high enough level to ensure housing stability.**
- **Ensuring the benefits system supports everyone affected by the crisis to keep paying their rent and manage living costs, including suspending the household benefit cap, reinstating the £20 Universal Credit uplift, and extending this to legacy benefits, and ending the five-week wait.**
- **Supporting communities and the economy by supporting people into work where possible and supporting those who can't work, and investing in social homes.**
- **Targeted help with the cost of living.**

**c. What examples of best practice to end rough sleeping can you share from a local, regional or national level in England?**

During the pandemic, there was a strong focus on partnership working across the voluntary, charity, local authority and housing sectors, where partners managed to work at speed and with creativity to house rough sleepers and people in inappropriate accommodation.<sup>11</sup>

## Case Study: Leeds City Council and partners

In March 2020 when we entered into lockdown, Leeds City Council and Emergency Accommodation partners St George's Crypt and St Anne's had to act quickly to keep some of the city's most vulnerable homeless people and rough sleepers safe. St Anne's and St George's Crypt are commissioned providers within Housing Related Support, supporting homeless people and those rough sleeping. Clients were moved over an afternoon into hotels in the city so that they could have individual rooms for isolation from the virus. Roomzz in the city centre has become a home for female clients and has supported over 130 women over the last year; Britannia Hotel in Seacroft housed over 200 people at its busiest. The partners have supported over 800 people and feel they have saved lives by working together and working flexibly.

St George's Crypt and St Anne's worked tirelessly to keep clients safe in the hotels with support from Forward Leeds, Turning Lives Around, Barca, Engage, Beacon, West Yorkshire Police, Joanna Project, Basis Yorkshire, and Leeds City Council partners including Leeds Housing Options, Adults & Health Commissioning, Mental Health Homeless Team (MHHT) Adult Social Care and more. Partnership working has been at the heart of the support and weekly virtual partners meetings were key to keeping communication going in a time of social distancing. One support worker described their time working at the Britannia:

"You never know what you might walk into in the Britannia. Some days were heart-breaking, and others filled with genuine joy at the achievements of some the residents. So many people and agencies have pulled together for the same cause and it worked. I genuinely feel honoured to have been a part of it."

It is not just the staff who have felt positive around working at the hotels over the last few months. Most importantly, many residents have reported long-term positive changes in their life as a result of being placed at the hotel accommodation. One resident said "I came to the Britannia hotel and had a drink and drug problem. Staff helped me to work with Forward Leeds and the Mental Health Homeless Team and they also supported me when my mum died. I had plenty of late night conversations

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.housing.org.uk/resources/partnership-working-to-house-people-in-urgent-need/>

with staff and they got me the support I needed. I'll be honest, at first I thought 'what's the point?' but after these conversations I was persuaded to try the support. I'm glad I did because it really helped me. I no longer drink and am on regular medication which has reduced my anxiety. I am waiting to move into my own property with support from Engage Leeds there when I need it. I don't know what I would have done if I wasn't put here. I would probably be dead. Thank you!"

The opportunities for learning will continue as Emergency Accommodation looks forward to new accommodation opening starting in early May with Kirkstall Lodge, which will be supported accommodation for males run by St George's Crypt. This will be followed by Ladybeck, a supported accommodation facility for females run by St Anne's.

Partnership working during the pandemic helped free up resources and move rough sleepers into settled accommodation quickly. Direct lets (into housing association properties) rather than Choice-Based Lettings sped the system up and could be timed for when people were coming out of hotels. This helped rehouse people quickly and free up space for those needing temporary accommodation. This approach led to hundreds of people being rapidly rehoused. Some housing associations furnished their accommodation, enabling people to move in quickly, and ongoing support was provided with resettlement and tenancy sustainment.

## **Case study: Liverpool City Council and Liverpool's social housing and support provider partners**

The City Council adopted a pro-active approach to the accommodation of homeless households and households at risk of becoming homeless during the coronavirus pandemic. This involved embracing the Everyone In principles to secure hotel placements and bed and breakfast accommodation to prevent people being homeless.

Like all local authorities, however, Liverpool saw an increasing demand on already stretched services during the pandemic:

- The Council's continuing commitment to the Everyone In principles resulted in households being provided with temporary accommodation who would not have been offered this under normal circumstances.
- Increases in the overall numbers presenting to Housing Options during the current year when compared to the previous year.
- A sharp increase in the number of domestic abuse cases.

- More family breakdowns arising from coronavirus issues such as the need to shield vulnerable household members and inter-generational conflicts.
- Presentations from out of area placing further pressure on temporary accommodation.

There was a recognition that a joint effort and partnership approach was needed to tackle some of these issues in order to move people on from the emergency or temporary accommodation and into permanent social housing. The City's main social housing providers have fully supported this and it has been effective in keeping the numbers of rough sleepers to a minimum and preventing homelessness among the most vulnerable people.

In order to facilitate effective, person-centred move-on, the City Council has worked with the city's main registered housing providers and housing support agencies. This has resulted in a commitment to make all accommodation that became vacant, available for moving households on from hotel and hostel placements. This included people with a history of homelessness and/or rough sleeping, people fleeing domestic abuse, homeless families and young people leaving care. An operations group was established to oversee the matching of these properties to the affected households and to ensure that adequate support was available throughout.

This approach was a change from the usual choice based lettings (CBL) system whereby vacancies are advertised via the PropertyPool Plus website. Instead households needing to be moved on have been directly matched to the vacancies that become available and then allocated a property. Where necessary, they have also been provided with a furniture package and ongoing floating support.

We have seen a huge positive impact from this joint work:

- 745 households (singles, couples and families) have had the cycle of homelessness ended through being rehoused. This amounts to approximately 1400 people.
- Tenancy sustainment has been exceptional, with a more than 99% success rate.
- Whilst there have been some subsequent rent arrears, these are small amounts and most often as a result of the automatic delay of UC claims being awarded.
- A review of the cost benefit of this approach has identified that the savings in terms of temporary accommodation costs for single people housed in this way were net circa £500k. This included the costs of furniture packages, however,

much of that was grant funding (NSAP). Therefore, we estimate that the overall saving to the council through the reduction in length of stay in temporary accommodation for single people was in the region of £1.1m.

#### Positive learning opportunities:

- Excellent strategic leadership from CEOs across Registered Providers has been instrumental in driving forward this work. This has helped to ensure stronger partnership working with the City Council more generally and we are now exploring how we would expand some of the approaches into other areas e.g with support for offenders and options around increasing employment opportunities.
- Operational management of the panel was very focussed and practical. It required systems and process to be simple and to operate as swiftly as possible.
- The approach meant that there was an opportunity for discussions to be had that enabled sensitive lettings, in a way that just isn't possible through CBL systems.
- The partnership approach meant that any emerging issues with the tenancy post-allocation could be addressed almost immediately. This included bringing people back into a supported housing environment if that was needed, rather than individuals being evicted.

#### Challenges:

The process is resource intensive, however, the buy-in of all the panel members and representatives across housing associations and support providers couldn't be faulted for levels of commitment. Some challenges were experienced:

- To work well, the process needed to include an offer of furniture packages and a link to ongoing support, where necessary, which has financial implications for the council and partners.
- The lack of one-bed accommodation, particularly in some parts of the city, has been an issue.
- The focus on rehousing people in emergency accommodation will be building up pressures elsewhere in the system, e.g. those in other types of housing need such as overcrowding.



Local authorities appreciated housing associations' flexibility around allocations and the ability to 'flip' properties from temporary to general needs accommodation. The crisis situation gave the leeway to do this because there was an imperative to house one specific group and increased levels of funding to make tenure flipping possible.

## Case Study – The Havebury Housing Partnership

Havebury owns and manages over 6,800 homes for both affordable rent and shared ownership across the east of England. We work with local authorities, agencies and other housing associations to meet the local housing need. This includes the Tayfen Service provision of a supported housing 24 bed hostel and 26 bed spaces in the community for 18-65 year olds at risk of homelessness.

Following on from the Everyone In government initiative in 2020, Havebury were aware that the local district council had a number of homeless individuals that required supported accommodation to be able to move on from the temporary accommodation that was coming to an end. Within the Tayfen service, Havebury had a significant number of residents that were ready to move on from the service. They had been unable, however, to secure independent accommodation. There was a real barrier to being able to make vacancies available for those most in need of supported accommodation.

Havebury staff approached their Head of Service to ask if they could take advantage of the organisation's agreed allocation of direct lets. They also informed the local authority of the number of current residents ready to move on and the ambition to get these residents into independent accommodation. This would then allow Havebury to house some of the council's temporary accommodation residents.

All relevant departments involved with new tenancies at Havebury were included, this included the allocations team and the income team. They worked together to identify suitably located properties and match these properties to residents ready to move on, and then worked to move through the verification process as swiftly as possible to minimise delay.

Externally, Havebury engaged with the local authority's housing team to utilise some suitable direct lets to other social housing providers in the area. They also started to identify individuals in temporary accommodation that they could move into Havebury's service as soon as accommodation was available. Havebury kept in close communication with the housing team and made the most of the referral

information that they held on potential residents and their experience of them in temporary accommodation to try and match the applicants appropriately with the current mix of needs in the hostel.

We were able to move on 12 residents in a short space of time to wonderful opportunities in social housing. This meant that we could then accept residents from local authority temporary accommodation. This ensured they were not asked to leave the accommodation with no other housing prospects.

While the residents who we put forward for direct lets were considered ready to move on to independent accommodation some were more physically equipped than others in their preparation. As the process of the direct lets moved swiftly some residents were anxious about the practical implications of furnishing a property. We had already established links with local charities to provide the basics if required and were able to organise other items if needed. We did reflect, however, that as part of the process of getting residents ready for move on, we could introduce these concepts at an earlier stage, so that the resident could take more ownership of the process.

The successful lets led to a sudden influx of voids and accommodation to turn around for new residents, in a volume that we were not used to working with. This led to us having to seek assistance from a wider base of contractors to try and minimise the waiting times for necessary works such as re-flooring and re-decoration of rooms.

We are now in a position of experiencing a high volume of residents ready to move on again and are looking to repeat this process. Sadly, however there is a severe lack of realistic move on opportunities in our area. Currently 40% of the people in our service are ready to move on and actively looking but not being successful.

During the pandemic, housing associations made a permanent pledge not to evict anyone in financial hardship.<sup>12</sup> NHF worked with DLUHC on this commitment. Possession action occurs in a minority of cases and only as a last resort, in situations where tenants are putting others in danger and alternatives like mediation have not stopped the risk, for example, severe anti-social behaviour.

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<sup>12</sup> Housing associations' statement on evictions and support for residents <https://www.housing.org.uk/news-and-blogs/news/housing-associations-evictions-statement/>

Interviews with housing associations from a recent report on Universal Credit and coronavirus, and research with twenty housing associations show income collection by housing associations is rapidly moving away from enforcement to a support-based approach.<sup>13</sup>

Even before the coronavirus pandemic, housing associations regularly demonstrated their commitment to supporting residents experiencing hardship, by reducing evictions and not evicting anyone who is working with their landlord to get back on track. This is one of the Homes for Cathy commitments: not making any resident seeking to prevent their homelessness, homeless.<sup>14</sup>

### **Broadland commitment not to evict**

Broadland housing association made a commitment not to evict people because of coronavirus but already had a no evictions policy. Since starting this policy, they managed to reduce evictions due to rent arrears from 18 to three in 2020. During this time, rent arrears reduced slightly. Where tenants positively engage, Broadland commit to doing what they can to support them, including the potential to freeze arrears – subject to regular reviews and rent being paid in the future. When circumstances improve, a sustainable repayment plan is agreed. Broadland's aim is to enable people to stay in their homes. With their no evictions policy, they are seeing a reduction in people leaving, as they are happy to put in place a repayment plan and are finding that supportive. Rent is still due, but Broadland are being mindful of the circumstances. In addition, as a natural extension to their approach to rent arrears, they have not refused any nominations on affordability grounds.

### **whg Eviction Scrutiny Panel**

whg have a commitment that “no evictions will proceed without the approval of the Director of Housing”. They have established an eviction scrutiny panel (ESP) to look in detail at each potential eviction case to look at whether they have done everything they can to prevent it and make sure there is an audit trail so the Director of Housing is kept up to date on every action that has been taken so that they can make an informed decision.

### **Curo support when rent arrears arise**

Curo aims to ensure that their customers understand and fulfil their payment obligations and are supported to do so. As part of this, they support customers to

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.housing.org.uk/resources/universal-credit-coronavirus-crisis/> ;  
<https://www.placeshapers.org/going-freestyle-what-happens-when-the-rulebook-is-taken-away/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://homesforcathy.org.uk/>

submit and manage benefit claims, provide money management, debt and benefit advice, and respond to customers who are in arrears in a way that is transparent, fair and positive.

Curo ensures that their staff know how to deal with circumstances such as bankruptcy and relationship breakdown, and how these affect rent payment and liability. As part of their commitment to equality and diversity, when taking steps to recover rent arrears they always consider the impact on physical and mental health, and now the impact of shielding or self-isolating, on each individual.

Curo also recognises the business case for avoiding eviction, as effective rent recovery is more likely if the tenant stays in their home. Their objective this year was “zero evictions into homelessness”. Their new target is to work on the basis of not referring cases to court and trying to avoid it all together.

Arrears repayment plans are usually calculated following completion of an income expenditure form. Curo recognise that flexibility may sometimes be required and cases where the arrears are low, if the customer can only afford a smaller amount then they will accept it. They have also given added emphasis to ‘breathing space’, where customers pay nothing on their arrears, provided the ongoing rent is being paid, for up to three months. Where they do an income and expenditure assessment, they also ask permission for a credit check to address any underlying issues, and refer to money advice if needed. Often this is when they implement breathing space.

#### **d. What in your view are the general lessons to be learnt from Everyone In initiative in regards to tackling rough sleeping?**

Housing associations welcomed the leadership shown by government to bring rough sleepers into self-contained provision, as part of Everyone In, and the accompanying funding. The requirement to house all rough sleepers demonstrated the government’s commitment to protect them from coronavirus. Many housing associations joined in the massive, life-saving<sup>15</sup> effort. We also commended the continuation of the government’s commitment to rough sleepers with a taskforce to advise local authorities and funding for move-on housing. This commitment to securing long-term housing, accompanied by support and proportionate funding, will be crucial to fulfilling the government’s objective to end rough sleeping by 2024.

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<sup>15</sup> Lewer, Dan, Isobel Braithwaite, Miriam Bullock, Max T Eyre, Peter J White, Robert W Aldridge et al., COVID-19 among people experiencing homelessness in England: a modelling study, September 23, 2020 [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600\(20\)30396-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600(20)30396-9/fulltext)

The pandemic helped the government to work with the housing sector to think about how people sleeping rough and needing support can get it at the right time in the right housing. There has been a realisation of the role of housing in enabling support and improving health, and it is positive that this has been recognised in new funding announcements. Without affordable, stable housing options, support such as mental health and drug and alcohol support are sticking plasters, albeit useful ones, that do not end rough sleeping on their own. Settled accommodation helped enormously in terms of providing support during Everyone In.

Everyone In showed what can be achieved with resources, coordination and commitment. **The government should build on this success by ring-fencing funding dedicated to preventing rough sleeping and supporting people to stay housed.** This should go beyond the RSAP programme but should use it as a model. The government seems to be beginning to recognise this. The Secretary of State said in a recent event on tackling rough sleeping, that the RSAP (affordable housing with appropriate support that helps people stay housed) is “a more cost-efficient means of housing”.

**Everyone In also showed that there must be a comprehensive assessment of people’s needs in order to inform which types of accommodation will be most appropriate for them.** A range of housing options, often in collaboration with partners and agencies, will be needed to match individual needs.<sup>16</sup> This needs assessment approach should be extended to the scale of strategic planning of supported housing, as recommended in the recent evaluation of the government’s supported housing pilots<sup>17</sup> and the Social Care White Paper.<sup>18</sup> The coproduction element of the RSAP programme encouraged this strategic planning but the timescales were too short (see part ‘1e’ below).

**Everyone In shone a light on the effectiveness and importance of partnership and multiagency working among councils, housing associations and local services in preventing and relieving homelessness<sup>19</sup> and rehousing rough**

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<sup>16</sup> <https://localpartnerships.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Rough-sleeper-accommodation-guidance-final.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supported-housing-oversight-pilots-independent-evaluation>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/people-at-the-heart-of-care-adult-social-care-reform-white-paper>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.housing.org.uk/resources/partnership-working-to-house-people-in-urgent-need/>

<https://www.housing.org.uk/news-and-blogs/blogs/jon-lord/collaboration-in-hardest-times/>

<https://www.housing.org.uk/news-and-blogs/blogs/steve-benson/working-in-partnership-to-rehouse-rough-sleepers/>

See also <http://meam.org.uk/2020/06/11/flexible-responses-during-the-coronavirus-crisis/>

<http://meam.org.uk/2020/10/06/partnerships-self-assessment-tool/>

**sleepers.**<sup>20</sup> This work was made more effective by positive relationships with one another, with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), health, voluntary organisations, and with the police and criminal justice system. Existing relationships and partnerships were foundational for quick and effective partnership working around homelessness in a time of crisis. Support provision worked well where there were existing pathways and less well where there were not. The government encouraged this partnership working in its review of the Homelessness Reduction Act,<sup>21</sup> and through the cross-sector funds made available with the Changing Futures Programme.<sup>22</sup>

Delegates at an April 2021 NHF and LGA event on responses to rough sleeping during the pandemic felt that partnership working improved for a number of reasons:

- Everyone's work crystallised around the same issue, rather than dealing with myriad pressures.
- The value and speed of working together (rather than in competition) became apparent, as did understanding of partners' pressures.
- Online working, while not without its challenges, allowed for greater efficiency, freeing up capacity and making multiagency meetings easier to coordinate and therefore more likely to happen.
- Bureaucracy and barriers to efficiency were removed across sectors. More agencies were allowed to make direct referrals for support, for example, rather than going through the local authority. Furthermore, co-location in hotels allowed for quick joint working: being able to go and speak to someone was much more efficient than having to go through a referral process.
- Flexibility was encouraged. People felt empowered to work in a way that was person-centred and based on greatest need rather than service-centred or dependent on process or eligibility. Success relied on a clear mandate from government or city authorities to do things differently.
- Targeted funding was made available, which streamlined procurement. This allowed for offers of accommodation to bring rough sleepers indoors quickly.

**One of the key benefits of improved partnership working was getting to understand one another and what each partner could provide.** Local authority delegates at the event spoke of housing associations being an integral part of

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.housing.org.uk/news-and-blogs/blogs/kathleen-hopgood/how-can-housing-associations-best-help-people-off-the-street-and-into-a-long-term-home/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/homelessness-reduction-act-2017-call-for-evidence>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changing-futures-changing-systems-for-adults-experiencing-multiple-disadvantage>



partnerships and planning around Everyone In. They provided accommodation for move on, and were able to work flexibly and responsively.

**There was a desire to hold on to the collaborative approach and not lose the relationships that have developed, to ensure a positive legacy from the pandemic. Part of this legacy was an openness and willingness to share information and true integration of services across sectors. To do this, all partners will need to sustain ways of working linked to trust, sharing expertise and involving communities – using organisations and people to their strengths rather than linked to specific contracts. There will need to be a commitment to system change, to deliver positive and joint solutions for clients. The challenge to doing this will be if funding streams are short-term and temporary. Grant funding has helped when it has been designed in a cross-sector way.**

**Sharing risk and being outcomes-focused for individuals was seen as a way to help providers always offer long-term accommodation to people with complex needs.** This could also help overcome some of the challenges identified such as differing priorities and welfare reform. It was understood that the local commissioning environment needs to permit this – competition in commissioning can mean a less robust service is offered because the focus is on competition rather than collaboration. This would also need a long-term funding settlement for support.

Improved relationships between housing and health colleagues led to better outcomes. Everyone In<sup>23</sup> raised the profile of homelessness, and health providers now have a greater understanding of the issue. Key health and wellbeing partnerships (e.g. substance misuse), for example, worked with housing associations in their services, while primary health care support helped people stay in their emergency accommodation and move on to permanent housing. This freed up space in emergency accommodation. The new Integrated Care System model should recognise the importance of including housing in strategic planning.

**e. How do you think Everyone In could have been made more effective in terms of policy, law, and/or funding?**

Local and national government showed leadership in bringing rough sleepers indoors, and announced funding for move on. Many housing associations built on

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<sup>23</sup> See <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9057/>

this momentum to help move people into permanent homes, providing the social housing and support needed to end wider homelessness.

However, there was not continued direction or leadership from government. **The same impetus to house rough sleepers as seen with Everyone In must continue, with the same encouragement of multiagency working and the same or greater levels of funding.** The 2021 Spending Review specifically mentioned ending rough sleeping but provided less funding than previous years.

The local authority funding awarded during the pandemic was not ring-fenced. Given the range of challenges facing local authorities, not all were able to give funding to services supporting those accommodated. This meant that services providing support beyond normal provision may have done so without extra funding. **Further guidance on expected cooperation between local authorities and housing associations would have been useful to avoid inconsistencies.**

Housing providers expressed concern about the long wait for the announced RSAP funding and the short timescales. Bidding was open for five weeks from July to August 2020. Housing associations reported local authorities were experiencing difficulty preparing bids in the time available. Allocations were announced in November and the completion deadline was March 2021.

**We recommended the government award the funding quickly, as further delays would make completion increasingly difficult.** Housing associations needed funding unspent by March 2021 to roll over, to avoid lost projects, **and we recommended that this flexibility should be built into subsequent rounds.** This has not yet been taken on board. We also suggested the next rounds allow housing providers to be lead applicants, to avoid situations where bids cannot be made because of local authority time pressures, which was partly taken on board, as housing providers could prepare bids, but were still not allowed to be lead applicants.

**f. The Government has promised in its 2019 manifesto to end rough sleeping by expanding successful pilots and programmes such as the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) and Housing First (HF):**

**i. What merits and limitations does the RSI have, and what impact do you consider it to have had on funding efforts to end rough sleeping?**

The Rough Sleeping Initiative funding for councils since 2018 seeks to allow councils and their partners to reduce the levels of rough sleeping through specialist service provision to help people off the streets.

We agree immediate action is needed to move people off the street. Effective outreach services are a crucial part of this, as is emergency accommodation, assessment and support. However, these immediate steps must be accompanied by measures to prevent people sleeping rough in the first place and long-term housing with support to ensure people don't return to the street.

The incremental change in the RSI will provide longer-lasting solutions to rough sleeping than non-housing interventions. This change went from specialist support, to housing provision with support, to partnership working that necessarily includes housing providers over a longer time period. This partnership working should provide not only intervention but prevention and recovery too. Also, unlike previous years where funding has been annual, 2022 saw a move to a multi-year settlement, providing much-needed stability to support providers and housing providers.

Of course councils are still having to make some very difficult budget decisions, and are under immense pressure. We are concerned that at least one two-tier authority area recently decided to decommission non-statutory supported housing for homeless households at county level for budgetary reasons. The decision also coincided with the awarding of three-year RSI funding at district level – potentially one of the reasons for the removal of commissioning. There is therefore a potential risk with the RSI that it is seen as a replacement for commissioned support funding for housing for people at risk of homelessness but who are not rough sleeping, rather than a necessary complement to commissioned supported housing.

It should also be acknowledged that there is a crisis of recruitment in supported housing, driven by a lack of competitive pay and conditions for workers in the sector, in turn caused by the difficulty in finding a sustainable funding model.<sup>24</sup> Solving this problem through long-term and sufficient commissioning would help ensure there is an adequately staffed workforce. RSI funding has a role to play in this.

## **ii. What role can Housing First play in helping the Westminster Government deliver its manifesto commitment to end rough sleeping in England by 2024?**

Housing First focuses on a specific group of people with histories of repeat homelessness, very complex needs, experience of multiple disadvantage and for whom other services have not been successful in ending their homelessness. It

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-03/closing-the-gap-health-care-workforce-full-report.pdf#page=122>

should be one of a range of housing options for people who are homeless. That is why it is to be welcomed that the Social Care White Paper aims, with its promised investment in supported housing, to ‘provide choice of alternative housing and support options’ to people. This emphasis on choice within housing and the need for advice, support and information around housing choices is very significant.

In 2020, the NHF carried out research to investigate the role of social housing landlords – specifically housing associations – in using the Housing First model.<sup>25</sup>

We found that housing associations considered Housing First an attractive model because it aligned with their organisational objectives, notably on addressing all forms of housing need, and included fully funded support. The success of the model was in the number of sustained tenancies, demonstrating its effectiveness in addressing homelessness, and associated support issues.

The main challenges were in finding suitable properties, risks around short-term support funding, and the strength of partnership working (both internal and external).

**Our main recommendations for delivering Housing First from the research are:**

- **The government and commissioners should ensure long-term funding of contracts for support.**
- **Housing associations should be key partners in delivery.**
- **Housing associations should be involved in setting services up so that they can adapt policies and processes. This also means local authorities and support providers would know the number and location of homes provided and determine how Housing First fits with allocations and nominations.**
- **Housing associations, commissioners and support providers should have clear and consistent lines of communication with external partners and internal teams to determine the practicalities of delivery.**

In 2020, the NHF joined forces with Housing First England, the National Federation of ALMOs, Crisis and other partners to ask the government for sustainable funding to

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.housing.org.uk/resources/research-report-on-how-housing-associations-use-the-housing-first-model-and-recommendations-for-delivery/>

ensure that Housing First can be part of the wider plans to end rough sleeping nationally.<sup>26</sup>

**g. What changes would you like to see in terms of national or local funding arrangements to tackle rough sleeping (no more than 3)?**

Funding should be:

- **Longer term.**
- **Adequate.**
- **Ring-fenced.**

Good quality supported housing gives people choice about their lives, provides tailored, person-centred support and represents value for money. It helps tackle rough sleeping through affordable housing with support for people to maintain their tenancies. Homelessness prevention services and floating support in general needs accommodation also help people to sustain their tenancies and avoid rough sleeping.

The NHF shares the concerns about some ‘exempt accommodation’, including property standards, referral routes and levels of support. We support the proposals in the Social Housing Regulation Bill for stronger consumer regulation and transparency. The regulation and administration of Housing Benefit needs to be fit for purpose to meet the legitimate costs of rents and service charges for people on low incomes who live in supported housing. There is also a need to close gaps in the system and make sure that local authorities and the Regulator for Social Housing have the resources for effective enforcement of the rules.

At the same time, financial viability and value for money need to be seen in the context of the wider funding environment for all elements of the scheme – support costs as well as housing costs. We therefore welcome the publication of the independent evaluation of the government’s supported housing pilots with its recommendations to protect the wellbeing of tenants through ensuring quality and value for money.

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.housing.org.uk/news-and-blogs/news/we-are-asking-the-government-to-fund-housing-first-as-part-of-plans-to-end-homelessness/>

It is positive that the pilots improved the quality of resident support by making sure it was tailored to and sufficient for their needs. We welcome the finding that assessments and strategic planning enabled local authorities to build a clearer understanding of what supported housing was needed and where, what supported housing exists and how to target interventions most effectively. This in turn makes sure that referrals into supported housing are appropriate and the support is what individuals need.<sup>27</sup>

The report highlights the importance of commissioning in meeting this strategic plan and ensuring quality in local authorities' own commissioned supported housing, through funding the support and controlling referrals into it. To enable this commissioning, the report recommends that the government review available options for funding the support element of supported housing so that it meets the standards of support that residents need. We agree that value for money needs to be seen in the context of the wider funding environment for all elements of schemes – support costs as well as housing costs.

**The government should ring-fence housing-related support and allocate £1.6bn<sup>28</sup> per year to English local authorities.**

## **2. Meeting the needs of everyone sleeping rough**

**a. Which cohorts of rough sleepers do you think have been supported out of rough sleeping? Has their homelessness been ended? If not what more needs to be done for these groups?**

There has been progress towards moving rough sleepers into housing with support where needed in recent years. What is needed to sustain an end to their homelessness is funded tenancy sustainment support and welfare benefits that cover the cost of rent, as well as ongoing availability of social housing.

**b. Which groups do you feel still lack access to the support they need or a meaningful intervention and what should be put in place to successfully end their homelessness?**

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[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1068653/Evaluation\\_of\\_the\\_supported\\_housing\\_oversight\\_pilots.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1068653/Evaluation_of_the_supported_housing_oversight_pilots.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> DCLG, Spending Review 2010: Equality Impact Assessment – Funding for the Supporting People Programme, December 2010, pp5 and 7



**In particular, views on any of the following groups would be helpful:**

### **1.Survivors of gendered violence/domestic abuse**

A Whole Housing approach should be provided so that survivors of domestic abuse have a suite of housing options available to them, from staying in their home if it can be made safe to do so, to refuge accommodation where needed, to managed transfers to alternative social tenancies, all with appropriate support. Housing providers should put in place mechanisms to identify domestic abuse where it is happening and provide support to prevent survivors becoming homeless.

### **2.Women**

Women rough sleepers need tailored housing solutions that provide support with the gender-specific needs they will have, and should be trauma-informed. They should be housed in safe accommodation where they are not at risk of violence.

It should also be acknowledged that the majority of households in temporary accommodation are female-headed single-parent families. There should be a focus on homelessness prevention for families and changes to welfare to make housing more affordable for single parents. Recent NHF research<sup>29</sup> into housing allocations also shows how councils and housing associations can work together to rehouse homeless families.

### **3.LGBTQI+ groups**

LGBTQI+ rough sleepers or people at risk of rough sleeping need tailored prevention support and housing solutions that provide gender-informed support. They should be housed in safe accommodation where they are not at risk of discrimination or violence.

### **4.Non-UK nationals**

The government should provide a longer-term strategy for people resettled through the Syrian and Afghan resettlement programmes, and the Homes for Ukraine scheme. This should include support for housing providers to offer more homes. Ultimately this will mean funding to:

- Build more social housing.

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<sup>29</sup> <https://www.housing.org.uk/resources/housing-homeless-families2/>

- Provide support.

Finding a workable housing solution for people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) will be necessary for government to meet its target of ending rough sleeping by 2024. Local authorities and support providers have worked hard to help people access their rights through immigration advice but there remains a group of individuals for whom the long-term housing outcome is unclear. Without government direction, different authorities will likely act differently, driven by local priorities.

Housing associations can use their charitable objectives to provide housing and support for people with NRPF.<sup>30</sup> They can also provide advice and support to people, including EU nationals, who are unsure of their rights.

## **5. Prison leavers**

For prison leavers to be supported into appropriate accommodation, there needs to be funding for tailored support that meets their specific needs and allows housing providers to provide supported and/or social housing.

The Ministry of Justice CAS3 scheme is helpful as a temporary accommodation solutions but there needs to be investment in social housing and integration with housing providers so that those accommodated do not become homeless at the end of the 84 days of their stay that is standard in CAS3 accommodation.

## **6. Veterans**

In its 2021 budget, the government announced £10m in 2021-22 to help veterans with mental health needs access services and support. Poor mental health can be a barrier to accessing and retaining housing and it is positive to see this attention to the mental health of a group disproportionately affected by homelessness. Many NHF members provide specific support for veterans to help them escape the cycle of homelessness.

More needs to be done to make sure housing providers and councils are “asking the veteran question” when assessing prospective tenants, so appropriate support can be provided for their needs.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> <https://www.housing.org.uk/resources/helping-people-no-recourse-public-funds-homelessness/>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.stoll.org.uk/no-homeless-veterans/>

## 7. Care leavers

Housing associations can and do provide move-on housing with specific support for care leavers that help them with the transition to independence and access employment and skills, and wellbeing support.<sup>32</sup>

## 8. Complex needs

When a person leaves a psychiatric hospital or has care needs, homelessness services are not appropriate places for them to be referred to. Yet homelessness service providers (providing supported housing) receive referrals for people with high levels of need / complex needs that they are not commissioned / equipped to provide support for.

## 9. Other groups

The latest government health service reforms are bringing a new and very welcome focus on reducing health disparities. There is potential for housing providers to be included in Integrated Care Systems to make sure housing provision and homelessness prevention are seen as key to promoting good health and reducing health disparities.

## 3. What is needed to prevent, secure and sustain an end to rough sleeping in England?

**b. In your opinion, what are the main national policy and practice changes still needed to sustain an end to rough sleeping in England beyond 2024? Please order these in terms of importance**

### Funding for support services

Social care is facing significant challenges and needs solutions that will take the pressure off services. Supported housing provides vital support for some of the most vulnerable people in society, for working age and older people alike. For many in these groups, the only viable alternatives to supported housing are residential care, hospital or another secure institution. This puts strain on already limited resources and can have a negative impact on people who could live independently with the

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<sup>32</sup> <https://gmhousing.co.uk/news/mayor-of-greater-manchester-joins-housing-providers-to-provide-extra-support-for-care-leavers/>

right support. Supported housing improves outcomes in social care and delivers significant savings. It is good value for money because need is matched with appropriate housing solutions, reducing demand for social care. Supporting people into employment and training through job coaching and skills development<sup>33</sup> helps them pay their rent and bills. An increase in mental health needs can be linked to subsequent rent arrears,<sup>34</sup> so as well as taking pressure off community and acute mental health services, mental health support keeps people in their homes.

Supported housing plays a vital role in our society, ensuring that thousands of people have the home and support they need to live independent and healthy lives. Support services help people settle into a new home, maintain their tenancies, ensure their property is safe and secure, learn life skills including cooking or budgeting and work with third parties such as landlords, Jobcentre staff or probation officers. When homeless people have their health and social care needs addressed they are more likely to be able to successfully move on to and maintain stable accommodation in the future.

The pandemic has also shown that good quality, suitable housing is vital to a person's resilience, health and wellbeing. The experience of the pandemic has also demonstrated the value of care and support services. It has highlighted the importance of person-centred support services and of taking a holistic and flexible approach to people's needs in enabling them to carry on living independently and manage the challenges presented by the pandemic. However, many providers have faced significant challenges during the pandemic. We conducted a survey of our members about the impact of the crisis on supported housing.<sup>35</sup> The survey showed increased demand for support services, especially short-term services, highlighting their crucial importance for vulnerable groups. We must continue to invest in and develop supported housing to help more people access these desperately needed services. Funding, from government and from local authorities, needs to be longer term and consolidated, and must be tailored to people's support needs. Funding needs to be joined up and long-term, meet clients' ongoing needs safely, and give

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<sup>33</sup> NHF, How housing associations are supporting tenancy sustainment and income collection through the coronavirus crisis, August 2020 <https://www.housing.org.uk/resources/housing-associations-tenancy-sustainment-coronavirus/>

<sup>34</sup> Nikki Bond, Katie Evans, Merlyn Holkar (2018) Where the heart is: social housing, rent arrears and mental health. Money and Mental Health Policy Institute <https://www.moneyandmentalhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Where-the-heart-is-social-housing-rent-arrears-and-mental-health.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> NHF, Briefing on the financial impact of the coronavirus crisis on supported housing providers, August 2020 <https://www.housing.org.uk/resources/briefing-on-the-financial-impact-of-the-coronavirus-crisis-on-supported-housing-providers/>

providers certainty that they will be able to keep staff or carry on provision – they want to be able to plan.

Flexibility needs to be built into funding because some clients take more time to engage with support and there needs to be a recognition in homelessness and rough-sleeping funding that service users have long-term, complex needs. The mind-set of long-term health funding should be retained here. We welcome the government's 10 year vision for Social Care, People at the Heart of Care, which includes a significant commitment to housing related spending and recognition of the need to “[make] every decision about care a decision about housing.”

**There should be a focus on homelessness prevention support rather than reactive measures to deal with the risk of homelessness.**

### **Build social rent homes**

An acute shortage of affordable housing in most of the country has led to increasing numbers of people desperate for a home. This can make it feel impossible for people to say no to the offer of a home, even if it does not feel safe or is in an area where the person has no local connection. That is why it is to be welcomed that the Social Care White Paper aims, with its promised investment in supported housing, to ‘provide choice of alternative housing and support options’ to people. This emphasis on choice within housing and the need for advice, support and information around housing choices is very significant.

The lack of social housing supply and planning decisions that are not aligned with housing need make addressing homelessness more difficult. Housing is becoming increasingly unaffordable in all parts of the country. Social housing supply and planning issues need to be addressed so that there can be more of a focus on affordable, permanent accommodation of the right type, that provides support where needed. To remedy this, capital investment through more grant funding for new homes at social rents is needed, along with revenue funding.

Encouragingly, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has committed to an enhanced focus on the benefits of social housing. **The government should recognise social housing as a cost-effective housing**

**solution, and acknowledge the value of a social tenancy<sup>36</sup> in terms of welfare savings and supporting positive social outcomes.**

**b. In your opinion, what are the main local policy and practice changes needed to successfully sustain an end to rough sleeping in England by 2024? Please order these in terms of importance**

### **Commissioning supported housing**

Support services help people settle into a new home, maintain their tenancies, ensure their property is safe and secure, learn life skills including cooking or budgeting and work with third parties such as landlords, Jobcentre staff or probation officers. Supported housing is a cost-effective solution to rough sleeping. Local authorities should assess local need for supported housing and commission long-term contracts accordingly, in dialogue with supported housing providers. There should be more strategic thinking and a move away from just crisis provision, towards needs audits and a recognition of the value of housing (not just accommodation) and the role of housing providers.

Providers are now supporting people with more complex and chaotic needs. Local authorities and providers could reach out to each other and have a conversation around longer-term housing options for vulnerable people and how to do that safely, with support that meets their ongoing needs.

### **Resettlement support and furniture provision**

People who are taking on a new tenancy might need some support to move in and set up home. For example, they may need referral for a low cost furniture package; help to connect up their gas, electricity or water; set a budget or ensure that their claim for Universal Credit or other benefits is being paid. This also helps them sustain their tenancy and avoid a return to rough sleeping and should be available for as long as needed.

Financial burdens from multiple moves, buying white goods, carpets and furniture for new homes, and storage of any furniture when moving into temporary

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<sup>36</sup> Barnes, K., Clifford, J., Ross, C. and Hulbert, A. (2018). The Hyde Group: The Value of a Social Tenancy: A socio-economic evaluation based on Hyde's housing portfolio. London: Bates Wells & Braithwaite  
<https://www.hyde-housing.co.uk/news/corporate-and-financial/value-of-a-social-tenancy-report/>



accommodation can put people in a precarious financial position when they move into a new tenancy. The provision of furniture has a considerable positive impact on mental health, financial security, and social wellbeing. Furniture provision can also improve tenancy sustainability.<sup>37</sup> Local authorities should provide funding for furnished tenancies and work with housing associations and charities to make sure new let homes are furnished through grants, furniture packages, and providing carpets and curtains in re-let homes. Of course, furnished tenancies, need to be provided alongside support as the related service charge can increase the cost of the property.

## Partnerships with housing providers

Local authorities and housing providers need to work together more and think strategically together. There are pressures in the housing market and regional variation depending on the local market. That is why it is important partners work locally together to address the challenges in their area and use the funding available to them in a strategic way, such as the RSI.

### **c. Should government look beyond ending rough sleeping and commit to ending wider forms of homelessness beyond 2024? Please explain.**

**Yes.** The pandemic has highlighted the need for secure, affordable homes, especially for those most affected by the crisis: low-paid key workers, rough sleepers, families in temporary accommodation and people in unsuitable, unsupported or overcrowded homes. It has also highlighted the need for a robust benefits system that covers the cost of rent, and safeguards for employment.

The pandemic has put more people at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping. We have also seen a surge in domestic abuse,<sup>38</sup> a leading cause of homelessness. The impact on the economy means a further spike in homelessness is a real risk. Groups

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<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a02be2eb1ffb6f0e483368f/t/600562467fec5e68f590e657/1610965577234/No+Place+Like+Home+%28Final+-+Online%29.pdf>

See also <https://www.housing.org.uk/our-work/coronavirus/communitiestogether/financial-worries/>  
<https://www.housing.org.uk/news-and-blogs/blogs/elizabeth-rowland/tackling-domestic-abuse-at-octavia-housing/>  
<https://www.housing.org.uk/news-and-blogs/blogs/martyn-hale/reflections-on-everyone-in/>

<sup>38</sup> SCIE, Domestic violence and abuse: Safeguarding during the COVID-19 crisis, June 2020  
<https://www.scie.org.uk/care-providers/coronavirus-covid-19/safeguarding/domestic-violence-abuse>

already vulnerable to homelessness, including people with mental health needs, single parents and disabled people, are likely to see their finances hit hardest. They may risk homelessness unless their income is secured.

Other causes of homelessness also persist, including relationship breakdown, family no longer able to accommodate and leaving institutions without housing. To prevent these situations leading to homelessness, the government should invest in support services like tenancy sustainment, floating support, legal and benefits advice, opportunities to access or retain employment, family mediation and prison and hospital resettlement. These will be critical to preventing homelessness in the wake of the pandemic and the cost of living crisis.

Families living in temporary accommodation are often in overcrowded conditions. The pause in lettings during the pandemic meant they had to stay in this accommodation even longer than previously planned (months or even years in some cases). There is a wealth of evidence on the impact living in temporary accommodation has on the health and wellbeing of families.<sup>39</sup> There are very high numbers of households in temporary accommodation: 96,410 at December 2021, the highest since June 2020 (98,260) which was a 15-year peak.<sup>40</sup> The number of children in temporary accommodation was 118,900 at December 2021. This has trended down since the peak of 128,310 in 2019 but is still at a historically high level.<sup>41</sup>

For all these reasons, the government should focus on wider forms of homelessness as well as rough sleeping.

#### **d. What policies are needed to end all forms of homelessness for good, and what additional outcome measures could reflect this?**

The NHF's People in Housing Need research finds there are 8.5 million people in England with some form of unmet housing need. For 4.2 million of these people, social rented housing would be the most appropriate tenure to address need. The research finds that overcrowding is the largest problem nationally, affecting nearly 3.7 million people. Affordability and suitability of housing are also big issues,

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<sup>39</sup> <https://www.housing.org.uk/globalassets/files/homelessness/housing-homeless-research-report.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-october-to-december-2021>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-october-to-december-2021>

affecting 2.4 million and nearly 1 million people respectively. Homelessness affects just over 641,000 people.<sup>42</sup>

There is not enough social housing to meet demand. The number of social housing lets made each year has fallen from 397,000 in 2013/14 to 306,000 in 2019/20, a 23% decrease. Changes to Affordable Homes Programme grant funding for building affordable housing has led to fewer social rent (set at around 50% of market rent) and more affordable rent homes (set at up to 80% of market rents) being built. New social rent homes fell by 85% as a result of these changes, from 39,562 built in 2010/11 to 5,955 in 2020/21. Right to Buy has also led to a loss of council housing that is not being replaced. We face a crisis in supply of social housing.<sup>43</sup>

DLUHC must provide more grant funding for new social rent homes for housing associations to provide enough homes that homeless households (and others in housing need) can afford and want. Availability of affordable housing as a key element in preventing homelessness was also highlighted in the government's review of the Homelessness Reduction Act – prepared before the crisis but all the more relevant now.<sup>44</sup> The crisis of supply and affordability of housing can increase housing vulnerability, and has been found to be an important factor in a rise in statutory homelessness since 2010/11.<sup>45</sup>

**To meet housing need in England, research for Crisis and the NHF found it will be necessary to build 145,000 affordable homes each year, including 90,000 for social rent.**<sup>46</sup> Further analysis carried out in 2019 suggested building these homes would require £12.8bn in grant a year.<sup>47</sup> More recent research noted the challenges to development capacity from costs to cover urgent building safety works and large

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<sup>42</sup> NHF, People in housing need 2021, <https://www.housing.org.uk/our-work/building-new-homes/people-in-housing-need/>

<https://www.housing.org.uk/resources/people-in-housing-need/>

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.housing.org.uk/globalassets/files/homelessness/housing-homeless-research-report.pdf>

<sup>44</sup> MHCLG, Homelessness Reduction Act 2017: government response to the call for evidence, 25 September 2020 <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/homelessness-reduction-act-2017-call-for-evidence/outcome/homelessness-reduction-act-2017-government-response-to-the-call-for-evidence>

<sup>45</sup> See summary in Wilson, W. and Barton, C. (2021) Statutory Homelessness (England). House of Commons Library. <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN01164/SN01164.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> Bramley, G. (2018) Housing supply requirements across Great Britain: for low-income households and homeless people. <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/housing-models-and-access/housing-supply-requirements-across-great-britain-2018/>

<sup>47</sup> NHF (2019) Capital grant required to meet social housing need in England 2021-2031

<https://www.housing.org.uk/resources/capital-grant-required-to-meet-social-housing-need-in-england-2021-2031/>

scale decarbonisation, suggesting that £34bn a year is required to meet affordable housing demand with up to £14bn of this required from government subsidy.<sup>48</sup>

## **More dedicated funding for homelessness prevention and relief**

**This investment should be alongside properly funded services for homelessness prevention and tenancy sustainment.** By investing £1.6bn per year in housing-related support, and ring-fencing this money, the government can ensure that support is put on a firm footing. It will save money on public services and temporary accommodation,<sup>49</sup> support good public health outcomes and help end homelessness.

The government should release more funding that will support families to move out of temporary accommodation (resettlement) and fund tenancy sustainment teams within local authorities that prevent homelessness.

Preventing homelessness has obvious benefits for people's housing outcomes, but a recent review shows how acting early also reduces health inequalities.<sup>50</sup>

Homelessness prevention support achieves positive outcomes for individuals, families and communities and delivers public purse savings,<sup>51</sup> including reduced use of temporary accommodation and hospitals,<sup>52</sup> and increasing the number of people entering employment.<sup>53</sup> Research shows public spending would fall by £370m if 40,000 people were prevented from experiencing a year of homelessness.<sup>54</sup> By investing in social rent and housing-related support, the government can extend its

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<sup>48</sup> Legal and General and British Property Federation (2022) Delivering a Step Change in Affordable Housing Supply <https://group.legalandgeneral.com/media/dyhbktwr/delivering-a-step-change-in-affordable-housing-supply-updated.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> Frontier Economics, Financial benefits of investment in specialist housing for vulnerable and older people, September 2010

[https://www.housinglin.org.uk/assets/Resources/Housing/Support\\_materials/Other\\_reports\\_and\\_guidance/Financial\\_benefits\\_of\\_investment\\_in\\_specialist\\_housing\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.housinglin.org.uk/assets/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Other_reports_and_guidance/Financial_benefits_of_investment_in_specialist_housing_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Final%20Rapid%20Review%20summary.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> Pleace, N. and Culhane, D. P. (2016) Better than cure? Testing the case for Enhancing Prevention of Single Homelessness in England. London: Crisis.

<sup>52</sup> LGA, The impact of homelessness on health: A guide for local authorities, September 2017

[https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/22.7%20HEALTH%20AND%20HOMELESSNESS\\_v08\\_WEB\\_0.PDF](https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/22.7%20HEALTH%20AND%20HOMELESSNESS_v08_WEB_0.PDF)

<sup>53</sup> Crisis, The plan to end homelessness, 2018 <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/the-plan-to-end-homelessness-full-version/targets-costs/chapter-15-cost-of-ending-homelessness/>; St Mungo's, Ending rough sleeping: the role of supported housing, September 2017

[https://www.housinglin.org.uk/assets/Resources/Housing/OtherOrganisation/Ending\\_Rough\\_Sleeping\\_SH\\_Report\\_0917.pdf](https://www.housinglin.org.uk/assets/Resources/Housing/OtherOrganisation/Ending_Rough_Sleeping_SH_Report_0917.pdf)

<sup>54</sup> Pleace, N. and Culhane, D. P. (2016) Better than cure? Testing the case for Enhancing Prevention of Single Homelessness in England. London: Crisis.

commitment to support anyone at risk of homelessness into sustainable, affordable housing beyond the RSAP.

## Welfare reform

Alongside these constraints in the supply of social housing, affordability of home ownership has also declined. Affordability is a key consideration of whether an offer of accommodation is suitable for a homeless household. Limits to benefits introduced in 2012, notably the two-child limit, removal of the spare room subsidy, and the benefit cap, has reduced income for some households on benefits. Local housing allowance rates also limit what private sector rents people on benefits can afford. The Office for National Statistics state that the ratio of median house price to median gross annual residence-based earnings in England stood at 7.84 in 2020, compared to 6.85 in 2010.<sup>55</sup> Meanwhile, when renting, households on lower incomes could expect to spend 38% of their income on a median priced rental home.<sup>56</sup> JRF found that 1.9 million private renters are pushed into poverty by their housing costs.<sup>57</sup> Poverty is both a precursor to homelessness and a cause of homelessness.<sup>58</sup>

Changes to welfare and introduction of affordable rent homes mean some households might struggle to afford social housing, particularly in high-cost rental areas like south east England and London. An inability to afford social housing is extremely worrying. Social housing is often the most affordable tenure of housing and is intended for those who can't access homes on the open market.

The crisis in supply and affordability creates less choice in allocations. It makes it more challenging to find suitable accommodation for families and move people out of temporary accommodation quickly.

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<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/ratioofhousepricetoresidencebasedearningslowerquartileandmedian>

<sup>56</sup> Office for National Statistics (2021) Private rental affordability, England: 2012 to 2020

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/bulletins/privaterentalaffordabilityengland/2012to2020>

<sup>57</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2022) UK Poverty 2022: The essential guide to understanding poverty in the UK <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/uk-poverty-2022>

<sup>58</sup> Johnsen, S & Watts, B (2014) Homelessness and poverty: reviewing the links. Heriot-Watt University. [https://pure.hw.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/7467281/Homelessness\\_Poverty\\_FullReport.pdf](https://pure.hw.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/7467281/Homelessness_Poverty_FullReport.pdf)

These issues can't be solved by local authorities and housing associations alone. Government funding is needed to fix them, alongside a long-term housing strategy for low income families who cannot afford to rent privately or own a home.

**The Department for Work and Pensions should review the impact of welfare reform on housing affordability, including allocations, access to social housing and rent arrears. The DWP should continue to work with the social housing sector to examine how welfare policy can restrict housing associations making best use of their available homes.**

**It should also:**

- **Reinstate the additional £20 per week for UC and extend this to legacy benefits.**
- **Suspend the household benefit cap.**
- **Ensure people have enough to live on at the start of the claim.**

### **Allocations policy and guidance**

If nothing changes with funding for social rent then the government must investigate how the allocations system can best meet demand, including whether homelessness should be given additional preference over other types of housing need. It would be helpful if government looked again at allocations legislation to adapt it to current realities, such as the need for family-sized homes, affordability issues and unmet support needs

There is no requirement for local authorities to look at whether a person will sustain a tenancy as part of suitability of accommodation offers to homeless applicants, or through their allocations scheme. Sustaining tenancies is important to prevent homelessness, particularly repeat homelessness. **We would like good practice examples from DLUHC on how local authorities should consider tenancy sustainment in allocations.**

From our research, we believe that more that can be done to ensure allocation policies and practice help local authorities and housing associations find homes that meet the needs of homeless households. **Closer partnership working between housing associations and local authorities would maximise the opportunity social housing provides to prevent and address homelessness.** This includes sharing information on applicants and considering whether more can be done to prioritise homeless households getting a new home.



Yet without an increase in social housing supply, accommodating more homeless households will make it even more challenging to find homes for others in urgent housing need. And adequate benefit levels and support, including help with the cost of moving and furnishing a new home, are critical in ensuring homeless households settle in to their new home and aren't exposed to the risk of repeat homelessness.

We will continue to make the case for wider investment in housing-related support services for other groups with complex needs, as well as older and disabled people, and the cost benefits these services provide for the public purse. **We need measures to end all forms of homelessness with a focus on prevention.**