



ALL IN FOR CHANGE

Prevention Commission: Meeting 3
March 2020

WHO IS THE PREVENTION COMMISSION?

The Prevention Commission is a group of people with lived and frontline experiences of homelessness who, as members of the Change Team, are motivated to drive forward the change needed to make real and lasting on-the-ground progress.

As well as people with current and recent experience of homelessness, the Prevention Commission is made up of people with frontline responsibilities in Local Authorities, Housing Associations and third sector support providers.



For meeting three we were joined by Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick of I-SPHERE at Heriot-Watt University, and Ruth Whatling from the Scottish Government.

WHAT DID WE COVER?

The Commission focused their discussions on two key areas:

1. More in-depth consideration of how new legal duties on local authorities can strike the right balance between ensuring housing security and housing choice.
2. Early discussions about what kinds of duties would be appropriate for health and social care bodies and how they might work in practice.

BALANCING HOUSING SECURITY AND HOUSING CHOICE

At the February meeting discussions started about potential prevention duties on local authorities, noting that considering how to strike the right balance between housing security and housing choice was challenging and at times conflicting.

Building from these initial conversations, members of the Prevention Commission took part in an exercise to help identify what factors were most important to them when considering where they wanted to live, and how their priorities might be affected if they were at risk of homelessness.

These inter-related factors included:

- **Location** (considering being near to family, work, childcare, schools etc.)
- **Size and/or type of home** (such as number of bedrooms, multi-storey, garden)
- **Accessibility** (wheelchair or other access issues, any other medical factors)
- **Cost** (thinking about rent, council tax, Housing Benefit/LHA, current or future employment)
- **Security of Tenure** (thinking about the different tenancies available in the social or private rented sector)
- **Safety/security** (considering issues such as domestic abuse, other violence and territorial issues)
- **Time** (taking account of how long you can wait to move or if you need somewhere right away)
- **Other** (pets, housemates and anything else that someone might identify)

KEY POINTS

A number of key points came through Commission members taking part in the exercise.

- What was most important to people was genuinely different depending on their circumstances and prioritising was challenging for everyone.
- For some the location of the house was the most important factor, while for others it was cost, security of tenure, safety, access to a garden for kids to play, and being able to have their pets with them.
- Important to everyone was creating a legal prevention duty that respects people's own priorities and the individual factors and subtleties that impact them.
- And important questions to give further consideration to are who makes the decision about which housing option is the best one, and do we have definitions of settled and suitable housing that everyone agrees with?

POTENTIAL DUTIES ON HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE BODIES

Our initial discussions on potential duties on health and social care bodies focused on the idea of health and social care staff referring someone identified as being at risk of homelessness to local authorities.

We approached this through playing out a real-life scenario of a health worker attending a home appointment to re-dress someone's wounds and the conversations that might arise. In this scenario the person talked broadly about their ill health, recent increasing drug use and falling a bit behind with their mortgage.

As a group the Commission then considered:

- how we can support people with no background in homelessness to be able to spot potential homelessness risk?
- the balance between taking a more formal risk assessment approach, and something more flexible
- the importance of the vastly different staff roles across health and social care, and how we can build positively on long-standing relationships without putting them at risk by bringing up issues people may not want to talk to their healthcare worker about
- what the difference might be between signposting and active referrals, and how we ensure that we get people's consent to make referrals on their behalf.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE PREVENTION DUTY REVIEW GROUP

The Prevention Commission would like to see further consideration of:

- how potential legal duties on local authorities make clear who makes the decision about the best housing option to prevent homelessness.
- in line with our thinking about a *Duty to Ask* we would like as far as possible for the final decision-maker to be the household facing housing crisis, although for some there will be a need for time and support to fully consider options and make the best decision they can
- how we best offer our support to allies in other sectors that may soon have new legal duties to prevent homelessness. All decisions need to take account of the capacity of other sectors to take on new duties and what they will need in terms of information, training and support.

NEXT STEPS

The Prevention Commission will:

- meet again on Thursday 2 April 2020 to continue our discussions, spending time on particular questions from the Review Group to further inform their conversations
- work together to plan our contribution to the joint meeting with the Prevention Duty Review Group.

CONTACT US

16a Adelphi Centre
12 Commercial Road
Glasgow G5 0PQ

T 0141 420 7272

E changeteam@homelessnetwork.scot

W homelessnetwork.scot/all-in-for-change