

All Party Parliamentary Group on Ending Homelessness



IGM Meeting Minutes

27 January 2020, 15.30-17.00, The Grimond Room, Portcullis House

Parliamentary Attendees:

Neil Coyle MP (Chair)
Bob Blackman MP
Alex Chalk MP
Angela Richardson MP
Ben Everitt MP
Justin Madders MP
Baroness Healy of Primrose Hill
Baroness Lister of Burtersett
Kate Griffiths MP
Mike Wood MP
Lord Young of Cookham
Jason McCartney MP
Lord Birt
Sally-Ann Hart MP
Naomi Grant, Office of Stephen Timms MP
Graeme Smith, Office of Neil Coyle MP
Elise Peek, Office of Jane Hunt MP
Kiera Oluwunmi, Lord Nat Wei
Harriet Drew, Office of Barry Sheerman MP

Secretariat:

Leah Miller, Crisis

Sector Attendees:

Vicky Ball, Pheonix
Jasmine Basran, Crisis
Emily Batchelor, Crisis
Alex Bax, Pathway
Sam Dorney-Smith, Pathway
Will Dows, Clinks
Amy Fleming, St Mungo's
Deborah Garvie, Shelter
Ian Geary, The Salvation Army
Jemma Gilbert, Healthy London Partnership
Hannah Gousy, Crisis
Rosa Heimer, Latin American Women's Aid
Rachel Holland, YMCA
Ewa Kapica, The Connection at St Martin's
Amos Kimani, National Landlords Association
Stephanie Kleynhans, Shelter
Saranya Kogulathas, DAHA
Rosanne Palmer, Emmaus UK
Jamie Pope, National Youth Advocacy Service
Megan Preston, Glass Door
Giana Rosa, CRAE
Ieuan ap Rees, West London Housing Partnership
Ally Routledge, National Housing Federation
Reshima Sharma, Shelter
Steve Solasta, Healthy London Partnership
Jon Sparkes, Crisis
Dr Al Story, UCL
Avantika Taneja, My Bank
Robin Tyne, Southwark Council
Suzannah Young, National Housing Federation
Tom Zagoria, Labour Homelessness Campaign
Jessie Seal, NACCOM

Welcome

Overview of APPG for Ending Homelessness' (APPGEH) work in the last Parliament

Welcome	<p>Co-Chair Neil Coyle welcomed all attendees and thanked them for joining the meeting.</p> <p>He outlined the achievements of the APPG since its inception in 2016, including the publication of our inquiry reports on prevention and rapid responses to homelessness, as well as the A Safe Home campaign.</p>
Election of Chair & Co-Chair	
Overview	<p>Justin Madders MP nominated Neil Coyle for re-election as Co-Chair of the APPG. All parliamentary members present agreed that Neil Coyle should be re-elected as Co-Chair.</p> <p>Bob Blackman was nominated as Co-Chair by Lord Young and unanimously elected in.</p>
Action points	Secretariat to note election of Bob Blackman as Co-Chair
Election of Vice-Chairs	
Overview	<p>Neil Coyle noted that MPs seeking re-election as Vice-Chairs of the Group included: Tonia Antoniazzi MP, Lord Bird, MP, Rachael Maskell MP, Stephen Timms MP and Mike Wood MP.</p> <p>It was agreed that all should be re-elected as Vice-Chairs. Nickie Aiken MP, Jason McCartney MP and Justin Madders MP were also nominated and elected as Vice-Chairs of the Group.</p>
Action points	Secretariat to note election result
Election of Officers	
Overview	<p>Seeking re-election as Officers of the Group were Emma Hardy MP, Colleen Flether MP, Christian Matheson MP, Lord Shipley, Chris Stephens MP, Rosie Duffield MP and Mike Amesbury MP. They were unanimously re-elected.</p> <p>Angela Richardson MP was also elected as an Officer of the Group.</p>
Action points	Secretariat to note election result
Secretariat appointment	
Overview	Neil Coyle then thanked the Secretariat, Crisis, for their work supporting the APPG, as well as other organisations who are members of the group.

	<p>The Secretariat, Leah Miller, explained that the group had a Steering Group made up of organisations across the homelessness and housing sectors, which met quarterly. This group help feed in ideas to the APPG’s workplan and ensure that key priorities were being picked up by the group.</p> <p>There were also a number of organisations signed up as members of the group who were invited to meetings, inquiries and were active participants in the APPG’s work.</p> <p>Bob Blackman moved that Crisis be re-appointed as Secretariat, which was agreed to.</p>
Action points	Secretariat appointment noted.
Update on the A Safe Home campaign	
Overview	<p>Saranya Kogulathas, DAHA gave an update on the A Safe Home campaign.</p> <p>She explained that the APPG for Ending Homelessness - supported by Crisis, Women’s Aid, Refuge, the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance, St Mungo’s, Surviving Economic Abuse, Shelter, Homeless Link, Depaul, Centrepont, Hestia, Changing Lives, The Chartered Institute of Housing, the Connection at St Martin’s in the Field, The Latin American Women’s Aid and Standing Together Against Domestic Violence – is calling for everyone who is homeless due to fleeing domestic abuse to have a legal right to a safe, permanent home.</p> <p>Domestic abuse is inextricably linked with housing, as abuse most often occurs at home. Housing is a key barrier to people leaving abusive situation and all too often people who do flee abuse are left facing homelessness.</p> <p>Last year 23,430 families and individuals who were homeless or on the brink of homelessness had experienced, or were at risk of, domestic abuse. One in five of Crisis’ clients who are women report that domestic abuse was the direct cause of their homelessness.</p> <p>She said that currently, survivors are required to prove their vulnerability and the extent of the abuse they have experienced to be eligible to access settled housing from their council.</p> <p>Proving vulnerability can be traumatic for survivors and there were heard stories of people being asked to return to an abusive situation to retrieve evidence of the abuse they’ve suffered. This had included requests for a Criminal Reference Number and in some cases a letter from the perpetrator admitting to the abuse.</p>

Research by the APPG for Ending Homelessness found that nearly 2,000 households fleeing domestic abuse in England each year are not being provided with this assistance because they are not considered in 'priority need' for housing.

This is despite the obvious dangers of homelessness or returning to an abuser. Every survivor of domestic abuse is by definition, vulnerable and therefore they should be placed in the automatic priority need category.

Survivors of domestic abuse in Wales already have a priority need for accommodation, following changes introduced in the Homeless Persons (Priority Need) (Wales) Order (2001). In Scotland priority need has been abolished altogether, meaning everyone who is homeless has a right to rehousing.

The campaign was calling on the Government to ensure that the Domestic Abuse Bill when it is reintroduced to parliament makes provision to ensure that all survivors of domestic abuse have access to a safe home.

This could be achieved by ensuring that everyone fleeing domestic abuse who is homeless is automatically considered in priority need for settled housing, rather than being subject to the vulnerability test to determine whether they qualify.

Whilst people would still need to provide an appropriate level of evidence that their homelessness has been caused by domestic abuse, such as a letter from a domestic abuse service they have been in contact with, they would no longer have to suffer the trauma of proving their level of vulnerability is greater than that of others facing homelessness.

The MHCLG duty on local councils to provide funding for specialist housing-based accommodation was extremely welcome. However, it fell short of a duty to support survivors into a safe, permanent home, she noted. There was also still no legal basis for the council to house survivors found not to be in priority need in temporary accommodation.

Providing for this in the Bill would help prevent homelessness among this group, supporting the Government's wider strategies on preventing both homelessness and domestic abuse. Without this, the Domestic Abuse Bill will fall short of tackling the link between homelessness and domestic abuse and achieving the Government's key aim of protecting people from experiencing domestic abuse.

Adding to this, Neil Coyle noted that the Bill was due to be brought back for a third time now there was a new Government.

	<p>The APPGEH was hoping to persuade Government of the case for including the amendment in the Bill when it was brought back.</p> <p>Leah Miller explained that DAHA had led a letter to CLG Secretary Robert Jenrick calling on him to work with colleagues in the Home Office and Number 10 to make this change. It was suggested that Officers of the Group could take a similar action which was agreed to.</p>
<p>Actions</p>	<p>Secretariat to send a letter on the A Safe Home campaign round Officers for signing-off</p>
<p>Discussion on other potential meetings and activities for 2019-20</p>	
<p>Overview</p>	<p>Neil Coyle MP highlighted ideas for public meetings that had been discussed at the APPG's AGM last October.</p> <p>These included an inquiry into sustainable solutions to homelessness, which would include looking at how best to end homelessness among people with complex needs, a meeting on the funding of sustainable homelessness services and a meeting on housing affordability, looking at social housing and welfare.</p> <p>Other meeting ideas had included, a review of the implementation of the HRA to time with the completion of the consultation on this in March 2020; a meeting on preventing homelessness among prison leavers to build on previous work of the APPG and time with the MoJ sentencing review; an annual lecture where a high profile figure is invited to discuss significant developments in homelessness policy and a meeting on the rough sleeping strategy. One idea for this at the previous AGM had been to invite the Archbishop of Canterbury to speak before Christmas, so was something the Group could take forward for 2020.</p> <p>Bob Blackman MP also said it was important for parliamentary members of the group to be putting down questions on homelessness to ensure the issue was seen as a political priority by Government.</p> <p>Sally Ann-Hart MP asked whether the Group had any plans to look at Housing First, to which Neil Coyle flagged that this had formed part of the inquiry into rapid responses to homelessness. It would also come-up as part of the meeting on ending homelessness among those with complex needs.</p> <p>Angela Richardson MP highlighted the problem of people being offered housing far away, noting that this was often an</p>

	<p>unsuitable option for people and especially those with support needs.</p> <p>Neil Coyle MP suggested that this could also be looked at as part of a meeting on ending homelessness among people with complex needs.</p> <p>Lord Birt said that there were far too few social and truly affordable homes. He suggested that the APPGEH look at this and invite the Minister to talk to the group about the Government's housing strategy.</p> <p>It was suggested that this could form part of the meeting on housing affordability.</p>
Actions	Secretariat update the workplan and send round Officers of the Group.
Presentation from Crisis Chief Executive Jon Sparkes on national strategies to end homelessness	
Overview	<p>Jon Sparkes began by highlighting forecasting research by Herriot-Watt University suggesting that homelessness would more than double by 2041 if current trends continued.</p> <p>However, he said that this was not inevitable. He noted research showing the impact different measures could have on core homelessness figures. For example, ceasing plans for further welfare cuts could reduce this forecast increase by 47%.</p> <p>He went on to highlight that there is, however, a belief gap among the public and parliamentarians that homelessness can be ended.</p> <p>A 2019 Ipsos Mori poll of politicians found that nearly two-thirds of MPs believe homelessness can be ended. Political will is cited as a key indicator for how this can be achieved, along with investment and resources. Others say it can't be done because of individual choices to remain homeless and reject help or intervention. Over half of MPs think that a formal definition of 'homelessness ended' should be adopted – some think existing attempts are too narrow or too broad.</p> <p>Both the Welsh and Scottish Governments were already carrying out work on national strategies to end homelessness.</p>

Last year, the Welsh Government set out its commitment to ending homelessness in Wales and set up a Homelessness Action Group with the intention of developing a national framework and strategy to deliver on this, adding that he had been appointed Chair of that Group.

The Group would work independently to provide policy recommendations on the actions and solutions required to address the following questions:

- What framework of policies, approaches and plans are needed to end homelessness in Wales?
- What immediate actions can we take to reduce rough sleeping between now and the winter of 2019/20, and to end rough sleeping altogether?
- How do we put the delivery of rapid and permanent housing at the heart of preventing, tackling and ending homelessness?
- How can we ensure joined-up local partnerships and plans are put in place to prevent, tackle and end homelessness throughout Wales?

The Group had adopted a definition of homelessness that aims to achieve the ideal state of making homelessness (in its widest sense) rare, brief and non-recurring/non-repeated. That is, maximum prevention of homelessness (it becomes rarer) and for those who do experience it a quick response when prevention fails (brief); and longer-term solutions so people only experience homelessness as a one-off (non-repeated/recurrent).

The Group had also developed recommendations on a framework for ending homelessness. These focused on:

- **Universal prevention:** doing things to make homelessness rarer across society, e.g. investment in affordable and social housing, reducing the impact of trauma that can lead to various problems later in life including homelessness, and establishing a legal right to adequate housing.
- **Targeted prevention:** helping people more at risk at an earlier 'upstream' stage through early identification and support, eliminating evictions and discharges into homelessness etc. A key feature of this is that other public services outside homelessness will have contact with people at this point.
- **Crisis prevention:** helping people who've reached crisis point (currently where the Welsh and English legislation is) but the Action Group in Wales is looking to extend the statutory time period from 56-days and widen the number of public services involved.

- **Emergency and recovery prevention:** they will still be needed but our report will recommend a shift from acute spending towards rapid rehousing as the default, rather than traditional homelessness emergency/recovery, particularly for people rough sleeping and in other really acute homelessness situations.

Emerging recommendations from the Group included:

- Effective right to adequate housing
- Prevention based approach
- Focus on child poverty, early life trauma
- Clear national, regional, local integrated housing and homelessness planning
- No discharge or eviction to homelessness, tenancy sustainment
- Extension of prevention duty
- Removal of barriers to support
- Evidence-based assertive outreach approach to rough sleeping
- Rapid rehousing as the default for supporting people at risk of homelessness
- Supply of social housing and security in PRS
- Welfare needs to be addressed by the UK Government

The Scottish Government had developed an approach to ending homelessness focused on the following principles:

- When homelessness is predictable, prevent it
- When people are at risk of homelessness, prevent it
- When people do sleep rough, quickly support them into settled accommodation
- Make temporary accommodation the stop-gap it was meant to be
- Housing provision and access – supply, social security
- Legislative elements – prevention duty, abolish local connection / intentionality, limit UTA
- Measuring and monitoring rough, grounded in wider national objectives

In The Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan, produced as a result of the work of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Reduction Group, the Scottish Government had committed to the following pledges:

- We will end homelessness by embedding a person-centred approach across our public services

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will end homelessness by preventing it from happening to people in the first place • We will end homelessness by prioritising settled housing for all • We will end homelessness by responding quickly and effectively whenever it happens • We will end homelessness by joining up planning and resources <p>Jon concluded by highlighting some common themes across both pieces of work that the Westminster Government could take on board as learnings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both placed preventing homelessness at the heart of the plan • They were focused on delivering a rapid response to ending a person's homelessness when it does occur • Once a person's homelessness is ended, they acknowledge the need for long-term structures to ensure a person does not experience homelessness again. • There was an overarching focus on ensuring that there is joined up planning and resources made available to deliver on the policy solutions identified through a cross-Government commitment <p>To end homelessness in Great Britain, we now need to see Westminster commit to developing a similar cross-departmental strategy that focuses on ensuring homelessness is prevented, and where this is not possible, is rare, brief and non-recurrent.</p>
<p>Questions</p>	<p>Dr Al Story noted that the single greatest predictive fact in Adverse Childhood Experiences was childhood poverty. It was great the Scottish and Welsh Governments were putting homelessness at the heart of their plans, but there was also a need to think seriously about childhood poverty and the causes of homelessness.</p> <p>In response, Jon Sparkes said it was important that any plan to end homelessness was grounded in wider focus and wider outcomes frameworks.</p> <p>Baroness Lister asked how serious discussions between MHCLG and the DWP were on tackling homelessness and whether the Scottish work on social security had considered the views of people with experience of homelessness.</p>

In reply, Jon Sparkes said there had been some very good discussions regarding changing the design of the welfare system to prevent homelessness, but the key thing was to invest in it.

Continuing, he highlighted the Government decision to unfreeze Local Housing Allowance. Whilst this was better than keeping it frozen, it was not enough to help people cover the cost of housing. The Government needed to invest in welfare to benefit the public purse in the long run and lift children out of poverty.

There had been some serious conversations between HARSAG and people with lived experience of homelessness, he said, adding that it was these contributions that had been listened to most seriously by the Scottish Government.

Lord Birt argued that homelessness was a symptom of a much bigger problem – a broken housing market. He argued that the Government was developing a myriad of sticky plaster solutions, but instead needed to identify how to fix Britain's broken housing market.

Responding, Jon Sparkes said he was in agreement and pointed to research showing at least 90,000 more social housing dwellings were needed each year in England to address current demand.

Suzannah Young, National Housing Federation, asked whether there was any appetite for long-term supported housing funding. She also questioned whether there was an acknowledged difference between affordable and social rents.

Responding, Jon Sparkes said the work affordable was being misused by the Government. 80% of market rate was not affordable in many areas, and as prices increased, became even more unaffordable. Increasing the supply of social housing was essential.

On long-term funding for supported accommodation, Jon Sparkes pointed to Housing First. Stating that this approach works best for people with complex needs, he noted that Housing First schemes tended to have a success rate of around 85-95%, compared to a success rate of around 15% in hostel accommodation.

The approach worked because support was open ended, but it needed secure funding from Government.

Ian Geary, The Salvation Army, noted that the Supported Funding scheme had had very high success rates, arguing that success rates varied across hostel accommodation.

Responding, Jon Sparkes agreed that there were examples of effective hostel services, adding that it wasn't an either/or situation. Instead, it was important to look at the system as a whole and ensure the correct accommodation and support options were being delivered. Otherwise Housing First would just become an expensive add-on.

Tom Zagoria, Labour Homelessness Campaign, asked if there was any update on the Government's review of the Vagrancy Act?

Responding, Lord Young of Cookham noted that he had asked a question on this the previous week. In response, the Government had acknowledged that the Act was out-dated and antiquated, but had suggested that total repeal might have adverse effects. The review was due to report in March, and he would continue pressing for its abolition.

Adding to this, Neil Coyle MP noted that Public Space Protection Orders also posed a problem in terms of criminalising and displacing vulnerable rough sleepers.

Dr Caroline Schulman, Healthy London Partnership, noted that support addressing the health needs of homeless people often dropped-off once improvements were being made. However, this often led to relapses. She argued that support needed to be truly long-term. Support to address health needs in temporary accommodation was also very lacking, she added, noting that it was particularly difficult to get people with mid-range support needs any help.

Jon Sparkes, said that evidence from clinicians on the importance of this was crucial, but had been missing for too long. He suggested that there should be a debate on how the health system can help prevent homelessness.

On the Homelessness Reduction Act, he said that where it was being fully embraced, it was doing what it was designed to. However, he accepted that that was limited. For example, he noted that homeless people were most likely to use GP services, but that GP services were the least likely public service to refer homeless people as there was no duty for them to do so in the HRA.

Daniel Dumoulin, Depaul argued that more one-bed social homes were needed to address shortfalls of the kind of accommodation homeless people needed to be able to move-on from temporary accommodation into permanent housing. He questioned how the Government could work more closely with social housing providers to ensure these units were there.

In reply, Bob Blackman MP suggested that a problem with this was that those decisions were made in local plans, which often weren't fully implemented for 3/4 years, by which time demand for housing tenures had changed. A strategic approach to planning was needed that considered what housing demand would be in the future.

Amos Kimani, National Landlords Association, asked how the private rented sector could be welcomed to help end homelessness.

Responding, Jon Sparkes pointed to the successful private rented sector access schemes, run the DCLG. He argued the Government should refresh and recommission 'Help to Rent' projects.

Bob Blackman MP said there was not enough social housing, which meant there had been an increasing reliance on the PRS. Arguing that the responsibility to address homelessness shouldn't be on private landlords, he said radical action was needed by Government to increase supply.

Neil Coyle MP noted that some local authorities, like Southwark, had been building social homes on private land. He said that there were some good examples like this that should be learnt from.

Debbie Garvie, Shelter, highlighted that there were 100,000s children living in temporary accommodation. Many spent their whole childhoods living in one-room apartments that did not meet basic accommodation needs. She questioned what could be done to address the lucrative temporary accommodation market.

In reply, Neil Coyle MP said this was something the APPGEH should look at, adding that this was a particular problem among families with No Recourse to Public Funds.

AOB

Overview	Closing the session, Neil Coyle thanked all attendees.
Actions and deadlines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Secretariat to note the outcome of the IGM and re-register group• Secretariat to write up and share the minutes of the meeting.• Secretariat to share update workplan with Officers of the APPGEH• Secretariat to share letter to MHCLG on A Safe Home campaign with Officers of the APPG for signing.