



Together
we will end
homelessness

75 WAYS TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS

A collection of practical examples
to share, inspire and add to

Lucie Dunn

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Foreword



Scotland has set itself the ambition to end homelessness.

Most people who find themselves homeless here have some of the strongest legal rights in the world - not simply to temporary shelter, but to a settled home.

At the same time, our legislative safety net has lagged behind that of other UK nations when it comes to preventing homelessness – and protecting homes – in the first place.

It's possible that an imbalance between the strengths and breadth of legal homelessness duties and a lack of equivalent duties around prevention contribute to very large numbers of people entering the homelessness system each year in Scotland: a system we know often causes lasting damage and trauma to those going through it.

In some areas, the homelessness system has become the 'default response', rather than the responsive safety net intended. When that happens, the 'system' tends to expand, taking ever larger amounts of focus and attention, so that resources are directed away from preventative activities. This is despite the fact we know prevention is better than cure for people affected, and cheaper for the public purse.

In the Programme for Government 2021, the First Minister announced the Scottish Government would initiate the process of taking forward changes to the law in this area, starting with a consultation process, which concluded on 8 April 2022.

At Crisis we welcome this progress and we're excited to see what comes next. We believe these changes, if implemented, could make Scotland a world-leader in ending homelessness.

But changes to the law are likely to take several years. Whilst those changes should make adopting preventative approaches easier, service and frontline practice can sometimes anticipate, foreshadow - and perhaps even inform – the future direction of legislation.

This is why Crisis has put together a compendium of examples from services, projects and approaches in Scotland and beyond **already** working in the spirit and intention of new proposals. Their interventions are having results in directly preventing, or more indirectly reducing the risk of, homelessness for individuals and families.

We hope the guide serves both as a library of useful practice examples that others can add to, and an inspiration to commissioners, service planners/ designers and funders.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew Downie". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Matthew Downie
Chief Executive, Crisis

Introduction

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG), chaired by Crisis' former Chief Executive Jon Sparkes, recommended new legal duties to prevent homelessness. In 2019, the Scottish Government asked Crisis to convene the Prevention Review Group (PRG), an independent group of experts supported by people with lived experiences of homelessness, to develop recommendations for Government on what those duties should look like.

The PRG reported its conclusions in February 2021.¹ It recommended two key legal changes:

- a **duty on local authorities to intervene earlier** to prevent homelessness
- **duties on wider public bodies to ask** about, then **act** on homelessness risk

Between November 2019 and October 2020, the PRG engaged with over 100 stakeholders,² largely in roundtable meetings. Stakeholders represented local authorities, Health and Social Care Partnerships (H&SCPs), Scottish Government and related bodies, and third sector organisations from homelessness, housing, domestic abuse, children and young people's services, health and social care and the criminal and community justice sectors.

The idea for this guide arose during those sessions. We heard from many organisations and their projects/ services which are already preventing homelessness across Scotland. At the same time, there was a feeling from meetings that some of these approaches may not be well known, or their findings well shared. We felt creating a tool to publicise projects and enable local authorities and others to identify, and gather more information about them, could be beneficial.

The resultant guide brings together a collection of examples of projects, services and approaches (henceforth termed 'interventions') which positively contribute to preventing homelessness.

Examples are taken from services and projects in Scotland and the rest of UK. They were gathered from calls for evidence, discussions with partners and reviews of publicly available documents.

Whilst there is overlap in approaches and findings amongst examples, each aims to demonstrate something different. Each example is presented in a standard, single page format. It includes

- a brief context
- a description of how the intervention works
- outcomes (in terms of prevention or reduction of homelessness risk)
- key insights from the delivery organisation
- contact details for readers to follow up

An intervention included here doesn't mean it's the only, or best, example of its type. It's simply not possible to identify all prevention activities and assess them against each other in this way. If good examples haven't been included, it's likely this is because we didn't find them or weren't made aware of them, rather than because they don't exist.

It's also important to recognise that although the guide includes a number of interventions targeted at groups with protected characteristics, as defined in the Equality Act 2010, we're aware it does not – yet - include examples from all equalities groups.

So, this is a collection of practical interventions worth exploring further, not a birds' eye overview of Scottish prevention activity or a basket of 'hard' prevention evidence.

We hope it will prove a source of inspiration for practical implementation and will encourage the sharing of further examples that fill the gaps we're aware of and, perhaps more importantly, those we're not. We've set out how organisations can do this in more detail below.

¹ Reid, B (2021) *Preventing Homelessness in Scotland: recommendations for legal duties to prevent homelessness*. Crisis. <https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/244558/preventing-homelessness-in-scotland.pdf>

² A list of contributing stakeholders can be found at Appendix 3 of *Op. Cit.* Reid (2021)

About this document

This is the **full report version** of the guide.

It can be read as a traditional, linear document. Or readers can simply use it as a library of practice examples to dip in and out of (> go straight to [Part III](#)).

In Part I, we provide an introduction on the legal changes proposed by the PRG, a summary of how we have understood 'homelessness prevention' and a note on our approach to evidence. We lay out the practical, multidimensional typology we've used in the guide, with all examples classified by when, where, who, what and which (tenure).

[In Part II](#) we offer analysis of main emerging themes from examples collected, across each of the above headings, and set out some concluding thoughts.

[Part III](#) contains the examples themselves. For simplicity, they're presented in the order of chapters in the PRG report, with a short summary of the PRG's recommendations in that area:

1. [landlords — social](#)
2. [landlords — private](#)
3. [children and families](#)
4. [young people](#)
5. [people with multiple complex needs](#)

6. [people experiencing domestic abuse](#)
7. [health and social care partners](#)
8. [justice partners](#)
9. [community partners](#)
10. [service delivery incentivising earlier intervention](#)

To make examples more accessible, we're developing a **digital version** of the guide which allows examples to be filtered and searched for by '**tag words**' (found in top right hand corner). The 'tags' categorise each example using the **when, where, who, what, which (tenure)** typology.

We'll continue to collect interventions to expand the digital bank of examples, fill gaps and start a more interactive conversation on what works in practice terms.

So whilst the final report version is fixed in time, the digital version will be a dynamic database.

If you have examples to contribute, please

- email bestpracticeteam@crisis.org.uk with subject title: *new homelessness prevention example*
- keep an eye out on our [resources for practitioners page](#) on the Crisis website for the online version.

Part I Homelessness prevention in a Scottish context

The Prevention Review Group

In 2019, the Scottish Government asked Crisis to convene the Prevention Review Group (PRG), an independent group of experts, chaired by Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick of Heriot-Watt University, to develop effective legal duties to prevent homelessness.

Group membership was identified jointly by the chair, the Scottish Government and Crisis, who also provided the secretariat. Membership included experts from the homelessness, legal and health and social care sectors, representing local authorities, the third sector and academics.

The PRG acknowledged that England and Wales have already legislated for new requirements to prevent homelessness. The PRG sought

to learn from the best of these approaches, whilst tailoring them to fit with the strengths of the existing Scottish system.

That included identifying key challenges in Scotland's current approach to prevention.

For many, the roots of a housing crisis start many months before losing a home. But by the time people approach a local authority for support, it's often too late for homelessness to be prevented. Sometimes they have come into contact with other services before this point - services whose intervention might have been able to prevent things deteriorating.

Rights for people at risk of homelessness to have their homelessness prevented are less clear cut than the rights people in Scotland have once they are classified

as statutorily homeless. The current legislative framework presents some practical barriers to local authorities delivering the best interventions to prevent homelessness - including technical and legal issues around the 'threatened with homelessness' period of 56 days before someone loses their home. Those issues mean prevention activity can be seen as 'gatekeeping'.³

The PRG developed initial principles to inform their work to address these challenges in conjunction with the Prevention Commission, a group of people with lived and frontline experiences of homelessness, and then carried out a series of consultations on different topics.

Over 100 stakeholders took part in those meetings, which covered current homelessness law, health and social care, criminal and community justice, domestic abuse, and children and families. The Prevention Commission also held meetings on each of these topics, and their findings informed the Group's final recommendations,⁴ summarised below.

Crisis strongly supports the recommendations of the PRG, and believes that, if properly implemented, its proposals would prevent many people in Scotland experiencing the trauma and stigma of homelessness and ensure they have stable and suitable housing.

What did the PRG recommend?

The PRG began by identifying some 'foundational principles' for its approach:

- preventing homelessness should be a **shared public responsibility** and should not rely solely or primarily on local authority homelessness services
- intervention to prevent homelessness should **start as early as possible**. In many cases, this will be before issues have escalated to a point where homelessness appears imminent
- people facing homelessness should have **choice** in where they live and **access** to the **same range of housing outcomes as members of the general public**, with **appropriate protections** to mitigate further risk of homelessness

They went on to recommend changes to the law so action to prevent homelessness is required:

- up to **six months before** homelessness occurs
- from a range of agencies working in partnership with the homelessness service to **identify people who may be at risk of homelessness** and **act on that risk** in accordance with their remit. These agencies include:
 - health and social care
 - police
 - prisons
 - children and families services
 - services working with people with complex needs
 - social landlords

³ At present, if a household is threatened with homelessness within 56 days, local authorities must open a homelessness application whilst exploring preventative interventions in parallel. To undertake prevention activity alone would be to divert people away from claiming their legal homelessness entitlements ('gatekeeping'). In practice, the most common outcome for households presenting at the prevention stage in Scotland is to proceed to a full homelessness application.

⁴ Further details on the PRG can be found at Scotland Prevention Review Group. <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/scotland-prevention-review-group/>

- to offer a specific **menu of options** [**reasonable steps**] to support people in preventing homelessness, drawing on housing options advice and support already available in local areas. This would include:
 - advice and advocacy around housing, welfare and debt
 - family mediation
 - Private Rented Sector (PRS) access and support for landlords and tenants
 - supply of furniture or similar goods
 - support for people experiencing domestic abuse
- to allow a wide **range of housing options** to be used, with safeguards, to help people at risk of homelessness. These could include social and private tenancies, owner occupation, a return to the family home or supported accommodation, where appropriate - or other options in line with the wishes of the people involved
- to **work together at strategic and community level** to make homelessness prevention a priority across services

Where this work fits with other agendas

Many of the drivers of homelessness cross over with other Scottish Government agendas.

Poverty, inadequate housing, family breakdown, domestic abuse, experiences of trauma, social isolation, disability, poor mental health, substance misuse or interaction with the criminal justice, immigration and care systems may all be factors which lead to a higher risk of homelessness occurring (as well as enduring and recurring).

Particular parts of the population may also have differential experiences of homelessness, and/or find themselves at increased risk of it, for example, young people, women, lone parents, Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer+ (LGBTQ+) people, gypsy/travellers and new refugees.

The Scottish Government and partners have already developed prevention 'pathways' for some groups identified as being at higher risk of homelessness.

The Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone (SHORE) standards were developed in 2017 to maximise prevention opportunities for people at entry to and on release from prison. Prevention pathways have more recently been created for care experienced people, young people under 25, women experiencing domestic abuse, and veterans. Work is underway to create a prevention pathway for people leaving hospitals. And the Fair Way Scotland plan sets out a range of housing and support pathways for people at risk of homelessness with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF).

Beyond our immediate sector, it's clear that work to identify risk factors and prevent homelessness will often support action already underway in other sectors, particularly around tackling child poverty, food poverty and fuel poverty, improving equalities outcomes and strengthening health outcomes.

It is a time of considerable policy change across Scotland, with significant developments in a wide range of areas. It's critical that points of overlap and shared focus between these areas and preventing homelessness are identified and joined up.

Just some of these include:

- post-COVID recovery and improving joint working across public services

- child poverty, fuel poverty, food poverty
- social security benefits take-up strategy
- Ending Destitution Together strategy
- adult social care review, and proposed development of a National Care Service
- key justice transformation priorities (as articulated in Vision for Justice in Scotland 2022)
- Domestic Abuse (Protection) Scotland Act 2021
- improving health outcomes and addressing health inequalities
- work to tackle drugs deaths
- Housing to 2040, Rented Sector Strategy (expected in 2022) and Housing Bill (expected 2023)
- work to take forward place-based approaches
- National Planning Framework 4

What do we mean by 'homelessness prevention'?

There are different ways of thinking about homelessness prevention. As with all types of prevention, the ability to claim an activity contributes to preventing a crisis or serious harm from happening begs the question 'how far out and how far back do you go?' A very wide range of activities could be classed as relevant to preventing homelessness, especially

5 Pleace, N (2019) *Preventing Homelessness: a Review of the International Evidence*: University of York, https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/145335/1/Preventing_Homelessness_A_Review_of_International_Evidence.pdf

6 Fitzpatrick, S, Mackie, P & Wood, J (2019) *Homelessness prevention in the UK: Policy briefing*: CaCHE. <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Homelessness-Prevention-in-the-UK-Policy-Brief-July-2019-final.pdf>

if we consider correlations between poverty and trauma experienced as a child, and potential for homelessness as an adult.

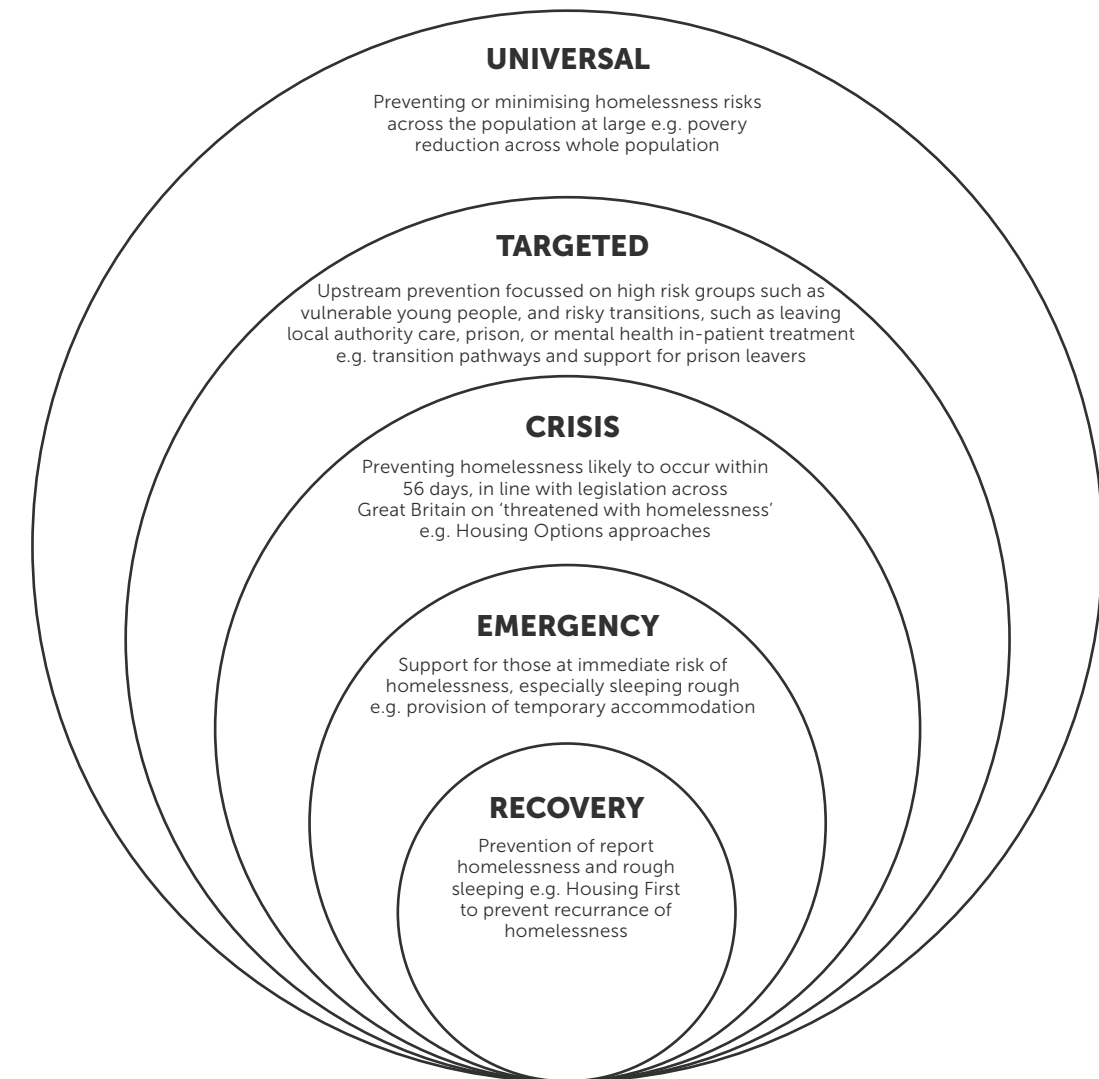
A review of international literature shows a tripartite definition⁵ has most commonly been used when thinking about different types of homelessness prevention:

- **primary** – activities which prevent or minimise risk of homelessness across the population at large i.e. affordable housing programmes, social welfare systems (also known as 'structural' prevention)
- **secondary** – activities targeted at predictably 'at risk' groups (at risk because of an imminent housing crisis, or by being part of an at risk group in the population)
- **tertiary** – activities stepping in when homelessness has already occurred, which aim to make it brief and non-recurrent

A five-point typology, depicted in Figure 1 on the next page, was recently developed by the UK Centre for Housing Evidence (CaCHE)⁶ during the development of the Rough Sleeping Strategy for England. It aimed for a finer-grained assessment of prevention-type activities for the benefit of policy-makers and practitioners:

- **universal** – activities which prevent or minimise risk of homelessness across the population at large
- **targeted** – activities targeted at predictably 'at risk' groups (due being part of at risk group in the population, or due to a 'risky transition' from a state institution)

Figure 1. Homelessness Prevention Typology



- **crisis** – activities targeted at people at imminent risk of homelessness due to housing or other crisis ('imminent' is understood as within 56-days, in line with current legislation across Great Britain on 'threatened with homelessness')
- **emergency** – activities stepping in when homelessness has already occurred which aim to make it as brief as possible
- **recovery** – activities stepping in after homelessness has been resolved, and which aim to ensure it is non-recurrent

The CaCHE typology effectively splits the 'targeted' category to allow separate consideration of groups at risk on account of specific characteristics i.e. age, health issue, leaving an institution, and those at risk due to an imminent housing crisis – a far larger group which takes up the best part of local authority housing options activity. The typology also splits activity undertaken to rapidly rehouse people who are homeless from activity which facilitates people sustaining their homes.

The new typology responds to findings that, to date, UK efforts have typically

Figure 2. the three key elements of a rapid rehousing approach



been focused around 'crisis' and 'emergency' types of prevention, - albeit with large differences between nations (in Scotland, 'emergency' prevention is especially relevant, given extensive recourse to temporary accommodation). This has largely been at the expense of focus on 'targeted' and 'recovery' types of prevention. 'Universal' prevention is often regarded as out of scope of homelessness-focused reviews, given that the type of activities in that category tend to require Government-level, cross-departmental intervention.⁷

Towards a practical, multi-dimensional view of prevention practice

As a document focused on practice, this guide deliberately takes a more practical view of homelessness prevention whilst also recognising its multi-dimensional aspects. It therefore uses a simple **when, where, who, what, which (tenure)** typology.

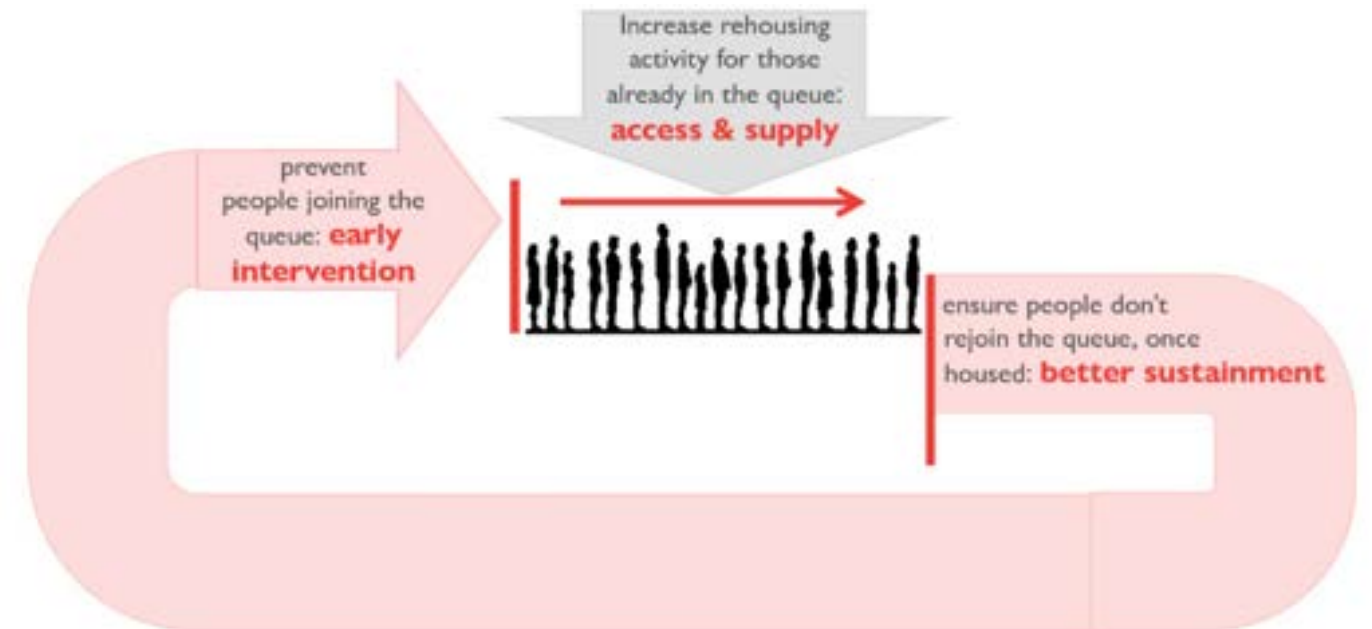
This comes from an understanding that most preventative activities **are** already targeted in some way, be they crisis, emergency or recovery types of prevention. It reflects an attempt to focus on the dimension of time i.e. **when** in a journey towards potential homelessness an intervention occurs, as a way of thinking more carefully about what a proposal to redefine 'threatened with homelessness' as within six rather than two months might look like in practice (taking the 'crisis' category upstream).

Recognising the importance of the roles other public bodies and partners might play if prevention really becomes a shared responsibility, we've also tried to set out more clearly in **which sector / place** and in **which tenure** an intervention occurs, to help flesh out how 'ask and act' principles translate into practical action.

Lastly, the guide aims for a distinctly Scottish approach to what gets called 'prevention' in the first place. This acknowledges the strength of legal protections in the 'emergency' domain of homelessness assistance in Scotland, and more recent rapid rehousing policy aims to improve

7 Gray, T, Argodale, S & Rodriguez-Guzman, G (2021) *What Works Evidence Notes: Prevention: Centre for Homelessness Impact*. https://assets-global.website-files.com/59f07e67422cdf0001904c14/61a5fcbfdb6e3b634905254b_CHI.WWC.EvidenceNote.Prevention.pdf

Figure 3. a more prevention-focused rapid rehousing approach



both speed of rehousing and conditions/suitability of temporary accommodation. In our view, valuable and necessary as these activities are (taking place in the middle section of the diagram at Figure 2⁸), they **don't prevent** the flow of people into the **homelessness system** in the first place.

Though it's acknowledged that the Housing Options approach adopted over a decade ago had impact in prevention terms,⁹ in more recent years, Scotland has arguably focused too much on the homelessness system itself, creating an ever-larger institution - especially in relation to the high numbers of people in temporary accommodation.

Big systems have institutionalising effects and, at times, a logic of their

own.¹⁰ It can be hard for people to think beyond them. The ultimate ambition of rapid rehousing policy may be thought of as 'deinstitutionalising' the homelessness system - deliberately making it smaller and less dominant - by stepping up focus and resources on what happens **before** people enter it, and **after** they leave it, i.e. in ordinary communities.

The guide respects that direction by focusing mostly on interventions for people requiring help with housing issues **before** and **after** homelessness, or which are available to people **at any time** (homeless or not). Many activities, and perhaps even more in a truly preventative system, are similar in nature at both ends of the 'system', as shown in Figure 3.

8 The concept of 'the queue' is taken from Perth and Kinross Council. See Home First Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan. <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/minutes/2019/12/rapid-rehousing-transition-plan-event-december-2019/documents/rapid-rehousing-practical-deliverability/rapid-rehousing-practical-deliverability/govscot%3Adocument/Rapid%2BRehousing%2B-%2BPractical%2BDeliverability%2B-%2BPerth%2Band%2BKinross%2BCouncil.pdf>

9 Fitzpatrick, S Pawson, H, Bramley, G, Wilcox S & Watts, B (2015) *The Homelessness Monitor: Scotland 2015*. Crisis. https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/236831/the_homelessness_monitor_scotland_2015.pdf

10 The issues of 'path dependence', the gap between intended and actual functions, temporary accommodation as an 'industry' and the defining rather than responsive role of the subsidy regime are explored in Littlewood, M, Watts, B & Blenkinsopp, J (2018) *Temporary Accommodation in Scotland: Interim Report*. Social Bite. <https://researchportal.hw.ac.uk/en/publications/temporary-accommodation-in-scotland-interim-report>

How examples are classified in the guide

In the top right hand corner of each one page example, there is a classification system which shows where it sits within the when, where, who, what, which (tenure) typology.

An explanation of each of these categories and how it relates to the PRG recommendations is provided below.

Figure 4: template used in prevention examples

Organisation name

where: new duty (6 months)
 where: housing
 who: anyone at risk
 which: social rented
 what: housing supply

Intervention name / description

The context
 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

The intervention
 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

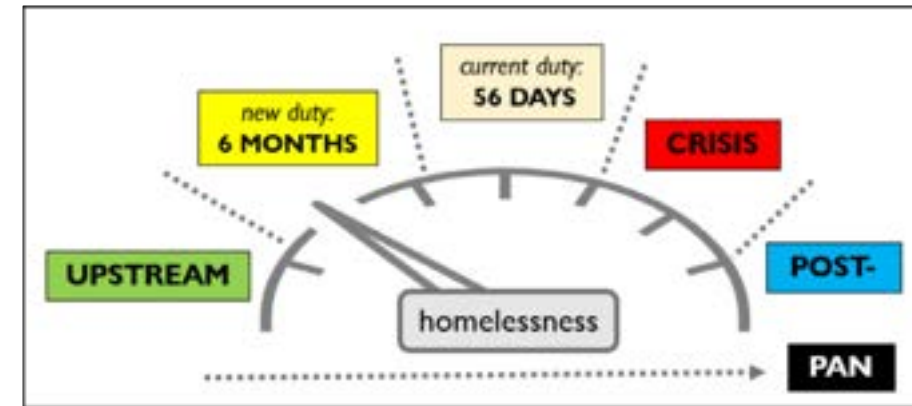
The outcome
 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Key insights

- » XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
- » XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
- » XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Find out more...
 Contact name, job role, organisation
contact.email@scot

WHEN WHERE WHO WHICH WHAT



Intervening earlier to prevent homelessness was a key PRG principle. The Prevention Commission highlighted people at risk of homelessness wanted more specific help at an earlier stage, and did not want to be forced to make decisions in 'crisis mode'. Local authority stakeholders also endorsed extension of the statutory threshold beyond the current 56 days.

Our examples are classified according to **when** they occur during a potential journey towards homelessness – including within and beyond it. Of particular relevance are interventions in the 'new duty' segment which occur between six and two months away from homelessness – as these are in line with the PRG's proposals for a new duty on local authorities.

Defining what 'six months away from homelessness' might look like is not straightforward. Nor is considering how that maps across to different causes of homelessness. It's easier to plot a tenancy eviction or release from a long prison sentence on such a timeline, less so a relationship breakdown or a harassment-related tenancy end. It's worth thinking about how easy this will be to communicate this to non-sector partners.

Here, we have understood 'six months away' as the point at which any of the problems which lead to homelessness – family disputes, incidences of domestic abuse, financial problems, social isolation, antisocial behaviour/harassment type issues, addiction problems, hoarding, landlord relationship issues etc – as well as discharge from institutions.

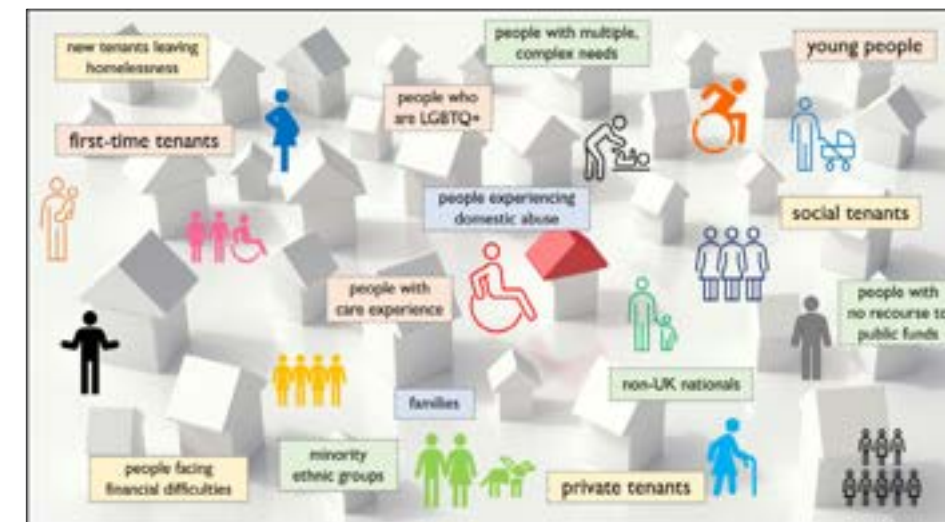
WHEN WHERE WHO WHICH WHAT


Acknowledgement of collective responsibility across public services to prevent homelessness was a second, key PRG principle. This was articulated in a more practical way by the Prevention Commission, who recommended that public bodies should 'ask' about housing in order to identify a potential risk of homelessness, and then 'act' on that information if a risk is present. What 'acting' might look like would differ by public body.

Whilst the PRG considered 'ask and act' duties in relation to certain devolved public bodies (health and social, justice, children's social work) others, they were unable to do so for reserved areas such as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Home Office.

From a practice stance, we can still explore how 'ask and act' principles could (and at times already do) work for public bodies outwith the scope of the proposed legislation – including DWP, education and wider community planning partners.

Examples have been classified according to **where** they occur in relation to the different services and agencies in a community. This is understood as where the intervention principally *takes place*. The simple community map above shows some of the wider partners, alongside housing, who may contribute to preventing homelessness.

WHEN WHERE WHO WHICH WHAT


The PRG acknowledged some parts of the population are at greater risk of homelessness than others, so may need targeted forms of help. They said the statutory homelessness framework should be amended to ensure housing options services meet the needs of specific groups at greater risk.

The Group also said housing options teams should work with partners to ensure their services achieved this effectively in their own areas, recognising different groups may be at higher risk of homelessness in different areas, for example, due to the balance of tenures, age demographics, geography or the communities settled there. As such, local authorities must monitor characteristics of those presenting for help, and tailor services and interventions accordingly.

In Scotland we are proud of the comprehensive - if not quite universal - set of rights to which people who find themselves homeless have recourse.

An unintended negative consequence of such 'comprehensiveness' may be that some options services have become overly generic in terms of advice, support and options they provide. Believing they are open to (almost) all, they may be less sensitive to the access and service barriers experienced by some, and to the different choices people may want to be able to exercise around their own housing futures.

Targeted approaches aim to correct these tendencies – but can themselves create their own exclusions. Getting a balance between how an 'intersectional particular' can operate well in the context of a universal service is a complex, dynamic exercise.

Examples here have been classified according to **whom** interventions are targeted at. At times, more than one group is targeted by an intervention, so 'targeting' is effectively operating in a multi-layered manner.

WHEN WHERE WHO WHICH WHAT



The PRG gave consideration to housing tenure in relation to preventing homelessness in the first place, recommending specific duties be placed on social and private landlords, as well as on local authorities in relation to tenure-sensitive 'reasonable steps' to mitigate risk of homelessness.

Registered social landlords (RSLs) should be under a duty to identify and take reasonable steps to mitigate risk of homelessness for any reason, including domestic abuse, as early as possible for their tenants. RSLs should ensure the involvement of the local authority at an earlier point than the current Section 11 duty requires in the event where a risk of homelessness exceeds their ability to intervene effectively.

The PRG recommended private landlords be made subject to pre-action requirements in relation to rent arrears on a permanent basis. They should also be able to make a Section 11 referral to the local authority for support to prevent

homelessness for a tenant at an earlier stage (with the tenant's consent). In addition, part of the minimal statutory prevention framework ('reasonable steps') for local authorities must include support for landlords and tenants in the PRS including landlord negotiation and access schemes.

Another key PRG principle was that people at risk of homelessness should have more housing choice, with access to the same options as other members of the public. The Prevention Commission noted those in greatest need often had the least choice of options, making clear tenure is just one of eight factors influencing people's housing decisions (along with cost, location, size, rapidity, accessibility, safety and personal factors i.e. pets, flat-mates).

The examples in this guide have been classified according to **which tenure** interventions occur within, including those which take place within state institutions, or which are 'tenure-blind'.

WHEN WHERE WHO WHICH WHAT



A key PRG aim was to clarify, strengthen and extend a duty on local authorities to prevent homelessness. To help achieve this, the Group recommended a range of 'reasonable steps' to prevent homelessness (currently set out in guidance) should be prescribed in law. These steps should be included in a personalised housing plan that enhances the person's choice and control.

'Reasonable steps' include housing options information and advice; support for private tenants and landlords; welfare/debt advice and assistance; advocacy support; holistic support for people experiencing domestic abuse; family mediation services; supply of furniture; referrals to relevant agencies; assessment of and provision to meet any housing support needs.

The PRG also recommended this 'minimal offer' be underpinned by

specific joint working arrangements between local authorities and wider public bodies - including institutions - as well as landlords.

'Reasonable steps' were also set out by the PRG for social landlords, in relation to identifying and taking steps to mitigate risk of homelessness, engaging in housing management practices which sustain tenancies, engaging with tenants to address financial issues and/or behaviour; and putting in place protocols to address domestic abuse.

A large proportion of interventions set out in this guide are practical examples of what 'reasonable steps' might look like. Each one has been classified according to **type** i.e. what the intervention actually offers to people. In many cases interventions provide more than one type of help.

A note on evidence

For many reasons, it can be hard to evidence 'what works' in terms of prevention. Essentially, we are seeking to measure why something **didn't** happen. The further 'upstream' (in terms of time) an intervention occurs, the harder it becomes to find correlation, let alone causality.

Statistics can indicate whether certain types of homelessness are going up or down before and after an intervention, but without a 'control group' (i.e. people of similar characteristics who don't receive an intervention) it cannot be claimed with accuracy that rises or falls would not have happened anyway. Looking at statistical trends over time has been further complicated by the past two years of the coronavirus pandemic.

National prevention statistics in Scotland (known as 'PREVENT1') have 'experimental' status only. They may facilitate comparison *within* an authority over time, but not between authorities on different aspects of prevention activity. And as much prevention work is undertaken by staff, services and organisations which don't submit PREVENT1 returns, the wider impact of preventative actions in an area is not being measured. This is relevant when considering how to assess the effectiveness of actions of wider public bodies in the context of new prevention duties.

International studies have been able to identify a broad range of interventions which can be successful preventing homelessness; but have had less success defining *which* are more successful than others, and *why*. A Centre for Homelessness Impact briefing¹¹ attributed this to a very low number of 'randomised controlled trials' (RCTs) outside the US, differences in legal duties owed (or not) to homeless households by

nation, and difficulties measuring impact according to different understandings of 'homelessness' and underlying reasons for it, by geography.

Approach to evidence in this guide

As this is a practice guide, and in view of our deliberate focus on practical interventions taking place **further upstream** from possible homelessness and/or carried out by **non-housing bodies**, we have taken a broad approach on what is acceptable as a promising or positive 'outcome'.

Examples generally are **not** presented as **hard evidence of homelessness prevented**, rather, as interesting **interventions** which seem **likely to reduce homelessness risk**.

Around 10% of interventions have been independently evaluated, with two subject to RCTs. Many report outcomes to local or national government, the social housing regulator and/or project funders. However, interventions in non-housing domains do not generally record housing-related data or metrics in a systematic way.

We have reflected examples which show potential and promise thus far and which appear to form a (larger or smaller) piece of the large and complex jigsaw which makes up a complete picture on prevention, even where more robust evidence is lacking. This reflects the principle that, albeit to different degrees, preventing homelessness is 'everybody's business'.

11 *Op. Cit. Gray, T et al (2021)*

Part II Key findings & insights

This section makes reflections on findings from the bank of examples, considered as a whole.

Given the somewhat opportunistic nature of the sample, they should be read with caution, as cannot be taken as representative of all preventative activity. It's also perhaps worth recalling that the interventions summarised occur in different nations with distinct legislative frameworks.¹² This section draws out broad themes which emerge in spite of these important contextual differences.

We have set out key insights by each of the main categories (when, where, who, which and what), then made some concluding remarks on the role of practice in the context of future work following the Scottish Government's consultation on legislative change, which closed in April 2022.

What can practice tell us about the right time(s) to intervene?

The great majority of interventions in the guide (regardless of the nation and its legislative framework) occur, or can occur, in the 'two to six months away' from homelessness timescale, which is positive from the perspective of PRG ambitions. Around a fifth of interventions happen further 'upstream', with over a third in the 'crisis' segment, and just under half (45%) in the 'recovery' i.e. prevention of repeat homelessness space. Most interventions occur in more than one time segment, with a small number operating across the whole journey towards, through and beyond homelessness.

Many services have designed interventions based on an understanding of why people, especially certain groups of people, do not come forward or engage with the 'right' advice and/or support services **earlier** - before it is too late to salvage a home. The following themes come up time and again:

12 A useful summary of key differences between legislative frameworks in Scotland, England and Wales, including proposed future changes in Scotland, can be found at Appendix II. *Op. Cit. Reid (2021)*

WHEN WHERE WHO WHICH WHAT

- stigma, lack of trust or fear of judgement when using statutory services
- lack of awareness/understanding of entitlements, systems and services available
- overwhelm; a feeling nothing can be done; not knowing where to start; 'nobody's asked'
- previous poor experience of service provision or quality, or attitudes within services
- age-related, cultural and/or language barriers; digital exclusion
- housing is only one of, and maybe not seen as the most important, issue people are dealing with
- the 'right' services aren't actually there ...or the services that are there aren't actually 'right'?

Key findings: time
1. Interventions usually found in a 'crisis' or '56 days' space can be offered earlier

Shifting the criteria on when, in a journey towards homelessness, an intervention happens or becomes available, can expand prevention opportunities. [Perth and Kinross Council's](#) comprehensive PRS access service is open to anyone with a housing need (including a simple aspiration to move). This takes an option usually experienced as part of the homelessness system (including as a last resort when a household has no other options) upstream, to a less pressured point in time, enhancing choice. [Aberdeenshire Council's](#) Housing

First support has (in a small number of cases) intervened successfully before a tenant, who otherwise meets Housing First criteria, becomes homeless again. Applying Section 11 processes earlier than the law specifies enabled [Comhairle nan Eilean Siar](#) and Hebridean Housing Partnership to jointly reduce evictions within a pressured island housing context

2. 'Low threshold' and 'hub' type approaches can help catch problems early

[South Norfolk Council's](#) 'help hub' reduces service/system complexity and decreases the stigma and lack of trust often experienced around presenting to statutory services, with a noticeable impact on rates of homelessness. [Swansea Council and Barnardo's](#) hub brings youth-focused partners together in one actual (as well as digital) space where young people can get all (not only their housing) needs met, paying dividends in preventing youth homelessness. People (from all tenures) referred by community link workers to [Linstone Housing Association's](#) hub have both health and housing issues. Most are nowhere near the cusp of homelessness, but many find the housing system complex and confusing. This sort of 'hub' approach enables cross-tenure help to be sought and support offered before problems escalate

3. Data-led approaches can help identify at risk households at an earlier point in time

Working with public sector data specialist [xantura](#), [Maidstone Borough Council](#) used 'data

analytics' to find and offer support to households predicted to be six months away from homelessness, enabling advice and help to be targeted earlier. Households who received support were 100 times less likely to become homeless than an (unintentional) control group who did not. [Cornwall Council](#) working with social policy software and analytics company [Policy in Practice](#) identified struggling PRS households with shortfalls and targeted Discretionary Housing Payments, significantly improving uptake for a more vulnerable group of tenants in a harder to reach sector

4. Whilst prioritising earlier prevention action, we should recognise it's never too late

The more that can be done 'upstream', the better for people and the public purse. But this approach still won't catch everyone, which means continuing to think about what works to engage those at imminent risk. [City of Edinburgh Council's](#) multi-disciplinary team engages Council tenants who don't respond to housing officers, some at a very late stage in the legal process. [Dumfries & Galloway Citizen Advice Service's](#) in-court advice is highly effective at turning things around for tenants and owners on the brink of homelessness. [Llamau's](#) specialist domestic abuse service, co-located in [Newport City Council's](#) options team, explores and facilitates access to sanctuary schemes, security enhancements and legal remedies for women who present at a moment of crisis. It's substantially reduced the proportion of women who've historically seen (and been offered) homelessness and temporary accommodation as their only route to safety. At a more 'structural' level, [Glasgow City Council](#), working closely

with multiple partners during the pandemic, has been able to shift the systemic response away from one of inevitable homelessness for every refugee household despite the 28-day timescale this group is usually given to obtain housing

5. Interventions open to people across all points of time in a journey have value

Continuity of support and the building and sustaining of supportive relationships are key themes across many examples. We know damage is done when people are referred, assessed and then 'passed on'. Services with an open door that stick with people housed or homeless offer something distinctive which challenges the stigma of using 'homelessness services', or no longer being able to get support because you've become homeless. Services such as [South Lanarkshire Council's](#) Breaking the Cycle offers consistent support to families with complex problems whether they are homeless or housed, helping workers understand realities of both the homelessness and housing systems. Place-based interventions like Link Up and [Bethany Christian Trust's](#) Inspiring Leith project, where everyone in the community is welcome, and [Street Connect's](#) low threshold, community-led recovery service, give enduring, 'base layer' support and connection to people at any point in a journey

WHEN WHERE WHO WHICH WHAT
What can practice tell us about how interventions work in different places?

Around half of interventions in the guide occur in the 'housing' domain, with the rest taking place in other locations: health and social care settings, the justice system, educational scenarios, children's services, social security and welfare departments or the wider community, which may include faith organisations, foodbanks, local groups and employers. One positive finding is that various versions of 'asking and acting' in relation to housing already exist in different sectors, even if non-housing partners do not always label or think about their work as preventing homelessness.

In the previous theme on time, we asked: why don't people come forward earlier to get help with housing? The theme place moves that question on by asking: where might people at risk of homelessness already be going? Which services are they already using, working with or even residing in? How can we use 'a different place' to generate intervention at an earlier point in time?

It should be noted that a focus on 'place', and the role of partners in non-housing settings in relation to homelessness prevention, does not necessarily equate to an intervention being funded or staffed by that same partner. It is more about finding a way to make use of that different 'place' to intervene earlier. Where responsibility for funding should lie – or whether joint funding is the answer – is a question we consider within concluding remarks at the end of this section.

Key findings: place
1. Examples already exist of 'asking and acting' on housing risk in non-housing 'places'

Navigators in [Durham Constabulary's](#) diversion scheme **ask** offenders about housing problems and **act** by supporting them to address these. Upstream Cymru schools **ask** pupils about stability at home in a universal screening survey and **act** on housing risks identified by involving partner charity [Llamau](#). Community link workers in Renfrewshire **ask** patients about barriers they face which undermine health, and **act** by referring those with housing problems to [Linstone Housing Association's](#) housing and health hub. Officers in [North Lanarkshire Council's](#) Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) **ask** questions on underlying factors driving a crisis - including housing - and **act** with appropriate advice or referral. Health visitors in Glasgow, supported by a [Glasgow Health & Social Care Partnership](#) health and housing link worker who has facilitated training, now **ask** about then **act** on housing issues families experience as a matter of course. Children's social workers in Oxford **added** a housing question to safeguarding referrals, then **acted** by involving an embedded housing worker from charity [Connection Support](#)

2. Non-housing agencies may 'ask and act' on issues causing homelessness, without mentioning housing

'Deep end' GP practices in Glasgow embedded a [Health & Social Care Partnership](#) welfare advice worker in surgeries. GPs **asked** questions on financial inclusion, not housing. It is the advice worker who goes onto **ask** about housing, with the result that almost a third of financial gains achieved by the service for patients addressed housing-related debt. GPs in Gwent, as part of the IRIS (Identification and Referral to Improve Safety) programme, are trained to identify the signs of domestic abuse, **ask** appropriate questions and **act** by referring patients into specialist domestic abuse support from [Llamau](#). It's the worker at [Llamau](#) – a homelessness charity – who then **asks** about and **acts** on housing issues, with a very significant impact

3. 'Asking and acting' can make use of 'windows of opportunity' from a system- or person-based perspective

It makes sense from a 'wider system' perspective for public bodies to **ask** about housing when a person interacts with them for a crisis-type reason which correlates strongly with reasons for homelessness, such as a financial, domestic abuse or child protection crisis. Work coaches **asking** about housing risk then **acting** by involving a housing coach from [Crisis Skylight Edinburgh](#) co-located in Jobcentre Plus is a logical thing for 'the system' to do. In other cases **asking** about housing has more, or at least as much, to do with engaging a person at a crisis point in their life - such as being arrested,

arriving at the doors of a court, ending up in hospital, or taking an overdose. Opening up the potential for change at a 'reachable' moment in a different 'place' is a key element in [Medics Against Violence's](#) Navigator project in hospital Emergency Departments (EDs), [Durham Constabulary's](#) Checkpoint programme and [Turning Point's](#) Lanarkshire crisis outreach service

4. A strong focus on 'institutional discharge' may mean we overlook opportunities to prevent homelessness 'on entry'

Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone (SHORE) standards rightly focus on both 'ends' of the prison journey, and on how housing and justice colleagues should work together. [Ayr Housing Aid Centre's](#) strong relationship with prison officers in links centres, along with robust processes when prisoners first enter prison, prevented over half of prisoners deemed to be at risk of homelessness from losing their homes, with over 120 Council tenancies alone protected last year. [Connection Support's](#) embedded housing worker in Oxford hospitals was initially directed to help facilitate discharge for 'bed-blockers', but soon identified housing issues only arose at the point a patient was medically fit for discharge. This highlighted the need for housing problems to be flagged much earlier to prevent unnecessary homelessness

5. Situating interventions in places people already go, and places they trust, has value

Various examples show that many of the people benefiting from their intervention had not sought out and/or used advice or support before. Embedding a service in schools enabled [Community Help & Advice \(CHAI\)/Children First's Maximise!](#) to reach families who'd not previously used advice services. 85% of GP patients referred to [Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership's](#) co-located adviser hadn't had any professional advice in the past year, despite being among those most in need of this. Embedding the service in a 'trusted place' was key for both projects. Knowing people may avoid, not trust and/or feel stigma using the 'right' service has led some partners to locate interventions in unusual places or offer them in a different way. [akt's](#) digital housing advice, casework and mentoring recognises young LGBTQ+ people facing housing problems may not feel comfortable using mainstream services face-to-face. Brent's community food bank and kitchen [Sufra NW](#) has developed an in-house housing advice/support offer for people with immigration barriers or/and who are not always engaged with mainstream provision locally

WHEN WHERE WHO WHICH WHAT

What can practice tell us about targeting interventions at certain people?

Almost all interventions in this guide are targeted in some way. The largest discrete group is tenants (social and private), making up 25% of examples. Tenure-specific prevention is covered in the next section. Young people are the second largest group represented (just under a fifth of examples), followed by people with 'multiple, complex needs', families and people with health issues (all 12%).

There are various examples targeted at people with care experience, experiencing domestic abuse, using the justice system or who have money issues, with a smaller number aimed at people who are LGBTQ+, at risk of violence, or part of a minority ethnic group.

Around 12% examples are targeted at 'anyone at risk' – low threshold services or projects available to anyone in the local area who wants to use them.

Key findings: people

1. Lowering thresholds is one way of targeting help to those who most need it

Whilst many interventions 'kick in' or become available when people are already in a difficult situation, others address difficulties the other way round. [East Ayrshire Council's](#) neighbourhood coaching approach shifts the landlord-tenant relationship, with smaller patch sizes enabling coaches to get to know all tenants and communities and not just their 'problems'. [London Borough of Barking and Dagenham's](#) community solutions

teams and [South Norfolk Council's](#) help hubs make the offer of holistic, no/low threshold support on a universal basis. [Derby City Council's](#) Local Area Coordination (LAC) model of support is open (and visible) to anyone who lives in a community. In all examples 'widening the net' and 'lowering the bar' for help has, perhaps paradoxically, proved a better way to target households most in need, whilst also reducing demand on services and releasing resources

2. Data-led and universal screening approaches show we don't 'always already know' exactly who to target

Whilst national statistics point to groups more predictably at risk of homelessness, these aren't always sufficiently disaggregated to enable interventions to be well targeted. We know young people are over-represented, but this doesn't tell us which ones are most at risk (apart those leaving care). Results from universal screening of pupils for housing (and other) risks in [Llamau's](#) Upstream Cymru project challenged professionals' beliefs that they 'already knew' who'd be at higher risk of homelessness: there was in fact little correlation between them and pupils at risk of disengagement from school. [Action for Children West Dunbartonshire's](#) work found that staff in schools were similarly surprised as to which pupils may need advice on or help with housing. [Maidstone Borough Council's](#) successful predictive data project with [xantura](#) did not simply point Council officers to households they knew or could already tell were or would be at risk; instead it challenged officer assumption/assessment

3. Targeted approaches shine a light on blind spots in and barriers to mainstream services – but the answer is not simply to replicate them

Jigsaw's Housing First was widely recognised as the first such project for women. It highlighted the importance of a gendered approach to support, focused on women's key relationships, including addressing domestic abuse and recognising their experiences as mothers - an emphasis fundamentally different to Housing First support for men. akt's digital advice, support and mentoring service with housing problems has been able to reach, and prevent homelessness for, young LGBTQ+ people who didn't feel comfortable approaching mainstream (especially statutory) services. East Ayrshire Council's approach to Gypsy Travellers is based on engagement with travelling and settled communities to gain better awareness of housing and other needs, acknowledging the authority has not always got this right in the past. Each of these interventions produce insight on why not everyone can or does use mainstream services. But positive outcomes shouldn't simply lead to commissioning more 'specialist' services. It's equally, if not more, important that mainstream services learn from these approaches and adapt 'business as usual' provision - making it more inclusive and alive to the intersectional nature of inequalities people experience

4. Broadening focus around a target group can bring benefits

Youth homelessness is a major problem, but focusing on young people in isolation can miss opportunities to improve the wider family context. Cyrenians East Lothian takes a 'two-pronged' approach to conflict resolution which recognises mediation alone rarely addresses all issues faced by a young person at risk of being asked to leave: the model also provides holistic support for their family. Swansea Council and Barnardo's hub came to the same conclusion: mediation must be complemented by wider family support. A focus on preventing homelessness for victims of domestic abuse may lead to lack of consideration of the housing needs of (and risks presented by) perpetrators. West Dunbartonshire Council's pragmatic approach aims to prioritise victims whilst also addressing perpetrators' housing needs. Working with LGBTQ+ specialist agencies, Safer London took action to ensure its social housing reciprocal scheme provided a safe pathway for those fleeing homophobic hate crime, even though its main role is to provide safe options for women and children fleeing domestic abuse. And Leeds City Council shows the value of a specialised team focused on the PRS, but which can also extend learning and practical assistance to landlords and tenants in social and supported tenures

5. Ensuring there's more than one option for any 'targeted' group matters

Rock Trust and Almond Housing Association's Housing First for Youth and Midlothian Council's House Project (which offers a learning programme and peer group alongside a settled home) both work with young people with complex needs. But they are different, as different options suit different people with an objectively similar situation. Rowan Alba's Thorntree Street implements Housing First principles in a way which reduces loneliness and isolation, providing secure tenancies in a community of peers with 24/7 support. Until Hull City Council piloted shared tenancies for young people, young people hadn't asked for this option. Yet once underway, shared Council tenancies, which replicate the more affordable, less isolating and often more transient housing used by non-homeless young people in cities like Hull became popular. Finland's Youth Housing Association (NAL) takes provision of youth-specific affordable housing to another level, directly managing thousands of homes. City of Edinburgh Council's PRS team finds some households in crisis don't have social housing as a goal: they may prioritise factors other than tenure in the city's pressured market. Where the team can't prevent homelessness, it offers supported routes into PRS and Mid-Market Rent (MMR) tenancies. Each of these interventions recognises the need for choice in a rapid rehousing system. For that to be meaningful, people, including those in 'target' groups, need more than one (housing/support) option to choose from

WHEN WHERE WHO WHICH WHAT
What can practice tell us about targeting interventions in different tenures?

Most interventions in this guide (around 35%) fall into the 'multi-tenure' category. 'Multi-tenure' means they are not necessarily restricted to people who are 'house-holders' i.e. people with their own tenancy or owner occupied home, and that they can work with people who are homeless or living with family or in less traditional housing scenarios.

Around two thirds of examples relate specifically to 'house-holders', be they tenants or owners, with 30% relating to the social rented sector only, and 13% to the PRS only. It's notable there are more interventions in the social sector, which produces less homelessness than the PRS, despite the former making up a larger proportion of housing stock in all but two Scottish local authorities.

Less common interventions include those delivered specifically in the 'family home', which means support to prevent a young person being made homeless by their parents/carers (rather than whole family-based prevention work); interventions which focus on institutional entries and exits; supported, shared or mobile options.

Key findings: tenure
1. Social landlords can play a primary and at times more explicit preventative role in allocations policies / methods

Angus Council and Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners revised their Common Allocation Policy to award highest priority to applicants leaving institutions

to whom the Council has full rehousing duty, avoiding the homelessness system entirely in some cases. Shetland Council gives discretion in points awards to households at risk of homelessness in next six months. This enabled many to receive an offer before needing to use the (often very long) homelessness route. Council and RSL partners committed homes to Midlothian Council's House Project for care experienced young people. Scottish care leaver protocols and social housing entitlements expedite the House Project's housing-led principles, which can be harder to achieve in other parts of the UK. Safer London receives property commitments from partner landlords in every London borough to facilitate tenancy transfers, rather than homelessness, for people at risk of violence/abuse in an area. They underscore the extent to which Choice Based Letting can be empowering for survivors, who regain an element of choice and control over their housing situation. And Oxfordshire Homeless Movement makes clear the unique contribution RSLs can play in preventing street homelessness for people with no recourse to public funds

2. Ensuring social tenants can furnish/decorate a tenancy is a key factor in sustainment

Argyll and Bute Council's flexible décor fund (for homeless applicants moving to RSL homes) enables people to 'plug gaps' in existing sources of help in a rapid, personalised way. A small amount of money can make a big difference to people when they're given choice and control to use it in the way that most benefits them. Newcastle

Furniture Service's furnished tenancy offer also prioritises choice and flexibility, with tenants able to select the items they need and supplement or return them at any time. It also enables tenants to have new goods, which can make a valuable difference to some people. Citizen Housing's enhanced relet standard for new homes addresses a significant area of stress and financial outlay for previously homeless tenants and improves uptake of offers, void times and sustainment

3. Relationship-based, person-centred housing management aids tenancy sustainment, but a minority may still benefit from a separate team/service¹³

Social landlords who've improved tenancy sustainment prioritise getting to know tenants, establishing trust and investing in a positive relationship from day one. Queens Cross Housing Association and East Ayrshire Council facilitate this through small patch sizes. South Yorkshire Housing Association emphasises the impact of the 'first contact' when people get in touch for help, with any member of staff. Tailoring action to each tenant and avoiding generic escalation processes and standard letters are key. The demotivating effect of jargon and the tone/language often found in formal letters was highlighted by Aspire Oxford navigators (some of whom had lived experience of homelessness). Their findings suggest certain landlords could do more to maximise positive tenant relations, but also that some tenants still need to hear advice

from a service or team with no enforcement role. City of Edinburgh Council's multi-disciplinary team and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's Section 11 pilot confirm that trust can increase as tenants hear consistent messages from different sources (including if that is from a Council team)

4. There's lack of parity between social and private tenants in access to/awareness of advice, support and financial help: more PRS-specific prevention is needed

Tenure interacts with characteristics of vulnerability in a manner which may make at risk groups in PRS more hidden from, and less reachable by, housing support and advice services. Through its 'Early Doors' project supporting both private tenants and landlords the Wallich found many tenants with complex needs were previously unknown to services. Glasgow City Council's PRS hub has welfare rights and property conditions officers specialised in the tenure, positively impacting sustainment to an extent not achieved by generic teams. Action for Children Dundee found PRS families experienced high levels of unmet need, realising wider child and family wellbeing benefits through their tenure-specific intervention. Decent and Safe Homes (DASH) sets an explicit goal of equalising advice and support available to social and private tenants ('socialising' the PRS), creating partnerships between statutory/voluntary agencies and landlords

¹³ Many insights in bullet points two and three echo those highlighted as key factors in new research on social housing tenancy sustainment in Scotland, namely: establishing a good relationship from day one; getting to know tenants; ensuring tenants can access furnishings/décor for a home; the limited effectiveness of standard letters; the benefits of advice provision from a 'non-landlord' agency. See Gray, T (2022: forthcoming) *Protecting Homes and Preventing Eviction. The role of social housing management in sustaining tenancies*. Neil Morland & Co, Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, Homeless Network Scotland, Simon Community Scotland & Crisis

5. Preventative services can work with private tenants and landlords, benefiting both – and bringing gains to PRS access schemes

Services in our guide have found that it's possible to engage private landlords as positive partners in prevention whilst also upholding rights of tenants and families. [The Bridge](#) offers a 'tenancy relations' service for tenants and landlords, encouraging early contact about disputes to catch problems before each party 'hardens' their position. This neutral stance takes the adversarial or accusatory edge off issues and can preclude the need for lengthy, costly court processes. [Housing Rights Northern Ireland](#) traditionally focused on tenants. But realising it could ultimately benefit tenants, they successfully branched out into offering a landlord helpline and a landlord-tenant mediation service. [Leeds City Council](#) has recorded more landlords coming forward to offer homes for people in housing need since they set up a dedicated landlord support team which encourages contact before a notice is served

WHEN WHERE WHO WHICH WHAT

What can practice tell us about interventions of different types?

The most common type of help offered by interventions is provision of information, advice and/or advocacy (two thirds include this). 44% are concerned with direct provision of individual or family support (generally a housing support-type service), with 43% making onward referrals to other relevant agencies. A third of interventions entail direct provision of housing, through supply or allocation, facilitation of access, or development of a specific type of housing option.

Perhaps more interestingly, and relevant to duties on public bodies, navigation, coordination and engagement activities are the next most prevalent activity with just under half of interventions doing this in some way. A third use embedded or co-located workers, or take a 'hub' type approach which brings different services together. 22% include some element of training or awareness-raising.

Less common activities include specific types of support, including specialist (i.e. health or domestic abuse), financial, digital or peer; mediation, befriending and mentoring; property enhancements (i.e. for security) or furniture; person-centred (social) housing management; and data analytics.

Key findings: type (of intervention)

1. The central role of relationships unites many interventions

Relationship breakdown is the primary cause of homelessness in Scotland: it follows relationship-based approaches have a larger role to play. Many interventions, including housing management practices, navigation/coordination roles, conflict resolution and 'family-centric' support, revolve around finding better ways to communicate, understand and build trust between people - both those using services and those providing them. [The Bridge](#), funded by various departments over the years (including police and public health), makes mediation accessible to young people early, with consistent success preventing homelessness. [Simon Community Scotland](#) deems pre-mediation focused on mutually agreeing a set of boundaries vital to successful shared tenancies. [Bethany Christian Trust's](#) befriending stresses the importance of social/community networks, which can often be lost or disrupted during homelessness and neglected in support assessments. [Rock Trust's](#) Nightstop emphasises relational support in a family home from community hosts. [Housing Rights Northern Ireland's](#) landlord-tenant mediation covering all types of housing disputes focuses on re-establishing communication: most pairs engaged reach positive resolution

2. Trauma-informed approaches inform a range of intervention types

Understanding people have reasons for what they do or don't do influences how [South Lanarkshire Council](#) collects rent and how [Wakefield District Housing](#) (WDH) conceptualises estate management. WDH seconded NHS clinical staff to intervene early with tenants with low and moderate mental health issues for whom neighbour or property issues may be a problem. [London Borough of Lewisham's](#) dedicated hoarding and self-neglect coordinator used research to develop a trauma-informed understanding of hoarding and how to address it. It considers why people hoard, what decreases trust (i.e. heavy handed enforcement), why quick fixes (like one-off clearances) don't have lasting results and why aftercare matters. [Pobl Group's](#) impactful Family Intervention and Prevention Project (FIPP) supports families displaying serious antisocial behaviour and/or whose children are at risk of being accommodated. Workers are trained to identify issues resulting from different types of trauma, and work on what families, not professionals, define as their goals. [Highland Council's](#) Move On team takes a similar approach in successfully engaging people other services have failed to reach

3. Cross-sector working needs culture change, time and deliberate focus

Changing culture and disrupting silos so all services can work better together is an ongoing challenge, not a 'quick fix'. Embedded, co-located, navigating, connecting and co-ordinating roles have a big part to play. Some roles can bring mutual benefits to host and hosted. [Moray Council's](#) Occupational Therapist co-located in housing generated insight and improvements in processes for both housing and health. [Connection Support's](#) embedded housing workers in children's social work smoothed relations between services whose legislation, culture and working practices had previously brought them into conflict. But some embedded staff faced attitudinal barriers, suspicion or disinterest from host colleagues until they saw benefits, which can take time. Flexible roles which don't 'belong' to a particular service or department – such as [Derby City Council's](#) Local Area Coordinators (LACs), [Highland Council's](#) move-on officers or [Turning Point's](#) South Lanarkshire crisis outreach workers – enable greater responsiveness to people facing challenges. They also have a 'disruptive', system-change element – likely to meet with resistance – and take time to show impact. A shift away from process-heavy roles in single departments carrying out statutory functions to person-centred partnership working may also not suit all staff – as [London Borough of Barking and Dagenham](#) found when making large-scale changes to service delivery

4. People with experience of homelessness (or other social harms) can change service culture, as well as enhance engagement

Navigators with lived experience of the types of problems faced by offenders on [Durham Constabulary's](#) Checkpoint programme made an impact on prevailing police culture, changing attitudes and improving understanding of the causes of offending, as well as allowing Checkpoint clients see visible recovery. Being and feeling judged by services, especially housing, was a theme running through experiences of people engaging with [Aspire Oxford's](#) navigators. Their personal experience of systems helped reduce power dynamics and generated learning, for example, that letters with a judgemental tone (often from housing) lowered people's motivation to address problems and made them more inclined to 'hide'. [Settle](#), which offers coaching support to young people at high risk of homelessness in first tenancies in London, ensures people who've used their services sit on all interview panels for frontline staff: they spot things others miss

5. Training and ongoing awareness-raising have key roles to play if preventing homelessness is to really become 'everybody's business'

Training in a job role is always vital, but its prominence increases when working between and across services in different disciplines: [Angus Council](#) used joint training for housing and justice colleagues to establish an effective prisons protocol. [Scottish Borders Council](#) assessed quality training for frontline housing staff on domestic abuse, with an ongoing good practice aspect, to be vital in driving change. Even when services/pathways are established, ongoing awareness-raising is needed to embed or 'mainstream' ways of working: [North Lanarkshire Council](#) has found it needs to repeatedly publicise the SWF as a central gateway to help. [Standing Together](#) found that even positive preventative options, such as the sanctuary scheme it coordinates in London, can fall off the radar of frontline staff without regular reminders. [Glasgow City Council's](#) PRS hub completed awareness-raising sessions with partner agencies after finding knowledge of housing, let alone tenure, to be low. And [The Money House's](#) successful immersive training programme for at risk young tenants recognises housing can also be complicated for those who live in it

Concluding remarks

In preparing this piece of work we spoke to partners across the UK working in a wide variety of organisations on the topic of preventing homelessness. Whilst most of this guide highlights specific examples from the perspective of individual organisations, we also picked up some broader themes in general discussion which aren't attributable to any one service in particular. We've reflected some of those in these concluding remarks.

The role of legislation and the role of practice

The guide identifies multiple examples of interventions which intervene earlier to address housing risks than the current statutory threshold in Scotland dictates. There are also promising examples of interventions which reduce homelessness risk which take place within, are funded by, conceived of or led by non-housing public bodies.

But whilst practice is important, and sometimes 'ahead of the game', legislative change is necessary for a number of reasons. Legislative change can drive the kind of collaborative, upstream, preventative work exemplified in this report to be the norm, rather than what are too often project-based, precariously funded and inconsistently available services around the country.

The importance of leadership support and buy-in at strategic, often cross-portfolio, level has been brought out in a number of examples. Whilst practice 'on the ground' can point the way, it rarely leads to change without attention, promotion and energy from higher level sources. Legislation is needed to ensure that this can be achieved in all parts of Scotland.

Intervening earlier

Various partners we spoke to in housing, homelessness and housing support sectors felt that there was little innovative about the earlier intervention approaches they were offering. Indeed, some said similar activities were carried out as part of 'business as usual' in the past (including as part of the broader Housing Options approaches mentioned above), often before the public service austerity and welfare reforms of the past decade.

Practitioners who work with people on the frontline (as well as those who directly manage them) often felt they had a good grasp on 'what works'. This could frequently be boiled down to: person-centred, relationship-based approaches. But we know that person-centred, relationship-based approaches thrive with difficulty in a strained operational and financial context.

Linked to this, various partners mentioned that prevention is often 'the first thing to go' in a climate of cuts, as 'cure' i.e. acute service responses and those currently defined as statutory requirements, must be prioritised. Legislative change should make it less easy to cancel early intervention and relationship-based work – the 'menu of options' which should be available if 'reasonable steps' to prevent homelessness are being taken – practices which can so often be side-lined when funding is tight and services are regarded as 'nice to haves', not legal requirements.

On a related theme, a variety of partners indicated frustration over a lack of sources of long-term continuation funding for successful interventions. Instead priority is given to 'innovation' or funding issued in year-by-year awards, which undermines continuity and, at times, recruitment and retention - which especially matter for relationship-based work.

It's also worth noting that some of the more housing-based examples of preventative action, such as social housing allocations, use of Housing First and wider access to PRS schemes, are harder or simply not possible to introduce in highly pressured housing markets when so many people are already in the current 'acute' (i.e. homelessness) system, and whose homelessness journey is becoming less brief year on year.

Such areas find themselves in a double bind. They are the ones who most need to prioritise prevention, whilst simultaneously having the most demand placed on their acute systems. Areas such as these require more than practice examples. It's possible that if funding is not earmarked for prevention, resources will be entirely absorbed by the needs of the acute system. However the acute system must also be funded, until prevention and rapid rehousing dividends start to pay off. This suggests careful consideration should be given to how new prevention duties will be funded.

Wider (non-housing) partners

We found talking in terms of 'homelessness prevention' may not be the best way to convey meaning to, or encourage engagement from, wider public bodies and other non-housing partners. Though we repeatedly emphasised we were seeking examples of *preventative* interventions, partners generally responded with examples of their work with people who are currently homeless. It was genuinely difficult to convey what we were (and weren't) looking for. This suggests prevention, from a housing perspective, is not well understood across different sectors.

When we did identify examples of the type of work we were seeking, it was clear many partners did not connect what they were doing with preventing homelessness. This led to us talking

about what services do to reduce risks to people's housing situations, or simply to help them with their housing problems. Indeed, it seemed more advantageous to avoid mentioning homelessness at all.

Some of the more holistic interventions carried out within non-housing settings such as schools, police cells, hospitals and GP surgeries have broader impact across a range of social harms, but with less specific impact on any one harm. Preventing homelessness or reducing housing risk may not be the main purpose of an intervention, or even relevant to many of those who benefit from it. Rather it is just one of a range of different areas of advice or support people may require from a holistic service.

This means interventions which address many aspects of complex lives may have less impact on reducing homelessness *specifically*, but their holistic approach engages with and mitigates against the impact of *all* factors that contribute to and perpetuate it.

The strength of such interventions is not that homelessness is the overriding or unifying social harm they seek to prevent, but that they do **ask**, and then **act** where this is the case. As Durham Constabulary puts it, housing is just one of a number of 'critical pathways' which, if not addressed, can perpetuate offending. Similarly, offending is just one of a number of critical pathways which, if not addressed, can perpetuate housing instability and homelessness.

Thinking about how each public body can do more to **ask** about each other's specialist area, then **act** holistically in response to the real problems people have (rather than on the narrow benefits to their own sector in isolation) – as well as who should fund that work - are key challenges to be addressed here.

Related to this, it is worth reflecting that - in terms of the 'when' question around intervention - all public services face a similar challenge. The earlier intervention occurs, the harder it is to draw a causal link with preventing a harm, and the easier it is for such interventions to be side-lined when funding is scant.

It also seems that the ingredients of more 'upstream' interventions are very similar across many different public services, and that they have wider benefits than simply stabilising housing for people - who do not live in sector silos, but in communities. This suggests deliberately funding earlier prevention work from pooled budgets or projects purposefully delivered in partnership makes sense.

Lastly, it may be worth noting that other public bodies simply 'asking and acting' by means of a referral sent off to a homelessness team may not pay dividends in either direction. In a number of examples, frontline professionals have been able, and sometimes encouraged, to make referrals on housing problems in the past. Yet it took more deliberate, more robust interventions (such as a training programme, a managed pathway and/or an embedded or co-located worker) to register outcomes which decreased homelessness risk for people interacting with those public bodies.

This suggests that, in Scotland, we need to take care to ensure the 'act' part of 'ask and act' does not get reduced to a one-way referral to local authority homelessness services. That could end up replicating rather than improving on the 'duty to refer' in England's Homelessness Reduction Act, which was diluted from original plans for a stronger 'duty to co-operate' on public bodies.

One-way referrals can perpetuate the idea that homelessness is only the concern of the local authority housing options team.¹⁴ Examples in this guide show the impact of more collaborative, upstream work by different partners which start to see preventing homelessness as 'everybody's business'.

¹⁴ The limitations of the duty to refer are highlighted in this report on youth homelessness: Heselwood, L, Farhan, I & Shilson-Thomas, A (2019) Preventing youth homelessness: an assessment of local approaches. Reform. <https://reform.uk/sites/default/files/2019-05/Preventing%20youth%20homelessness%20WEB%20VERSION.pdf>

Part III Practical prevention examples

Chapters

1. Landlords: social rented sector
2. Landlords: private rented sector
3. Children and families
4. Young people
5. People experiencing domestic abuse
6. People with multiple, complex needs
7. Health and social care partners
8. Justice partners
9. Wider community partners
10. Service delivery incentivising earlier action

Landlords: social rented sector

What did the PRG say about social rented housing?

Social landlords are well placed to carry out work which prevents homelessness. Good quality tenancy management practice may ultimately serve this function, especially work to address rent arrears and antisocial behaviour.

The PRG recommended that where a social landlord identifies circumstances which may lead to a risk of homelessness, they should take '**reasonable steps**' to mitigate that risk. Circumstances may include early warning signs of arrears or financial difficulties, tenant behaviour which may ultimately threaten a tenancy, or other circumstances, including domestic abuse, or court proceedings, for example, relating to criminal charges, which may give rise to a loss of housing on remand or imprisonment.

'Reasonable steps' would include:

- housing management practices to sustain tenancies
- engaging with the tenant to address relevant financial circumstances
- engaging the tenant to address behaviour
- putting in place protocols to address relevant circumstances and mitigate risk of homelessness at an early stage, including protocols relating to domestic abuse, and where tenants face court proceedings

The PRG also recommended that if an RSL considers the risk of homelessness for a tenant is such that assistance is required beyond their powers, including where there is a growing risk of eviction, they should notify the local authority as early as possible that there is a risk of homelessness (similar to a Section 11 notification, but at an earlier stage).

Our social rented sector examples show how...

- [Shetland Islands Council](#) amended its **allocations policy** to take in a wider understanding of 'threatened with homelessness' and [Angus Council](#) and RSL partners updated their Common Allocation Policy to award highest priority to people leaving institutions to whom the Council has a full rehousing duty. Both helped avoid use of the homelessness system at all in some cases (second example in '[justice partners](#)' chapter)
- [Comhairle nan Eilean Siar](#), together with its (only) RSL, Hebridean Housing Partnership, implemented the **Section 11** process earlier and with greater emphasis on working in partnership, leading to a decrease in evictions
- [Argyll and Bute Council](#), [Citizen Housing](#) and [Newcastle Furniture Service \(NFS\)](#) have taken impactful, although different, approaches to addressing the challenges of **furnishing** and **decorating** a social home to improve sustainment

- [Queen's Cross Housing Association](#), [East Ayrshire Council](#), [South Yorkshire Housing Association](#) and [South Lanarkshire Council](#) developed approaches to **housing management** which have improved sustainment and reduced tenancy failure
- [City of Edinburgh Council](#) successfully launched a **multidisciplinary team** to support tenants at risk of eviction who are not engaging with their housing officer
- [Aberdeenshire Council](#) extended **Housing First** support to social tenants at high risk of repeat homelessness, [South Lanarkshire Council](#) works with families with 'multiple complex needs' to remove threat of eviction for **antisocial behaviour**, and [Almond Housing Association](#) and [Rock Trust](#) pioneered Housing First for Youth for young people leaving care with **complex needs indicators** predictive of future homelessness (found in '[people with multiple complex needs](#)' chapter)
- [West Dunbartonshire Council](#) took a high level, victim-centred approach to addressing **domestic abuse** in Council housing, whilst also considering the housing needs/risks of perpetrators, [Scottish Borders Council](#) with partner RSLs took a **pan-local authority approach** to domestic abuse and [Safer London](#) set up and manages a successful reciprocal transfer scheme for social landlords in all 33 London boroughs for tenants experiencing domestic abuse, **homophobic hate crime** and **gang violence** (examples found in the '[people experiencing domestic abuse](#)' chapter; the London example is within '[justice partners](#)' chapter, as it is funded by Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime)
- [Wakefield District Housing \(WDH\)](#) improved tenancy sustainment and reduced antisocial behaviour for tenants by seconding clinically trained '**mental health navigators**' from the local NHS Trust, which jointly funds the project (example in '[health partners](#)' chapter)
- [Midlothian Council](#) launched a successful '**House Project**' for young people leaving care or homeless with care experience, using its own stock and that of RSL partners; [Hull City Council](#) and [Simon Community Scotland](#) (with West Dunbartonshire and Renfrewshire Councils and various RSLs in Glasgow) developed successful **shared social housing options** for young people), [Finnish Youth Housing Association \(NAL\)](#) both purchased stock and partnered with other social landlords to create **affordable housing for young people**; and various social landlords in London successfully worked with **immersive training** from [The Money House](#) and **coaching support** from [Settle](#) to reduce homelessness risk for young people in first tenancies (examples in '[young people](#)' chapter)

Shetland Islands Council

when: new duty (6 months) > current duty (2 months)
 where: housing
 who: anyone at risk
 which: social rented
 what: housing supply, options & allocations

Preventative social housing allocations

The context

The PRS has a key role to play preventing and alleviating homelessness in local authorities where location is key, especially rural areas where social stock is limited. But whilst a 'maximal options' approach emphasises consideration of all tenures, it's also the case that for *some* households in every local authority area, social housing will be the only viable, affordable and sustainable option.

In Shetland, with one of the smallest and least affordable PRS in Scotland, social housing is likely to offer the only option for many households at risk of homelessness. As such, Shetland Islands Council stepped up the preventative role allocations can play, alongside meeting its statutory homelessness duties.

The intervention

Though Shetland has one of the lowest rates of homelessness (relative to population size) in Scotland, if people do become homeless they generally face very long rehousing journeys. 60% of households need no support apart affordable housing. For single people, stays in temporary accommodation are the second longest in Scotland (behind Midlothian). The Council has long aimed to take a more nuanced, 'upstream' view to prevention in its allocations policy, enabling 'insecurity of tenure' points to be applied to applicants with homelessness risk within six, rather than the more usual two, months.

The Council doesn't *automatically* apply insecurity of tenure points on prevention grounds: this depends on the individual household's situation, with other prevention action taken alongside. The Council must be satisfied actual homelessness could occur to apply points for this reason. That may involve a notice period from a private let, tied tenancy or owned home, or a situation of impending unaffordability, such as the benefit cap applied on loss of work, or a relationship breakdown.

In 2019, specifically to enhance its ability to prevent homelessness at an earlier point in time, the Council increased the level of points awarded in this category. That enabled certain households whom the Council deemed very likely to become homeless within the next six months to be offered a social property before they reached crisis and needed temporary accommodation.

The outcome

In 2020-21, 33 households awarded insecurity of tenure points on basis of probably future homelessness in the next six months were offered Council housing before this occurred. Almost half were single applicants, the most over-represented group in Shetland's homelessness system (70% of households waiting with homelessness points at financial year end were single applicants). Though a small number, 33 households is very significant in island communities: it represents half of the number of households accepted as statutory homeless in Shetland last year (67). As the authority also increased allocations to the statutory homeless group last year, as well as nominations to its RSL partner, the number of live homeless cases in Shetland declined from 109 in 2019 to 89 in 2021, with households in temporary accommodation (77) on 31 March 2021 the lowest number since 2010.

Key insights

- giving a level of social housing priority to households with insecure housing tenure who are more than two months away from statutory homelessness can help them avert crisis
- whilst, in law, Scottish social landlords can't take household income into account when allocating, this doesn't prevent them from acknowledging households whose current housing affordability (for example, benefit cap producing an unaffordable shortfall) places them at future homelessness risk
- balancing preventative allocations with rapid rehousing recommendations to increase allocations to statutory homeless groups is a genuine challenge in some authorities in Scotland at present, and likely to take considerable time to achieve: but the direction of travel is clear

Find out more...

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Comhairle nan Eilean Siar & Hebridean Housing Partnership

when: new duty (6 months)
where: housing
who: social tenants
which: social rented
what: information, advice & advocacy / navigation, coordination & engagement

An earlier & enhanced Section 11 process

The context

Placing legal duties on other public bodies to prevent homelessness comes from an understanding that people facing housing problems often interact with other services before presenting at local authority housing options teams. England's 2018 Homelessness Reduction Act placed duties on certain public bodies to refer people at risk of homelessness in the next two months to housing options, affording Councils earlier opportunities to prevent crisis. Those public bodies include Housing Associations (Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in Scotland).

In Scotland, a referral mechanism between RSLs and options services has existed since 2003 (in law) and 2009 (in effect). But in practice, Section 11 has served more as a tool for notification of homelessness than its prevention. North and Islands Options Hub's 2019 pilot with Scotland's Housing Network (SHN)ⁱ aimed to turn that around, with very positive impacts realised in the Western Isles.

The intervention

In planning its rapid rehousing transition, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is unique: it has just one mainstream social landlord. This places a high premium on joint working with HHP, the stock transfer RSL. Strong relationships and communication were cemented post transfer in 2006, with Council homelessness officers working from HHP offices. But over the course of time they were re-located back to Council buildings. By 2019, joint prevention work had become less impactful. When HHP issued a Section 11 notice, the Comhairle sent tenants a standard letter. Few responded: just one tenant did so in 2018.

The Comhairle and HHP were thus enthusiastic participants in the Hub/SHN Section 11 project. This tested three principles, aiming to realise Section 11's untapped preventative benefits. The first was earlier notification: when notice is served, rather than when court action is starting. The next principle focused on sharing more, and more useful, details with a Council – not only a tenant's name and address, but the best way to contact them, household composition and risks/vulnerabilities. Lastly, the Council and RSLs would work together more closely, and more deliberately, to prevent homelessness.

HHP issued Section 11 notices, with enhanced details, to named officers in the Comhairle every time they served notice of possession for a HHP tenancy. Comhairle officers would triage referrals, discussing with HHP which tenants may require more input – some had already responded, so did not need this. Where tenants didn't respond to HHP, the Comhairle offered a joint visit, or tried various different routes and techniques to contact the tenant to engage them in advice and support to prevent eviction.

The outcome

HHP carried out three evictions in 2017-18 and five the year before the project, compared to none in 2019 when the project was underway. The Comhairle succeeded engaging every tenant who had received a notice whom HHP had been unable to reach. Due to its impact, both partners agreed to mainstream the enhanced approach.

In the wider pilot, including four Councils and seven RSLs, homelessness was prevented in 96% of cases. Councils and RSLs able to apply project principles in full (as in Western Isles) experienced no homelessness. Those unable to commit sufficient resource to apply principles in full did not witness such reductions. This offers a useful (unintended) comparator. Findings suggest earlier intervention and greater information-sharing, joint working and resource commitment to preventative approaches can reduce homelessness.

Key insights

- social tenants who become homeless often don't appreciate their limited onward housing options: an ability to explain this at an early point, using approaches other than standard letters, can aid prevention
- an agency other than the tenant's landlord (including the Council) may have more success engaging some households, whose trust can rise as they hear consistent messages from different sources
- some pilot partners were unable to commit sufficient resource upstream due to demands from the acute/statutory service. That suggests a need for transitional funding to complete a prevention shift and/or methods of risk assessment/triage for households most in need of an enhanced approach

Find out more...

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Argyll & Bute Council

when: recovery
 where: housing
 who: social tenants
 which: social rented
 what: property enhancements & furniture / financial support

Flexible décor & move-in fund

The context

Research on social housing in Scotland draws a link between higher potential for tenancy failure, and the extent to which a tenant has been able to make a property feel like a home.ⁱⁱ This often relates to practical/financial factors - the inability to afford, physically carry out and/or generally deal with, furnishing and decorating a whole property quickly.

Decorative state and/or lack of furniture may also increase the likelihood of applicants refusing offers of housing. This generally has negative consequences for homeless applicants. At worst, it can lead to a loss of rehousing priority. But in all cases, it leads to an elongation of homelessness. Argyll and Bute Council has been taking a novel approach to address both issues.

The intervention

In its RRTP, Argyll and Bute Council reported that only 73% of social housing offers were accepted by homeless applicants. Research showed a link between refusals and decorative standards. Whilst some Councils run furnished tenancy schemes covering larger items (i.e. flooring and cookers), these are rare among RSLs. Such schemes can help new tenants by complementing other forms of help available, but are not an option for stock transfer authorities. Homeless applicants in Argyll and Bute receive two offers, making discharge of duty less common; but the prevalence of refusals was certainly contributing to longer temporary accommodation stays.

The Council conceived of a flexible decoration fund, managed by the authority, for use in RSL homes. The aim was to increase both the proportion of offers accepted by people who are statutory homeless, and the financial means and personal choice available to new tenants to make a house into a home, enhancing the likelihood of tenancy sustainment. All tenants moving on from homelessness are offered use of this fund, which can be paid promptly, making move-in quicker. The fund complements and/or fills gaps left by other forms of help, such as the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) or RSL decoration vouchers.

Where a tenant feels enhanced decoration is the priority, the fund can boost the amount offered by the RSL as vouchers, or enable the tenant to pay for small works to be completed themselves. Or it can be used to pay for items often not covered by the SWF, such as carpets or goods which allow a greater level of personalisation. The fund can pay for van hire to assist a move, or a rent overlap where a tenant can't move until furnishing/décor is in place, and has to pay two rents. Where RSLs are involved, they invoice the Council, rather than requesting payment from the tenant, reducing stress.

The outcome

Between April 2020 and December 2021, 93 new tenants made use of the decoration fund, at a cost of £64,577 (average: £694 per household). All tenancies are being sustained to date (early 2022). The Council notes having recourse to the fund has in some cases facilitated quicker move-on from temporary accommodation, partly offsetting costs (especially as Argyll and Bute often use privately rented temporary stock). The fund's flexibility has thus far catered for the range of issues applicants have challenges with, and there's been no need as yet to implement a 'supervised spend' option.

Key insights

- a small amount of money can go a long way when someone is moving into an unfurnished home – especially when they have choice and flexibility to use it in a way which most benefits them
- whilst various sources of help for people who are homeless moving to social homes exist, they're not always sufficient, rapid or comprehensive - a universal fund can plug critical gaps promptly
- the extra costs of raising the decorative standard of unfurnished homes through funds to tenants may be able to be partially offset by quicker move-on from temporary accommodation, lower refusals, lower void times and greater sustainment

Find out more...

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Citizen Housing

when: recovery
 where: housing
 who: social tenants
 which: social rented
 what: property enhancements & furniture

'Fresh Start' re-let standard

The context

The condition of a new social property can be a key factor in determining the extent to which tenants settle in and make a home. In some cases, poor condition can lead to applicants refusing an offer. People who are homeless may be forced to take the property, then find completing, organising and paying for decoration and furniture overwhelming. Poor condition and lack of furniture were highlighted by people who were homeless as key reasons for abandoning social homes in recent Scottish research.ⁱⁱⁱ

Whilst many RRTPs contain local authority solutions to such issues – such as 'property ready' or decoration funds, enhanced starter packs or fast-tracking of grants – there are relatively few examples of social landlords questioning, then improving, their own relet standards in order to remove the need for such extensive schemes. This is exactly what West Midlands social landlord Citizen has been working on since reviewing its relet standards in 2019.

The intervention

In common across the social sector, Citizen's relet standards had, over the years, been cut back to reduce costs, with some benchmarking schemes rating low void investment as a high performance indicator. Research with tenants found most were shocked by the condition of properties at viewing. Almost all underlined the mental health impacts of moving into an undecorated, uncarpeted home. Some had got into debt trying to make the property habitable. Research with voids staff found many felt demotivated by handing over such a minimal offer to lettings teams.

Statistics showed 93% of new tenants requested repairs within the first three months. 30% of negative feedback from new customers related to relet standards. These issues were intensified in bedsit and one bed flats in city centres, with higher turnover and refusal rates. Property condition was a key factor in both refusals and abandonments. These homes are most frequently offered to, and tenanted by, single people moving from homelessness – who often have the least means to rectify such problems.

Citizen worked with innovation company What If! to understand the problem with tenants, applicants and staff, innovate ideas, then rapidly test solutions. In early 2020, they piloted 'Fresh Start': a home with a relet standard meeting customer - not sector standard - expectations. Homes were deep cleaned, professionally, neutrally redecorated and new flooring laid. Whilst this cost more and took longer at void stage, it was hoped lower refusals, repairs, complaints and turnover would offset costs in time. Therefore, no service charge was applied. Fresh Start was trialled in ten bedsits with high turnover in Coventry, then extended to 70 one-bed and studio flats in late 2020.

The outcome

Citizen has been able to show the Fresh Start void standard has improved sustainability, with 50% lower turnover than similar properties in the first 6-12 months. It has also improved uptake, with 56% more bids for the targeted homes. There is evidence that an average Fresh Start home will take longer to prepare than a regular void, but this will be more than offset by quicker lettings. Issues with COVID-19 related have made it difficult to verify this to date, but current data is positive.

Fresh Start has had a positive impact on customer satisfaction. 80% of applicants viewing were impressed, compared to 24% viewing routine voids. Fresh Start has doubled the number of staff who felt satisfied in their role and proud of the homes offered. Citizen is now rolling out the scheme to 250 further homes.

Key insights

- providing an enhanced relet standard can address a significant area of stress, difficulty and financial outlay for new tenants, start tenant/landlord relations on a positive note, and raise staff satisfaction
- tenancy sustainment is more cost effective for landlords than high 'churn' – so where it can be shown higher relet standards improve sustainment, the investment can be justified
- the ability to collect and analyse granular data which can show potential savings or offsets is crucial in making a business case for any scheme which increases upfront investment costs

Find out more...

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Queens Cross Housing Association (QCHA)

when: upstream > current duty (2 months) / recovery
where: housing
who: social tenants
which: social rented
what: person-centred housing management

Early intervention approach minimising arrears, evictions & abandonments

The context

In the year before the pandemic (2019-20), 1,759 households were evicted for rent arrears by social landlords in Scotland. 3,380 social homes were recovered as abandoned.^{iv} Not everyone who loses a social home goes onto present as homeless – at least not immediately – and national statistics suggest only around 2% of annual homelessness applications are due to social landlord eviction for arrears.

Yet social landlords are uniquely positioned to minimise these eventualities. This means even when evictions and abandonments are statistically and/or comparatively low, there may still be more that social landlords can do – as North West Glasgow landlord, QCHA, is demonstrating.

The intervention

QCHA manages nearly 4,300 homes, with officers working generically on small patches of around 300 tenants. QCHA has never had significant challenges with rent collection, nor registered high rates of eviction for arrears, compared to Scottish averages. But the association recognised there were nevertheless significant discrepancies between housing officers' individual approaches to managing arrears (for example, use of notices) and in their outcomes for both tenants and the organisation.

Acknowledging they could do more to minimise evictions and abandonments (12 and 25, respectively, in 2017-18), QCHA reviewed working practices. They also invested in an IT system giving housing officers early warnings of tenants going into arrears, so they could prioritise contact and target support. Whilst highly beneficial for some – such as new staff with no knowledge of the patch, or those less adept in managing rent accounts – the IT solution made no difference to one housing officer. Their patch consistently had low arrears; in almost a decade they'd never taken court action, much less evicted anyone. So QCHA studied the practices of this officer to learn what could be applied more widely.

The officer was effectively embodying an early intervention approach, starting even before a prospective tenant accepted a home, with a conversation on rent. The approach can be summed up as getting to know each tenant well; establishing a relationship; avoiding reliance on standard letters; aiming to get all tenants a month ahead to provide a 'safety net'; and prioritising quick, firm but supportive contact if any issues develop. Of those, being able to establish a rapport such that the tenant responds is the most important. QCHA subsequently asked the officer to take on a training, monitoring, advice and complex arrears casework role to maximise their impact.

The outcome

Evictions for arrears by QCHA fell from 12 in 2017-18, to four in 2018-19, to none in the past two years. Simultaneously, the % of rent due represented by arrears fell consistently from 5.4% in 2017-18 to 2.6% in 2020-21: much below Scottish averages (which went in the opposite direction). Abandonments, which QCHA assessed were also often due to rent difficulties, fell from 25 in 2017-18 to 13 in 2020-21.

On a granular level, after 'early intervention' was adopted, all patches recorded a drop in arrears for the first time. Tenants with clear rent accounts increased from 42% to 62% (75% if technical arrears are omitted). This was achieved with no legal interventions. Frontline staff also gave positive feedback on seeing the approach made a difference for tenants, which previously felt impossible to achieve.

Key insights

- get to know your tenants well, so contact and action can be tailored and targeted - small patches help; where this is not possible, an IT system which predicts issues can be beneficial
- avoid standard letters and generic escalation processes: calls, visits, texts work better for most
- respond quickly to problems and follow-up any action – positive (i.e. a payment made) or negative (i.e. a broken arrangement). This lets tenants know you're there, aware and you care

Find out more...

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East Ayrshire Council

when: upstream > current duty (2 months) /recovery
 where: housing
 who: social tenants
 which: social rented
 what: person-centred housing management

Neighbourhood coaches - not housing officers

The context

It's not easy to measure tenancy sustainment. No single national statistic, for example, rate of eviction or abandonment, or proportion of tenants sustaining a tenancy at 12 months, tells 'the whole story'. Tenants can terminate tenancies for positive reasons, whilst others may remain in homes that aren't right for them as they're unable to secure a move. Despite the difficulties of accurately defining and measuring sustainment, in 2017, East Ayrshire Council recognised it faced real challenges in this area. The Council looked outwards, exploring UK and international approaches which have had a positive impact on tenancy sustainment, understood in its widest sense. This exercise inspired them to pilot a new approach to housing management: neighbourhood coaching.

The intervention

A coaching approach turns the traditional landlord-tenant dynamic on its head. It conceives of residents/tenants as people with whom to build trusting relationships, as opposed to passive recipients of Council services. The rationale is that positive relationships have the largest impact on good outcomes. Coaches focus on people's strengths, goals and interests rather than defining them by their problems, issues and needs. Getting to know households as well as the community - its assets, activities and places of interest - are key tasks for neighbourhood coaches. They are also community connectors, connecting people to each other, as well as to local resources.

East Ayrshire undertook a neighbourhood coaching pilot in Doon Valley in 2018, with feedback from staff and tenants used to inform an immersive coaching programme across the workforce in 2019/20. The programme is designed to support employees to coach others to achieve their potential. It includes sections on self-awareness and insight, having good conversations, the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), coaching in conflict situations, acting as a catalyst to motivate others and the impact of loneliness and social isolation. The training has different 'tiers', from in-depth programmes for frontline staff, to introductory sessions for elected members. Following a successful pilot, neighbourhood coaching was rolled out to all neighbourhood housing teams in 2019.

Neighbourhood coaches blend traditional landlord roles with interpersonal skills, using coaching where someone is facing barriers to achieving things in their life. A coach might speak to tenants about rent issues, but also facilitate access to learning or work opportunities. They might give advice to someone about a housing application, but also link them into local activities to build skills and confidence. They are the key contact, with a local presence, which means a smaller patch size (around 250-300 homes). In 2017, the Council also introduced 'tenancy start matrices', which identify areas where new tenants may need more support, and six, nine and 12-month 'tenancy health checks' for all for new tenancies.

The outcome

In 2016-17, before adopting neighbourhood coaching, the Council carried out 80 evictions. Sustainment at one year for tenants overall was 79%; 65% for previously homeless tenants. By 2019-20, the Council had cut its eviction rate in half (40). Sustainment rose to 82% for all tenants, and by 10% - to 75% - for formerly homeless tenants (statistics reflect the pre-pandemic year, for comparator purposes).

As above, statistics do not give a full or final account of what sustainment really means, and causality can be hard to show. However, the Council is in no doubt that its proactive, holistic coaching approach has increased engagement and improved relationships with tenants. This ultimately impacts positively not only on housing sustainment, but also on tenant outcomes in the broadest sense.

Key insights

- a coaching approach can make a positive difference for frontline staff as well as tenants; coaches see more of the outcomes people achieve, and receive greater feedback on their own impact
- having time to spend - to get to know tenants and their local communities well - is one of the greatest benefits of a coaching approach for staff, made possible by smaller patch sizes
- whilst smaller patches require more staff, the person-centred, holistic way of working has led to a reduction in enquiries and demand on services, thereby improving efficiency

Find out more...

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South Yorkshire Housing Association (SYHA)

when: upstream > current duty (2 months) / recovery
 where: housing
 who: social tenants
 which: social rented
 what: person-centred housing management

Person-centred housing management, minimising evictions & abandonments

The context

Plans to end social housing evictions into homelessness are gaining traction. In 2019, the Welsh Government agreed social landlords could raise annual rent by CPI+1% for five years, provided they meet extra conditions. One of those was to deliver on a new agreement not to 'evict into homelessness'. In 2016, a group of English Housing Associations pledged to do more to end homelessness by signing up to nine commitments.⁹ One of those is not to 'evict into homelessness'. The group, known as Homes for Cathy (HfC), now has 116 member landlords.

Whilst eviction rightly attracts attention, there is perhaps less focus on abandonments, which often also lead to homelessness. The number of social homes abandoned annually in Scotland far exceeds that of evictions (3,380 against 1,866, in 2019-20). Focusing on eviction in isolation risks neglecting trends of increased abandonment in some landlords, and the interaction between these forms of tenancy failure. SYHA (a founding member of HfC) bucks the trend through its ambition to end both.

The intervention

SYHA manages over 5,200 general needs homes in the Sheffield area. Their longstanding approach to tenancy sustainment twins close data monitoring and review with creating a culture where staff are empowered to get to know their tenants as people, and do the best for them. SYHA examines all evictions and abandonments to establish learning points. They ask if they could have intervened earlier, or differently. From this, they found many abandonments, like evictions, were driven by rent arrears.

To reduce arrears-related problems, SYHA gave staff the ability to apply rent procedures more flexibly, to respond to tenant circumstances. They introduced (optional) furnished tenancies with floor coverings (added to service charge, and eligible for Housing Benefit), recognising the role furniture plays in creating a sustainable home as well as the furniture poverty trap some tenants find themselves in.

SYHA highlights the impact of the 'first contact': when people get in touch for help and don't get a good first response, they often won't come forward again. As tenants may interact with different parts of the landlord at different points in a tenancy, any member of staff may be their 'first contact' about a problem. Staff training prioritises the building of relationships over completing transactions with tenants, who fundamentally need to know of their landlord: can I trust you? do you care? are you committed?

The outcome

SYHA has reduced evictions and abandonments year on year from 50 in 2014-15, to just 12 in 2019-20. In the pandemic year, only three tenancies failed. This hasn't come at the expense of rent performance: SYHA's arrears % shows a trend of decline from 6.3% in 2007 to 2.2% today. Their pre-pandemic tenancy failure rate was 0.2%. To put this in a Scottish context, the average tenancy failure rate for landlords with over 1,000 homes was 0.9% in 2019-20, with just one general needs landlord under 0.2%.

Since 2015, SYHA has also monitored average tenancy length, reviewing tenancy 'ends' to establish if these represent 'natural turnover' (including positive moves due to a change in circumstances, or a tenant passing away), or a scenario where SYHA might have done more to support the tenancy. Average tenancy length in 2015 was 4.5 years, and is now above 6 years.

Key insights

- consider abandonment as well as evictions for a broader picture of sustainment
- a person-centred approach to reducing tenancy failure is cost effective for landlords
- 'the Board need to be on board': top down interest is crucial in framing the right questions and metrics - not 'where are we on arrears?' but 'how many people have we evicted?'

Find out more...

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Newcastle Furniture Service (NFS)

when: pan
 where: housing
 who: social tenants
 which: social rented
 what: property enhancements & furniture

Flexible furnished tenancy rental

The context

Tenancy sustainment isn't easy to measure. Data at national level in Scotland only records social housing retention in the first year. Not all tenancies end for negative reasons, or lead to homelessness. Behind long tenancy statistics we may find some households desperate, but unable, to move. Yet when exploring why some tenancies do fail, especially in relation to the most common reason for repossession (abandonment), the challenge of making a house into a home frequently arises in research, with some direct links made between *unfurnished* tenancies and an increased risk of failure^{vi and vii}.

Turn2Us reports that two million UK households lack essential household appliances.^{viii} This has a financial impact: it costs more to do without white goods, can increase household debt and/or encourage use of high purchase or rent-to-own schemes. Living without essentials also negatively impacts well-being, self-esteem, health and in some cases, safety. NFS was set up as a direct intervention to increase sustainment for social tenants on low incomes.

The intervention

NFS, part of the 27,000 home Arm's Length Management Organisation, Your Homes Newcastle (YHN), began in 1989 when the landlord identified many young people's tenancies were quickly breaking down. Voids staff often found mattresses on the floor and take-away boxes, suggesting tenants had moved in, but not managed to make the house a home and abandoned it. A pilot furniture rental option was launched, then quickly expanded. NFS now rents furniture to 5,300 YHN tenants and 4,000 social tenants of other providers across 38 social landlords in England and Wales.

New or existing YHN tenants can opt into furniture rental, with flexibility on which items are needed. NFS offers a range of packs, including all white goods, larger furniture and starter packs financed through a Housing Benefit (HB)/ Universal Credit (UC) eligible service charge. NFS delivers, installs and repairs all items for no extra cost. A furnished tenancy is a temporary solution for some, a long-term one for others. Tenants can hand back items at any time, for example, if they buy their own furniture or enter work and lose HB/UC eligibility. In practice, around 20% of NFS customers don't get HB/UC, but stay with the service, with flexibility on rental charges offered for those in difficulty.

NFS replaces white goods every four years, unless the tenant does not want this. If they move to another YHN property they can take their items with them. Used items are cleaned, repaired and recycled where possible. They may be offered to social fund recipients or donated to tenants who cannot use NFS for some reason. This furniture rental model is replicated across NFS's 38 clients.

The outcome

Housing Associations' Charitable Trust (HACT) analysed NFS's impact in 2020, surveying tenants and housing management data.^{ix} They found tenants using NFS had average lower monthly arrears, compared to a control group. Tenants using NFS overwhelmingly reported a positive impact on their finances and their wellbeing. The option was seen as flexible, quick and good value for money, compared to alternatives, with savings on repairs and replacements especially appreciated. Social landlords using NFS perceived a link between flexible furniture rental and increased tenancy sustainment.

Key insights

- choice and flexibility are key to a good furnished tenancy offer, enabling new and existing tenants to access what they need when they need it, with the option to return items any time. Such flexibility responds to diverse needs and avoids locking people into a service charge 'poverty trap'
- the ability to access affordable, new items (especially white goods) is valued by some tenants who may otherwise resort to high-cost purchase schemes, rather than use second-hand furniture
- whilst data shows certain households are more likely to use NFS (i.e. single men over 35; young female lone parents), offering the option to all tenants creates a universal safety net

Find out more.....

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South Lanarkshire Council

when: new duty (6 months) > current duty (2 months)
where: housing
who: social tenants
which: social rented
what: person-centred housing management / financial support

Psychologically informed rent collection, reducing evictions

The context

South Lanarkshire Council is the fourth largest social landlord in Scotland, and the third largest stock-holding local authority. Between 2014 and 2017, evictions for arrears rose to the highest number on record (109). South Lanarkshire had gone from having one of the lowest authority arrears eviction rates in the country, to the seventh highest. The Council realised this trend was going in the wrong direction. The housing service was challenged to look afresh at whether eviction really was being used as a 'last resort', setting an initial goal not to evict any families with children.

The intervention

The Council completed a full analysis of which households were being evicted and their journeys, entirely refocusing their eviction policy. That included a review of the content and format of standard letters, with a move away from dense text towards visual symbols. Officers were encouraged to re-engage with the original spirit of pre-action requirements and adopt the ethos that almost any problem can be solved "if we can get tenants to talk to us". This shifted focus from adhering to a set of steps, to trying and testing multiple ways to engage people with debt, including a refreshed focus on support.

All officers received training on psychologically informed practice, and were encouraged to use this training when engaging with tenants in arrears. A panel was set up to review all repossession cases, with a mandatory step to liaise with the homelessness team. The expectation was that most cases would not be approved unless all routes were shown to have been exhausted.

The Council also recognised that even if officers managed to engage tenants, they still had little flexibility on rent collection. So they gave officers more autonomy and discretion when applying the escalation policy, for example, through use of rent holidays or reduced payments. They introduced a sustainment fund for one-off payments to arrears. That enabled officers to open negotiations, rather than simply demand money, which changed the culture of conversations around rent.

The outcome

Since introducing the new policy, South Lanarkshire Council reduced evictions for arrears year on year. By 2020, it had improved on its figures from 2014/15, evicting just 20 households for this reason (from a stock of almost 25,000). This is the second lowest local authority arrears eviction rate in Scotland, behind the Shetland Islands.

There were concerns that, during the pandemic, the approach could lead to an unmanageable increase in arrears. But in fact the Council's arrears rate by end March 2021 was nearly back at pre-pandemic levels (7.8%), and below Scottish average (8.7%). The Council is now completing research on abandonments, with a view to redesigning interventions to reduce these, and recently extended its tenancy sustainment fund approach to PRS tenants.

Key insights

- incentivise tenants to talk to the Council: give staff tools to open negotiations, and avoid use of generic letters with a formal tone
- much as it does in other areas of housing and support, a psychologically informed approach on the frontline can pay dividends in relation to rent collection
- Senior Management buy-in is key when trying to shift both culture and process around major areas such as evictions

Find out more.....

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City of Edinburgh Council

when: new duty (6 months) > crisis
where: housing
who: social tenants
which: social rented
what: information, advice & advocacy / specialist assessment & support / financial support / onward referral / navigation, coordination & engagement

Multi-disciplinary team approach to engaging tenants at risk of eviction

The context

Homelessness caused by eviction for rent arrears from a Scottish local authority landlord consistently makes up just 1% of all households presenting for help each year. Traumatizing for the tenant, a Council eviction is also costly to the public purse, especially the local authority which carries it out.

City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) has had one of the country's highest eviction rates for some years: in 2018-19, 129 households were evicted for arrears; 97 the year later. As those who become homeless in Edinburgh face one of the longest rehousing journeys in Scotland, finding ways to minimise the number of CEC tenants losing their homes due to arrears each year is particularly vital.

The intervention

In 2021, with rapid rehousing funding and taking inspiration from a successful project by Newcastle City Council⁸, CEC set up a multidisciplinary team (MDT) with a remit to reduce arrears-related evictions. The team is based in the Council's Advice Shop, comprising a team leader, dedicated housing officer, debt adviser and income maximisation officer. It's informed by, and reports to, a steering group of social work, local housing and homelessness teams and the Council's in-house housing support service.

Housing teams refer households who aren't engaging with them and on whom they have served a notice of possession for arrears (up to the point a case is in court) into a multi-agency meeting. Not all households with a notice are referred, only those judged likely to proceed to court due to a lack of engagement. The MDT gets in touch with tenants, generally by text or 'phone. They simply say they want to help and it's likely there is a lot they can do. They ask tenants to sign mandates, enabling them to consult internal systems and external services. Though the Advice Shop is a Council service, its separation from the landlord/'enforcement' side tends to generate a different response from tenants.

The MDT completes a full benefit check, and the debt adviser, income maximisation and housing officers get individually involved if needed. The team tries to 'get behind' the reason for non-payment and offer advice, support and advocacy. In a small number of cases tenants may be withholding rent due to a repairs dispute. But most cases are more complex and need longer-term input, including referral to other services through a GP or social work, for example. The MDT works with tenants to put a plan in place, enabling them to negotiate with the housing team to salvage a home up to and including the point a decree has been granted.

The outcome

In its first year (2021-2022), 89 households were referred by locality housing teams to the MDT. Of those, 75% have engaged with the team, which is currently still working with 46 households. Some cases have been closed after the issue has been resolved, and the threat of homelessness removed (for example, a repairs problem, or a more straightforward benefits case).

The MDT continues to work with the majority of (more complex) cases to build trust and support tenants with appeals, complex debt, referrals to other services and legal issues. Of tenants supported, the team estimates homelessness is preventable in all cases. No tenant who's engaged to date has been evicted, with five interventions at a late legal stage reversing the action and averting homelessness.

Key insights

- setting up tenancies well from the start saves time, effort and expense down the line – such as direct help with benefit claims and a 'warm handover' from homelessness services (i.e. on support needs)
- buy-in from locality teams is key: prevention should always be an option, up to the day of eviction
- locality officers doing everything right may still find a small number of tenants won't engage: a team whose role is nothing to do with enforcement can make inroads for this reason

Find out more...

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Landlords: private rented sector

What did the PRG say about private rented housing?

The PRG recognised that the private rented sector (PRS) has a key role in both preventing homelessness and resolving it once it has occurred.

The Group made a number of recommendations around the PRS, including empowering private landlords to make a homelessness prevention referral to the local authority on behalf of a tenant, with the tenant's permission, which the local authority would be required to act on.

The PRG also specified the local authority should have 'advice and assistance' in place to meet the needs of people living in the PRS specifically.

In relation to both preventing and alleviating homelessness, the PRG recommended the PRS should be a 'standard' housing option for people threatened with homelessness whose housing could not be salvaged, as well as for those already homeless. The Group underlined that PRS access (including rent deposit guarantee) schemes, and landlord liaison functions, should be in place to facilitate this.

Our PRS examples show how...

- [Perth and Kinross Council's](#) comprehensive approach to **PRS access** both prevents homelessness and facilitates greater choice and control for people within the system
- [The Wallich](#) developed an 'Early Doors' service for landlords and tenants: both parties can get **advice** and **support** before problems escalate
- [Housing Rights Northern Ireland](#) is having success with its private **landlord-tenant mediation** service and [The Bridge](#) achieves excellent outcomes from its **tenancy relations service** for both private tenants and landlords
- [Leeds City Council](#) offers a **landlord support team** and **Evict-Alert** service for any landlord experiencing problems with a tenancy and [Decent and Safe Homes \(DASH\)](#) has set up **Call B4 You Serve** – an earlier intervention service for landlords which is shared by ten local authorities in the Derbyshire area
- [Glasgow City Council](#) created a **dedicated PRS prevention team** which includes property conditions and welfare rights officers, whilst [Action for Children Dundee's](#) Family Sustainment Service prevents homelessness for **families** in the PRS specifically
- [City of Edinburgh Council's](#) PRS prevention team intervenes when a household has been served notice to salvage the tenancy, or where not possible, offer **facilitated pathways** into **alterative PRS** or **Mid Market Rent (MMR)** properties, enhancing choice in a pressured housing market
- [Cornwall Council](#) and [Policy in Practice](#) used **data analytics** to identify struggling households in the PRS and target **Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs)** more effectively (*this example in 'service delivery incentivising earlier intervention' chapter*)

Perth & Kinross Council

when: new duty (6 months) > crisis
where: housing
who: anyone at risk
which: private rented
what: information, advice & advocacy / financial support / housing supply, options & allocations

Facilitated access to private renting as a preventative approach

The context

A focus on 'maximal housing options' is central to rapid rehousing policy and to plans to strengthen prevention law in Scotland. Perth and Kinross Council is widely regarded as inaugurating a rapid rehousing approach with their 2016 Home First policy, which radically reduced the impact, duration and costs of homelessness, especially prolonged use of temporary accommodation.

Key to Home First is a focus on a range of solutions for most households seeking housing, recognising the PRS can meet some needs as well as, or in some cases, better than social housing. Partly due to complexities and lack of precedent discharging homelessness duties into the sector, the PRS has tended to play a homelessness prevention rather than alleviation role.

The intervention

Perth and Kinross Council's PRS Initiatives Team was set up in 2009 as Private Sector Leasing (PSL) wound down. The Council bought a commissioned, poorly performing deposit bond scheme in house and restructured the service. They also created an in-house social letting agency, PKC Lets, offering tenant find and good value property management to landlords who appreciated those elements of PSL. Many PSL landlords stuck with the Council – so stock previously used as temporary accommodation became the foundation for a Council-run lettings agency for settled homes.

Any household with a level of housing need can get help from the team, as long as they can manage a private tenancy. Households don't need to be homeless or threatened with homelessness in two months. The team completes an affordability assessment and helps with property find, move-in (including benefit claims and furniture), rent in advance and any support needed. Applicants either find their own property and the Council steps in to negotiate the let with a bond or cash deposit, or they can be offered a property managed by PKC Lets.

Landlords can use the 'bond only' option; PKC Lets marketing, tenant find and tenancy set-up; or a full property management service. The latter includes rent collection, inspection and repairs coordination, for a monthly fee of £30+VAT per home. The service negotiates rents with landlords to ensure good value. Including homes above Local Housing Allowance (LHA) prevents the service being seen as a 'low end' option by either landlords or applicants, and gives more choice to both. Owners seeking help to bring a home back into use via the Empty Homes Initiative can access advice, as well as grants, on condition the property is made available to the PRS Team at LHA rate for an initial five-year period.

The outcome

Since 2010, the PRS Initiatives Team has helped almost 2,000 households into private tenancies. Most were threatened with homelessness in the two months or more, so avoided homelessness through this option. PKC Lets now manages 180 homes, with the Council running a rent deposit service alongside, housing 160 households in PRS in 2019-20. A Council-run lettings agency has also helped drive up the standard of local private rented housing, ensure empty homes grants benefit people in housing need, and enabled better prevention through a pool of well-engaged private landlords.

Key insights

- a well-resourced, flexible PRS team working closely with private landlords locally can offer people in housing need a wider range of options - enabling them to avoid homelessness
- including above-LHA homes as well as households in any form of housing need helps prevent a PRS service being seen as a 'last resort', attracts a broader range of landlords and widens options for planned and sometimes aspirational, rather than crisis-driven, moves
- co-locating PRS teams with housing options ensures private renting is a key part of discussions: officers can present rapid PRS solutions which can't be offered by the social housing system without a homelessness journey

Find out more.....

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The Wallich

when: new duty (6 months) > crisis / recovery
where: housing
who: private tenants
which: private rented
what: information, advice & advocacy / individual & family support / specialist assessment & support / mediation, befriending & mentoring

Advice & support service for both tenants & landlords

The context

The PRS currently contributes to more homelessness than it resolves in Scotland. In 2019-20, whilst over 5,000 households became homeless from a private tenancy, less than 1,400 households had their homelessness ended that way. In the first round of RRTPs, most local authorities registered aims to increase use of the PRS as a solution to homelessness, at the same time as maximising opportunities to prevent homelessness from the sector.

In Wales, that dual-pronged ambition had already crystallised in the Housing Act (Wales) 2014. The Act included a strengthened duty on authorities to take reasonable steps to prevent and resolve homelessness. Prevention duties now applied earlier: 56 days, rather than 28 days, from homelessness. Welsh Councils were also given the option, for the first time, to discharge duties into suitable private rented homes, provided tenancies were likely to endure for six months. Both elements of the 2014 Act sharpened focus on sustaining PRS tenancies and inspired the Early Doors project.

The intervention

Welsh homelessness charity, the Wallich, began to deliver Early Doors in partnership with Bridgend County Borough Council, in 2019. This is a free service for private landlords and tenants resting on an 'early intervention' concept: both parties can seek help around rent arrears well before the point at which a landlord serves a notice. Landlords must gain consent from tenants before seeking help from Early Doors. Any tenant assisted into a private let by the Council is advised of the scheme and asked to give their prior consent at tenancy start.

Early Doors offers impartial advice to landlords and tenants, and can help improve communication between parties, including by mediation, where agreed to. They can also work with tenants to identify and address any issues which may contribute to non-payment of rent, with the aim of reaching a mutual repayment agreement. That includes completing benefit checks, income maximisation and budgeting support, as well as signposting, connecting and at times, directly supporting tenants with other issues causing difficulties, for example, accompanying them to initial GP or mental health appointments.

Whilst the original focus was on arrears, Early Doors has adapted through the two years it's been running to include wider issues which may threaten sustainment. The service now encourages any landlord or letting agent with concerns about a tenancy to get in touch. Where it's not possible to salvage a tenancy, Early Doors works jointly with the tenant, landlord, local authority and other partners to secure a managed move, in order to prevent homelessness.

The outcome

Since its inception, Early Doors has received 69 referrals (lower than original expectations due to the pandemic and associated legislation). Only 1% of tenants have gone onto become homeless. 78% private tenancies have been sustained, with the original issue successfully addressed whilst 10% of tenants are still working with the service. No tenant refused support at the initial stage, though 9% disengaged at a later point, with outcomes unknown, and 2% terminated due to leaving the area.

Key insights

- it's possible for one agency to offer a service which benefits tenants, landlords and letting agents
- the presenting problem isn't always the real cause of the issue undermining sustainment, which highlights the need to spend time with both parties and offer a truly holistic service
- some private tenants have complex needs, yet are not known to other services; in such cases, it can take longer to build up relationships with both parties
- linking in with landlord forums, associations, regularly visiting letting agents and promoting the service in the community i.e. by attending community events, helps publicise the service

Find out more.....

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Decent & Safe Homes (DASH)

when: new duty (6 months) > current duty (2 months)
where: housing
who: private tenants
which: private rented
what: information, advice & advocacy / specialist assessment & support / onward referral / navigation, coordination & engagement / mediation, befriending & mentoring

Landlord-facing pre-notice support service

The context

The 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) heralded a radical change to English homelessness legislation. It placed new duties on local authorities to prevent (and relieve) homelessness. For the first time, these duties applied to all applicants, not only those deemed eligible for the existing 'full' duty. Since 2010, the leading cause of statutory homelessness in England has been the loss of a private tenancy. With prevention at its core, the 2017 Act gave local authorities a renewed impetus to explore ways to reduce homelessness from this sector in particular.

The intervention

DASH is a social enterprise which provides shared services for local authorities across the East Midlands. In 2019, DASH launched the Call B4 You Serve (CB4YS) pilot. One staff member, based at Derby City Council, served as a single point of contact for private landlords who were experiencing tenancy problems and intended to take eviction action. The officer was available to advise landlords across ten authority areas, with each contributing towards a portion of the pilot costs.

CB4YS is a landlord-focused service, encouraging contact as early as possible if a landlord or agent has problems with a tenancy. Around half of referrals to its service come from landlords. The other half come from options teams in partner authorities: they refer all Section 21 ('no fault' eviction) notices, received by tenants who present as threatened with homelessness, to CB4YS. The remit of the service is to exhaust all tenancy sustainment avenues. If this is not possible, CB4YS seeks to facilitate a positive tenancy end (from both sides), and a planned move for the tenant.

CB4YS has established extensive partnerships within the ten Councils, and across their wider service landscape. Whilst the CB4YS officer entirely manages relationships with landlords, providing advice, mediation, support and updates, they are reliant on Council and other partners stepping in and providing advice and support to tenants, where needed. That includes following up on any enforcement action where illegal or unsafe management or property conditions are detected.

The outcome

In year one, CB4YS received 462 referrals. Landlords did not go on to serve notice in 21% of cases and withdrew notices in 14%. 34% tenants moved to other homes - without a need for either legal action or temporary accommodation. This gives a prevention rate of 69%. 14% of remaining cases received extensive assistance, with 16% still in process. CB4YS estimates savings to Councils of over £1.2 million in homelessness service costs in year one. Seven more Councils joined in year two.

CB4YS finds landlords appreciate a service which listens to their side of the story. They've been willing to work through problems, including writing off arrears if a tenancy is stabilised and they're able to receive support. Via landlords, tenants access advice and support earlier. Even where a tenancy can't be salvaged, CB4YS negotiates 'good ends'. Relationships between Councils and landlords have improved, with landlords showing greater willingness to let homes to tenants on benefits and who are in urgent housing need.

Key insights

- create partnerships with an aim to equalise the advice and support available to social and private tenants - thereby 'socialising' the PRS. This improves stability for private tenants, whilst retaining the much-needed homes that sector provides
- a service designed for private landlords can ultimately benefit tenants (and local authorities)
- landlord-focused support to prevent tenancy loss also expands opportunities for people in housing need to access the PRS: a 'double dividend'

Find out more...

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Glasgow City Council

when: new duty (6 months) > current duty (2 months)
where: housing
who: private tenants
which: private rented
what: information, advice & advocacy / specialist assessment & support / onward referral / navigation, coordination & engagement / training & awareness raising / property enhancements & furniture

Referral-led PRS prevention team

The context

Today's PRS houses a wide diversity of tenants, and a growing number of families and minority ethnic groups. More than 30% of children in poor households now live in the sector.^{xi} Some of these households are likely to have particularly high and tenure-specific needs for timely financial, welfare and debt advice and at times, housing support. In contrast to social tenants, their landlords are less likely to be well-informed on, or plugged into, local advice and support services.

2019 research from Shelter Scotland^{xii} found many Councils lacked understanding of the housing support needs of private renters, and were not confident setting priorities in cross-tenure housing support commissioning. Housing support referrals tended to be associated with move on *from* homelessness as opposed to early intervention to prevent it. In Glasgow, where almost a fifth of households rent privately, the City Council's PRS Hub is taking a proactive, upstream approach to change that dynamic.

The intervention

The PRS Hub began as a short-term intervention in 2017. One officer was tasked with contacting families identified as subject to the benefit cap, to offer advice and support to maximise income and employability. The aims were to prevent child poverty and homelessness. An unexpected finding was private landlords, as well as tenants, engaged with advice and support. Many families were entitled to financial support they weren't receiving. And landlords often showed leniency, once they knew support was in place.

Whilst the project had an initial welfare reform (benefit cap) focus, the officer quickly discerned much broader, unmet needs for advice and support - including for health, childcare, property condition and tenancy rights. The team was expanded to include property conditions officers. They assess homes, make landlords aware of issues and give time to resolve them before enforcement action is taken. That ensures when homelessness is prevented, the home the family continues to live in is of adequate standard.

The PRS Hub works by referral only. Over time it's widened referral networks to include health teams (such as health visitors and community link workers) and social workers. This ensures services most likely to come across vulnerable families have both housing 'on their radar' and a team to refer into if a family in the PRS has a housing problem. The Hub's focus is long-term sustainment. Workers take a case management approach, supporting each family holistically, and with no set time limit, on any issue which could undermine sustainment. They also support moves to alternative homes where there are no other options.

The outcome

In its first four years, the Hub assisted over 600 families in PRS, with a 100% engagement rate. Homelessness was prevented for 85% of households supported, either by sustaining the original tenancy or moving to an alternative tenancy prior to homelessness. For those in the first group, which comprise the great majority of all households, the team is assured both property and financial issues have been addressed.

The Hub estimates for each £1 spent on providing the service, almost £12 is saved to the public purse. Intervening early to intensively support families in extreme hardship can avoid the need for temporary accommodation and homelessness services. It also avoids the need for (and associated costs of) social work involvement with the same families.

Key insights

- PRS-specific advice and support services can make inroads where generic services don't
- housing (especially tenure) isn't always on the radar of services - so awareness-raising with partners is key
- a great deal can be achieved to improve property management and standards working with private landlords as partners, whilst also ensuring enforcement action is taken where necessary

Find out more...

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Housing Rights Northern Ireland

when: new duty (6 months) > current duty (2 months)
where: housing
who: private tenants
which: private rented
what: mediation, befriending & mentoring

Private landlord-tenant mediation

The context

Northern Ireland's PRS has grown rapidly in recent years. Unlike in Scotland, where the social sector remains larger than the PRS in all but two Council areas, its two rented sectors are now roughly equal in size. There has been an accompanying sharp rise in households becoming homeless from privately rented housing through the period.

Traditionally, Housing Rights has provided services for people experiencing housing problems - not for their housing providers. But staff delivering the tenant helpline service found private landlords also needed advice and assistance: help which can, in turn, benefit tenants. Housing Rights opened its landlord helpline in 2017. This meant it was well placed to set up a private landlord-tenant mediation service, with a clear purpose of preventing homelessness from the PRS, in 2020.

The intervention

Housing Rights received government funding to pilot its PRS mediation service, which launched a few months before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. It set up a small team of internal and sessional mediators working to the European code of conduct, offering a free service to tenants, licensees, landlords, agents and solicitors. As with all mediation, the focus is on improving (and sometimes re-starting) communication, helping people to have difficult conversations where relationships have broken down, teasing out the issues, and seeking a resolution acceptable to both parties.

The mediation service accepts self-referrals and referrals from other agencies, with many arriving online or via Housing Rights' landlord and tenant helplines. Only registered landlords and agencies can use the service, and mediators don't take on deposit disputes, so as not to duplicate the work of Alternative Dispute Resolution services. Tenancies must still be live, and both parties must give consent to participate, and be able for the mediation process.

Mediators first check eligibility and suitability for mediation, contacting both parties separately to gather information about the dispute and willingness to proceed. Once consent is received, a mediation session is arranged (largely online during the pandemic). The session's aim is to reach an appropriate agreement, which is emailed to both parties for confirmation. The service follows up one and three months after cases are closed, to gather feedback and identify if issues leading to the mediation remain resolved or not.

The outcome

In the last 18 months, the service received 358 referrals, steadily increasing as the service becomes better known. 72% of referrals came from tenants. Of eligible referrals, just over 40% went on to take part in mediation. Of just under 100 mediation sessions attended, 85 positive agreements were reached (88% of mediations). This indicates whilst many parties referred don't end up using mediation, those who do are highly likely to reach a positive resolution. Tenants and landlords who either don't go onto mediation, or don't reach agreement, are signposted to Housing Rights advice services.

The main referral reasons include repair disputes, arrears, antisocial behaviour, threatened evictions and unprotected deposits. So whilst it's not possible to make a clear causal link between positive resolutions to landlord/tenant issues and prevention of homelessness, it's clear mediators focus on all the main drivers of tenancy failure, using non-adversarial and restorative techniques.

Key insights

- whilst mediation is common, mediation in the PRS is not – and it takes a specialised focus
- a tenant-focused organisation can be well-placed to offer services for landlords which ultimately benefit tenants and the wider rented sector
- mediation services take time to gain traction and confidence, but can be highly successful

Find out more...

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The Bridge (East Midlands)

when: new duty (6 months) > current duty (2 months)
where: housing
who: private tenants
which: private rented
what: information, advice & advocacy / navigation,
 coordination & engagement / mediation,
 befriending & mentoring / onward referral

Independent Tenancy Relations service

The context

In 2019-20, over 5,000 households became homeless from a private tenancy in Scotland - be that for landlord- or tenant-driven reasons. This accounts for 16% of all homelessness applications, suggesting a key target for prevention work. Indigo House's 2020 research highlighted^{xiii} the weight many tenants place on good, trusting relationships with landlords; a low enthusiasm for official, legal complaints; and the value of informal dispute resolution services working with both tenants and landlords to foster and smooth those relationships.

Though less common than they may have been in years gone by,^{xiv} Tenancy Relations Services provided or commissioned by some English local authorities can offer an instructive model.^{xv} The service offered by The Bridge (East Midlands) has a particularly long history of positive outcomes.

The intervention

The Bridge (East Midlands) provides a dedicated Tenancy Relations Officer (TRO) service in the Charnwood area of Leicestershire, as part of the wider housing advice service commissioned by Charnwood Borough Council. The TRO advises and assists tenants and landlords with any area of tenancy dispute, including rent levels, disrepair, deposits, notices, illegal eviction and harassment. The TRO offers independent legal and good practice advice, negotiation, mediation, signposting and referral to other services where required.

The TRO's role is to promote tenancy sustainment, improve property conditions and management in private tenancies and smooth landlord-tenant relations. Where additional input, up to and including enforcement, is needed, the TRO has 'fast-track' links to relevant Council departments, such as environmental health. Attempts to illegally evict can often be the result of a genuine misunderstanding by an inexperienced landlord. A TRO can often resolve this quickly through advice and guidance, though primary account is always taken of the tenant's wishes, based on the possible courses of legal action.

The TRO also provides holistic signposting and/or referrals for tenants, including support to attend first appointments and 'warm handovers' to other services which The Bridge (East Midlands) offers, such as housing advice or support, where a tenant needs this. There is a consistently high demand for the service (which rose dramatically during the pandemic), requiring the TRO to introduce a prioritisation process. In the small number of cases where a conflict of interest arises between parties, another member of the housing team takes over advice provision for the tenant.

The outcome

In 2019-20 The Bridge (East Midlands) dealt with almost 750 housing advice queries, of which over half related to an imminent or future homelessness risk. Specifically, the TRO advised 91 private tenants and 20 private landlords. The TRO was able to prevent or reduce risk of homelessness and intervene successfully in a landlord/tenant dispute in all of these cases. 97% of tenants were able to stay in their original home. Importantly, property conditions were improved through TRO intervention for 83% of households with a repair or maintenance issue. 79% of tenants also improved their financial situation by using the service.

Key insights

- by providing advice and support at an early stage, solutions can be found for many common issues leading to homelessness from the PRS: any delay is likely to hinder a good outcome
- a service for both tenants and landlords focused on tenancy relations can improve communication and take the adversarial/accusatory edge off issues before each party has 'hardened' their position, often avoiding a need for lengthy, more costly court processes
- multi-agency relationships (with local authority teams, services which support tenants, and the wider landlord sector) are the core of the service – which is why a dedicated role really matters

Find out more...

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Action for Children

when: new duty (6 months) > current duty (2 months)
where: housing
who: children & families / private tenants
which: private rented
what: information, advice & advocacy / individual and family support / onward referral / navigation, coordination & engagement / property enhancements & furniture / financial support

Targeted upstream support for families in PRS

The context

In a rapid rehousing system, homelessness - where it can't be prevented - should be rare, brief and non-recurrent. An ideal approach to rapid rehousing transition includes identification of which groups of people the existing local system serves most poorly: those whose homelessness is least likely to be rare, brief or non-recurrent. Such analysis can inform improvements to homelessness, temporary accommodation and support services/processes. It should also guide prevention priorities.

A good example of this comes from Dundee. Analysis showed larger families spending inordinately long periods in temporary accommodation, with little or no control over location, due to a shortage of larger social homes. Working backwards, Dundee City Council and partners found a high number of larger homeless families had been evicted from the PRS, due to arrears. This prompted Action for Children to design a bespoke, early intervention project for families at risk in the PRS.

The intervention

Action for Children launched its Family Sustainment Service (FSS) in April 2019, with one-year project funding from Safe Deposits Scotland. The team was composed of two support workers, aided by a student social worker. Their service mapping revealed a lack of dedicated advice and support for families living in the PRS in the city. The project's initial focus was short, sharp interventions to check benefit entitlements, maximise income and offer help with budgeting.

FSS set up referral routes and established links with welfare/money advice, grants, food/clothing banks and energy advice. Families responded well (89% engagement rate), with some self-referring. But FSS soon found the nature of unmet need was wider than purely financial. Many families also had issues with property condition (tenant- or landlord-driven); health; digital exclusion; domestic abuse; and child protection. Over time, the service adapted to take a more relational, holistic and co-ordinating role to meet these needs.

FSS also discovered private landlords were receptive to the service; they quickly became the main source of referrals. FSS have been able to work in partnership with landlords in ways which also benefit tenants, for example, facilitating access to funding to upgrade heating and insulation for landlords whose tenants are in receipt of certain welfare benefits. Where a landlord is operating illegally, however, FSS can quickly refer them onto the Council's PRS team for enforcement.

The outcome

In its first two years, FSS worked with just under 100 families and 279 children (41% with three or more children; 29% with four or more children). No family supported by FSS has gone on to become homeless. The Council's updated RRTP^{xvi} (focused on the pre-pandemic year) highlights a "significant decrease in presentations from the PRS", citing the work of FSS. The Council subsequently committed three years of RRTP funding to the service.

In year one (pre-pandemic), FSS recouped £40,000 towards arrears via benefit backdates, removal of benefit cap, new entitlements and payment plans. 116 children were referred to Leisure Active, enabling them to access the same chances as others. In 2020-21, the service broadened its linkages with health visitors, schools and social work, starting to attend Team Around the Child meetings.

Key insights

- working backwards from a problem (large families in temporary accommodation) and designing a specific intervention can have a positive impact on both beneficiaries and the wider system
- it's possible to engage private landlords as positive partners in homelessness prevention, whilst also upholding rights of tenants and families
- a PRS-specific service focused on sustainment can have wider child and family wellbeing benefits

Find out more...

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Leeds City Council

when: new duty (6 months) > current duty (2 months) / recovery
where: housing
who: private tenants / social tenants
which: private rented / social rented
what: information, advice & advocacy / specialist support / onward referral / navigation, coordination & engagement

Landlord Support Team & Evict-Alert service

The context

The 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) placed new duties on English local authorities to prevent homelessness for all groups of people - not only households deemed to be in a priority need. The Act also extended the definition of 'threatened with homelessness' to households likely to become homeless within 56, rather than 28, days, encouraging earlier prevention work.

Since 2010, the leading cause of statutory homelessness in England has been loss of a PRS tenancy. Some Councils with high presentations from that sector reviewed their PRS prevention offer. Despite a longer prevention 'window' in law, Leeds City Council found 56 days before tenancy end was often still too late to prevent homelessness, so designed a landlord-facing service to prompt earlier contact.

The intervention

Leeds City Council launched its pilot Landlord Support Team in 2019, aiming to change the culture of 'inevitable eviction' which affected most cases of PRS tenancy loss once a notice was served. The Council spoke to landlords they worked with through their PRS access scheme. Landlords said they valued a single point of contact in the Council if problems arose in a tenancy. It transpired that breakdown of landlord-tenant communication often, indeed usually, lay behind service of a notice. But by the time the case arrived at the Council, relationships were very often beyond repair.

The Landlord Support Team contains two landlord support officers and two housing advisers. Their remit is to encourage earlier contact from landlords who are having tenancy problems which may lead to them issuing a notice in time. This part of the service is called 'Evict Alert', though the team can provide advice and support at any point in a tenancy, not only where there's a homelessness risk. Landlords housing homeless households through the PRS access scheme can also use the service.

The team is able to link tenants up with other Council services which enhance tenancy sustainment, including housing support, financial and welfare advice. Landlords have responded well, especially appreciating the Council's welfare expertise and networks, as this is not something which tends to be offered by mainstream letting agencies. Landlords have also found the Council can sometimes 'get through' to a tenant when they've exhausted their own abilities in this regard.

The team also provides advice, signposting and service linkage for Housing Associations and supported accommodation projects intending to serve notice, enabling earlier intervention and/or planned moves, rather than crisis presentations. The Council has generally found that learning from reducing evictions from social housing can be applied to the PRS as well.

The outcome

The Landlord Support Team estimates that they have been able to prevent homelessness in approximately 80% of cases referred by private landlords to Evict-Alert. Where it's not possible to prevent homelessness, at the very least the Council has prior knowledge of the household, their situation and needs, meaning homelessness applications can be handled in a more planned manner.

Word of mouth has been a powerful tool in promoting the service, improving trust and confidence in the Council among private landlords. This has had the knock-on impact of generating approximately ten additional PRS tenancies per month for homeless households through the Council's PRS access service, as landlords know that they will be supported.

Key insights

- creating and/or enhancing a prevention service aimed at private landlords can also benefit tenants
- a bespoke support service aids prevention, and also brings homes to the PRS access service
- it is possible to stem the tide of PRS evictions into homelessness

Find out more...

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City of Edinburgh Council

when: current duty (2 months) > crisis
where: housing
who: private tenants
which: private rented / MMR
what: information, advice & advocacy / financial support / onward referral / housing supply, options & allocation

Dedicated PRS prevention team

The context

Since 2010, the main cause of statutory homelessness in England has been loss of a private let. In Scotland, relationship breakdown has consistently taken that place. In 2019-20, landlord-initiated tenancy loss in all tenures accounted for 13% of applications, compared to 24% 'asked to leave', and 19% homeless due to a non-violent dispute. We can't accurately quantify those made homeless by private landlords in HL1 statistics. But as we know social sector evictions are comparatively low, we can assume most households homeless due to 'other action by landlord' were private tenants.

In Edinburgh, where over a quarter of households rent privately, the sector contributes significantly to homelessness. It was therefore fitting that City of Edinburgh Council's (CEC) first RRTP set plans for a PRS prevention team to start turning this around.

The intervention

CEC's PRS prevention team formed in 2020. It contains a team leader, four officers, and a Financial Inclusion PRS Officer. The team's focus is to support tenants and landlords to address any issues which may lead to tenancy breakdown and to assist households to find a suitable alternative home where a tenancy isn't salvageable. The team works with all households seeking housing options and/or homelessness advice who have a current private let. In many cases, households present after receiving a notice to quit/leave a private tenancy.

Officers check notice validity, and investigate reasons for it being served with the landlord or agency (reasons stated are not always the actual reason for a notice being served). Where arrears or other financial problems are undermining the tenancy, the Financial Inclusion PRS Officer can offer welfare rights advice and assistance, help tenants apply for grants and provide links into employability services. The team also has a fast-track access to Discretionary Housing Payments and flexible use of a homelessness prevention fund. Officers also offer negotiation, advice for landlords and referral or signposting to other support for tenants.

Where tenancy loss is not preventable, the team assists households to access an alternative PRS or, if they are in employment, Mid-Market Rented (MMR) property in a planned manner, avoiding the need to use temporary accommodation (if this is in line with the household's wishes). The team has partnership pathways into MMR options, and works jointly with Crisis Help to Rent which offers property find, deposit bond and support for tenants. The team can call on various funds to assist people into a PRS if a bond isn't accepted. The team continues to work with households who go onto apply as homeless and use temporary accommodation if they would still like to access PRS or MMR.

The outcome

In its first 15 months, the team worked with 324 households, preventing homelessness for 225 of those (69%). Around a quarter were able to stay in their home, with 75% assisted into an alternative PRS or MMR tenancy. 99 other households already assessed as homeless were assisted into a tenancy. Overall, 81 households moved into MMR with the team's help. The Financial Inclusion PRS Officer helped secure over £50,000 in additional income from benefits awards, backdates and grants for tenants.

Key insights

- some people in housing crisis don't want to apply as homeless and/or don't have social housing as their ultimate goal: offering supported routes into other tenures widens people's choice
- whilst providing advice and assistance at crisis point has been successful, the team aims to move further 'upstream', intervening earlier to increase the number of tenants who can stay in their home
- landlords and agencies understand the benefits of the team and usually react positively to joint work to resolve tenancy problems, rather than seeing it as an adversarial, tenant-only service

Find out more...

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Children and families

What did the PRG say about children and families?

The PRG noted that around 27% of households making a homelessness application in Scotland each year include children. Most are lone parents, mainly mothers, and are more likely to have experienced domestic abuse. Families who become homeless are more likely than other groups to have come from the PRS.

Schools and health visitors have key roles in supporting children and identifying factors that may present a homelessness risk, such as poverty or strain on relationships.

The PRG recommended that those carrying out these key roles make a referral for assistance if a homelessness risk is identified.

Our children and families examples show how...

- Llamau and partners adapted the Australian Geelong project – a **universal screening** and **support programme** in **schools** credited with significantly reducing youth homelessness - to a Welsh context with Upstream Cymru
- Community Housing Advice Initiative (CHAI), in partnership with Children First, are reaching families in need of **advice** (including on housing), family support and employability assistance through their **embedded** Maximise! service in **schools**

- Cyrenians and The Bridge have achieved excellent outcomes through longstanding **mediation/** conflict resolution and **support** services
- Connection Support **embedded** a **housing** worker within **children's social work teams** in Oxford to ensure housing risks could be identified and addressed early
- Pobl Group and South Lanarkshire Council's dedicated teams supporting **families** at risk of **eviction** (often due to **antisocial behaviour**) and whose children may risk being accommodated have made a difference through person-centred, 'sticky' support
- Action for Children West Dunbartonshire is seeing benefits of locating **housing** workers in high **schools** and **improving awareness** of housing with education partners (*example in 'young people' chapter*)
- Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership seconded an NHS staff member to act as a health and housing link worker, enabling **health visitors** across the city to ask families the right questions on housing and providing coordination for addressing housing issues across different landlords and tenures (*example in 'health and social care partners' chapter*)

Llamau

when: upstream
where: education
who: children & families / young people
which: family home
what: individual & family support / mediation, befriending & mentoring

Universal schools-based early intervention

The context

In the past decade in Scotland, homelessness applications from people aged 16-24 fell both in number and as a proportion of all applications. But young people remain very over-represented in the homelessness system. 2018 research^{xvii} for Welsh Government found international evidence supportive of youth-centred, school-based prevention as a means of reducing youth homelessness. That evidence included Australia's Geelong Project, which successfully pioneered *universal* screening for homelessness risk in schools rather than relying on prior agency identification or pupil self-referral for support.

Upstream Cymru (a partnership of Cardiff University, the End Youth Homelessness Cymru coalition, led by youth homelessness charity Llamau, and software company, Do It Profiler) introduced the approach into Welsh schools in 2020. A pilot also began in North East Scotland College, Aberdeen, in late 2021.

The intervention

Pupils in selected year groups in seven secondary schools within two Council areas in South Wales completed a short online screening survey. Questions were based on those developed by the Geelong project, but adapted for a Welsh context. They covered wellbeing, resilience, school engagement and housing risk (at family and individual level). They ask, for example, about family moves, conflict with parents or guardians, and staying away from home overnight.

Whilst some pupils and families are already in receipt of support, others whose responses are scored as being 'at risk' might not be. School staff and workers from Llamau reviewed survey responses, agreeing any proactive help the school could offer through pastoral care or other support, such as in-house counselling; of course, not all support is housing- or homelessness-focused.

But where housing risk is identified, Llamau offers pupils individual input from an 'Emphasis' worker, and/or family mediation. Emphasis workers offer intensive, tailored, strength-based support to young people at risk of disconnecting with mainstream services, including education. Family mediators work with young people and parents or carers to re-establish positive communication strategies and resolve conflict, offering a safe, non-judgemental space for each party to listen and be heard.

The outcome

Pupils in seven schools completed 833 surveys in the pilot's first year; few pupils opted not to participate. Summary analysis by University of Cardiff identified 10% at high or immediate risk of homelessness, with a further 10% at medium risk. 7% said they had no trusted adult they could confide in, whilst 18% reported experiences of bullying at least once or twice a month, with 7% saying this was almost daily. Of most consequence for the pilot, 88% of pupils at immediate and 65% at high homelessness risk demonstrated *no* signs of educational disengagement, or other school-based difficulties.

Based on screening led, targeted support was offered to pupils facing significant barriers, of which the school was previously unaware. 83 pupils and families took part in mediation (85% uptake rate). 30 pupils engaged in Emphasis support. Of those, 77% improved their attendance at school and felt more optimistic about the future [note: *Llamau highlights these figures are lower due to the pandemic*]

Whilst too early to report long-term impact in Wales, longitudinal evidence from three Geelong schools using universal screening and support over three years found youth homelessness reduced by 40% and early school leaving by 20%, substantially reversing the schools' previous over-representation in those statistics.

Key insights

- universal screening can remove stigma from engagement, whilst also identifying young people who otherwise show no indication of risk (of homelessness or other issues)
- whilst professionals in any public service, including an educational setting, are aware of many of those at high risk of harm, we don't 'always already know' everyone in those groups
- universal screening can identify other issues as well as housing risk which schools can act on, for example, revealing the heretofore unknown extent of regular bullying that many pupils face

Find out more...

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Community Housing Advice Initiative (CHAI) & Children First

when: pan
where: education
who: children & families / people with care experience
which: multi-tenure
what: information, advice & advocacy / individual & family support / onward referral / navigation, coordination & engagement / co-location, embedding & 'hub' approaches

Embedded advice & support for parents in schools

The context

Homelessness can cause major disruption to relationships, routines and familiar settings at any time in life. But it's especially damaging when experienced in childhood. Not having a consistent, stable home negatively impacts children's health, wellbeing, development and life chances. A third of Scottish homelessness applications include children, with family applications rising year on year pre-pandemic. Households with children, on average, spend longer in temporary accommodation.

Due to the city's limited stock of family-sized social housing and expensive private housing sector, homeless families in Edinburgh face some of the longest rehousing journeys in Scotland. So services which find effective ways of targeting advice and support at families with a higher risk of homelessness are vital.

The intervention

Maximise! began in 2018, as a pilot based in a 'cluster' of six South East Edinburgh schools with high levels of child poverty. It offers 'family-centric' advice and support to parents through a 'one-stop shop' located in schools. The project is particularly funded to prioritise work with care experienced families (which can include care experienced parents, or families vulnerable to this intervention and who therefore require additional support). The service has three strands: every family is offered the advice strand, provided by CHAI, whilst many also benefit from family support from Children First and/or employability assistance (also from CHAI).

The service is designed to be embedded in schools, with school staff (including teachers, pupil support and education welfare officers), having ownership of the appointments that can be booked for families. The model was temporarily adapted due to the pandemic, with appointments offered mostly online or by 'phone. Other professionals, such as community link workers, can also refer. Building a trusting relationship with a family is key for the service. Workers take a persistent, proactive, flexible, trauma-informed approach, aiming to support families who sometimes struggle to engage with services.

CHAI offers specialist advice and assistance with income maximisation, benefits and personal debt, whilst also helping families to address rent/Council Tax issues, and challenge repossession actions, including representation at court/tribunals, and explore alternative housing options. They also support currently homeless families. Maximise! estimates half the families they work with have some sort of housing issue, whilst most have financial issues likely to impact on housing down the line.

The outcome

Schools and parents responded well to the pilot, with high demand for the service, including from many families who hadn't engaged with advice agencies before. Maximise! has now been rolled out citywide to all schools, though retains a care experience focus.

In year two, Maximise! supported 550 families and 900 children. Many were lone parent families - who are over-represented in the homelessness system. The service delivered £700,000 financial gains and 80 tenancy sustainment interventions. Many of these were rent-related, with 12 families represented at tribunal, but they also covered family conflict resolution: another major cause of homelessness.

A 2021 Social Return on Investment report^{xviii} on Maximise! found each £1 invested would generate £24 of benefits (range: £20 -£28). The Edinburgh Poverty Commission described the service as *"among the best and highest impact approaches seen anywhere in UK"*, singling out the combination of *"high quality advice, advocacy and wellbeing support embedded in key public services"*.^{xix} Maximise! also received the 2021 Scottish Public Service Award for Voluntary Sector Partnerships.

Key insights

- delivering housing advice from a trusted place families already go to can expand its take-up and impact
- regular interaction with and feedback to the host (in this case, the school) is key to embedding a service
- many families experiencing poverty have more than one issue – so providing a holistic service is key

Find out more...

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Connection Support Oxford

when: new duty (6 months) > crisis
where: children & family social work
who: children & families
which: multi-tenure
what: information, advice & advocacy / onward referral / navigation, coordination & engagement / co-location, embedding & 'hub' approaches / training & awareness raising

Embedded housing workers in children's social work teams

The context

The housing system can be hard to access and navigate for people who may need advice or support at an earlier point in order to prevent homelessness. Housing can also appear too complicated to deal with for other professionals – including those working in other parts of the same organisation (such as children's social work). During consultation for the Oxfordshire Homelessness Trailblazer (2017-19), professionals and people with lived experience of homelessness repeatedly put forward the concept of on-hand housing expertise in non-housing settings as a solution to this systemic problem.

The intervention

Embedded housing specialists based in other public services (children/families, social work/health and criminal justice) were employed by Oxford charity, Connection Support. Two workers were assigned to locality/community support, closely linked to multi-agency safeguarding hubs, which act as first point of contact for low/medium child safeguarding concerns. The service offers advice and guidance to professionals and links in with 'early help' teams. The embedded housing workers' role was to prevent homelessness for families with children in need, or with child protection plans.

Housing workers initially were advised, albeit on an anecdotal basis, that housing problems were a primary cause of 10% of children needing to be placed in care - providing a strong impetus for early prevention work. Despite this insight, they discovered housing was something of a 'blind-spot' in the child protection system. No questions around housing were asked within safeguarding referrals; social workers perceived housing was too complex a system to navigate. At times, that meant their work to keep a family together could be undermined by a (sometimes avoidable) housing crisis.

Embedded workers were initially greeted with some indifference and even hostility: past housing/social work relations hadn't always been smooth. But by highlighting points of intervention for families they quickly demonstrated their worth, training social workers on key questions to ask to ensure housing issues were picked up early. 15 referral routes to housing were set up in children's services. 228 referrals were made, with the main drivers of housing risk being financial (38%), domestic abuse and overcrowding (both 16%). Workers offered advice, advocacy, navigation and case management.

The outcome

69% of referrals received by embedded workers resulted in successful prevention of homelessness for a family. 4% were unsuccessful (the family became homeless), whilst outcomes for the remainder were not fed back. Prevention activity often succeeded because families were more than two months away from homelessness. This was the case in 78% of referrals, so staff could work sufficiently upstream of a crisis. Additionally, the direct ownership and 'named professional' in social work assigned to families made joint working easier than in other systems housing workers were embedded in.

The embedded workers' purpose was to create system change in key public service areas, not set up a permanent role. Whilst housing workers in children's social work did not continue beyond the Trailblazer funded period, their legacy included an internal housing champion's network, housing education/training, a network of 'go-to' housing contacts and housing questions as a key part of assessments and procedures.

Key insights

- by educating social workers on the realities of the housing system, workers were at times able to support them to propose more realistic housing solutions to families, avoiding homelessness
- embedded workers can smooth relations between services whose legislation, culture and working practices may have previously brought them to blows - at the expense of people using both services
- interventions to prevent family homelessness can be very effective if the right questions are posed early

Find out more...

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Cyrenians East Lothian

when: new duty (6 months) > crisis
where: education
who: children & families / young people
which: family home
what: individual & family support / mediation, befriending & mentoring / co-location, embedding & 'hub' approaches

Mediation & family support

The context

Relationship breakdown is the primary cause of youth homelessness in Scotland. 60% of people under 25 presenting to local authorities in 2019-20 cited being 'asked to leave' (40%) or a non-violent dispute at home (20%) as the main reason for their application. Just under half (47%) came from the parental/family home, or that of a relative. During the pandemic, the number of people asked to leave the family home rose to the highest level in a decade – even whilst other forms of homelessness decreased.

Whilst mediation focused on repairing relationships between young people and parents/care givers can help reduce the conflicts which can lead to crises such as homelessness, RRTPs show the nature, extent and timing of such interventions is inconsistent across Scotland.^{xx} Cyrenians has delivered its impactful 'Amber' mediation and support model since 2006 - its good practice insights informing the set-up of the Scottish Centre for Conflict Resolution in 2014.^{xxi}

The intervention

Cyrenians devised the Amber model specifically to address the sort of family relationships breakdowns that can lead to youth homelessness. The service has two distinct prongs: mediation, delivered by skilled mediators, and direct family support. This comes from an understanding that focusing on conflict resolution alone is often not enough to address a family's difficulties. Whilst mediators listen to each family member and help them communicate and understand each other better, family outreach workers offer more practical support, such as helping young people build confidence, manage anger or cope with school.

Initially launched in Edinburgh, since 2010 Amber has been commissioned by East Lothian Council social work and housing teams. Amber workers are co-located in the local authority, which has built trust and confidence in the service. The service also has a school-based element, working with pupils from age 14, taking referrals from teachers, social workers, youth mental health teams and young people themselves (some referred via friends). Cyrenians also delivers conflict resolution sessions as part of the curriculum.

The service also has a housing element, through the 'asked to leave' project, which works with young people who find themselves facing or experiencing homelessness. At times, with mediation and support, homelessness and use of temporary accommodation is entirely prevented. At others, it means a planned move, with less rupture of family relationships. The service continues to be available to young people who enter the homelessness system, with support focused on mending relationships – leading at times to young people returning home, or building bridges with their family, which aids future independent living.

The outcome

Since Amber was launched 15 years ago, 1,959 families have benefited from mediation and support, with the great majority of young people staying at home, returning home, or moving out in a planned rather than crisis manner, with support.

Last year (2020-21), Cyrenians mediation and support services worked with 117 young people and their families, with overwhelmingly positive outcomes: 85% of young people remained at or returned home, whilst 15% moved out in a planned way with support. Learnings from Cyrenians' 10-year collaboration with East Lothian Council show early intervention is a cost-effective way to both prevent youth homelessness and reduce unnecessary state intervention in family lives.

Key insights

- mediation alone doesn't address all issues faced by a young person at risk of being asked to leave home - a strong model of support needs to accompany it
- mediation should only be delivered by trained and skilled professionals; inexperienced staff members wading in without experience can actually cause more damage to relationships
- a mediation plus family support model is not cheap - but costs of family breakdown (to social work, housing, education and health services) are far higher

Find out more...

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Pobl Group

when: new duty (6 months) > crisis
where: housing
who: children & families / people with multiple complex need
which: rented / owned
what: information, advice & advocacy / individual & family support / navigation, coordination & engagement / onward referral / financial support

Holistic support for families engaged in antisocial behaviour

The context

We don't know how many families become homeless due to involvement in serious antisocial behaviour (ASB) each year in Scotland. Homelessness reason is not disaggregated by household type in national statistics. Nor is eviction on ASB grounds disaggregated, unlike arrears. We do know social housing evictions for ASB, in contrast to evictions for rent arrears, are rare - making up 4% of social housing evictions in 2019-20 (79, compared to 1,759 for arrears).

Yet it's clear ASB doesn't just impact the housing stability of perpetrators; it also contributes to homelessness more widely. For families engaged in ASB, the harms and costs for children and statutory services are high. There's potential for family breakdown and sustained interaction with child protection, care and criminal justice, as well as homelessness, systems – for both parents and their children, once adults. This makes focusing on and investing in tenancy sustainment for such families hugely worthwhile.

The intervention

The Family Intervention and Prevention Project (FIPP) launched in South-East Wales in 2010, with a remit to engage families displaying serious ASB. Its dual aims centred on preventing homelessness and preventing children being accommodated by the authority. FIPP was initially funded by Charter Housing (now Pobl Group). It's now commissioned in three local authorities through the Welsh Housing Support Grant.

FIPP offers intensive, holistic support to families in crisis living in all tenures; the majority of families are social or private tenants. FIPP accepts referrals from any agency, with most coming from landlords, social work, police and health visitors. Between 80-90% of families have social work involvement; many have child protection concerns. Truancy, interaction with the criminal justice system, substance misuse, home condition problems and domestic abuse are all common.

FIPP workers are not statutory. They work on what each family sees as their main worries or goals, not necessarily what the referrer defined. They work with every parent and every child in a family, taking a coordinating role with other services. Workers use a trauma-informed approach and are trained to carry out the Freedom Programme (for women who have experienced abusive relationships), parenting programmes and child therapy. FIPP has a flexible budget, small caseloads and work with families as long as needed – years in some cases.

The outcome

In over a decade, FIPP has rarely encountered a family who won't engage with their service. Between 2010-20, FIPP worked with 300 families and achieved a 100% tenancy sustainment rate. This includes managed moves, but reflects the fact no family was evicted, or entered the homelessness system, once FIPP became involved. 97% of families remained together, with only 3% having children accommodated.

A 2013^{xxii} evaluation found, by preventing family evictions, FIPP made savings for housing and homelessness agencies, but also brought about reduced interventions from police, youth offending, court and social work services. Neighbour complaints, truancy and debt all decreased for families supported. FIPP was assessed as highly cost-effective, generating total public sector savings of £1.17 million in its initial three years.

Key insights

- providing person-centred support to families facing the largest challenges is costly, but the costs of not doing so – to the families themselves, to social work, police, housing and others - are far greater
- working alongside families to achieve what they, rather than professionals, define as success, increases engagement, motivation and outcomes
- the right staff and working conditions matter: FIPP's small, skilled, well-supported team have diverse professional backgrounds, check in with each other daily and the service has very low staff turnover

Find out more...

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The Bridge (East Midlands)

when: upstream > new duty (6 months)
where: education
who: children & families / young people
which: family home
what: individual & family support / mediation, befriending & mentoring / co-location, embedding & 'hub' approaches

Early intervention mediation in educational settings

The context

UK homelessness research suggests the earlier in life a person becomes homeless, usually through a relationship breakdown at home, the more likely they are to be repeatedly homeless as an adult.^{xxiii} Though homelessness in under 25s has declined year on year in Scotland, both numerically and as a proportion of all homelessness compared to the general population, homeless young people remain over-represented.

During the pandemic, the number of people asked to leave the family home rose to the highest level in a decade, whilst other forms of homelessness decreased. The pandemic has also had a severe impact on existing and exacerbating factors in youth homelessness - especially work, welfare and mental health. So services focused on mending relationships have never been more vital. Those which intervene as early as possible, like the Bridge's talk2sort mediation for 11-19 year olds, can be particularly effective.

The intervention

The Bridge (East Midlands) has been delivering the talk2sort service for nearly 20 years, and currently works with young people and their families across the East Midlands area. The aim of the service is to engage young people and families before a crisis, such as homelessness, occurs. As such, talk2sort offers well-advertised drop-ins and appointments at schools and colleges, with people able to attend sessions in the evening and/or different locations as suits. talk2sort can also work with one person only, if only one person in a conflictual relationship wants to engage.

talk2sort focuses on opening communication, mending relationships, supporting young people and families to identify and explore solutions, improving mental health or emotional wellbeing and reducing harms, such as substance use or antisocial behaviour. Referrals can come direct from young people or families, through word of mouth, or from statutory or voluntary agencies, including education, children and families and 'early help' teams. Trained mediators work with young people and families as long as needed. They also employ creative techniques to engage young people who struggle to express themselves in words.

The outcome

Over many years, talk2sort has achieved a consistently high success rate in preventing youth homelessness and improving other outcomes for young people and families. In 2019-20, talk2sort engaged 126 young people. 100% reported that, as a result of working with the service, their housing situation was resolved or they had avoided becoming homeless, where that had been a likely possibility. 89% reported improved communication and better family relationships. 75% said the service impacted positively on their mental health, and 100% of those reporting the issue reported that they'd reduced substance use and/or involvement in crime and antisocial behaviour.

As a result of its success, talk²sort has both expanded its geographical coverage and its funding base. In 2011, Leicestershire County Council's Public Health Directorate committed to part-fund the service, deeming it a 'value for money' upstream intervention which reduces health inequalities and generates savings to more costly areas of crisis public sector expenditure. In 2019, the service attracted funding from the Leicestershire Police and Crime Commissioner following a similar understanding of the benefits of an early intervention approach in reducing youth offending..

Key insights

- mediation isn't suitable for every young person or family, but offering it in a flexible way at the earliest possible point expands its reach and effectiveness
- investing in relationship-based services for young people before problems have reached crisis point improves their outcomes (in the widest sense), whilst also being cost effective to public services
- mediation can't prevent all young people leaving home, but can make planned moves and ongoing contact with parents/carers more likely – both of which can bolster future housing sustainment

Find out more...

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South Lanarkshire Council

when: pan
where: housing
who: children & families / people with multiple complex needs
which: social rented / temporary accommodation
what: information, advice & advocacy / individual & family support / navigation, coordination & engagement / onward referral

Intensive support for families engaged in antisocial behaviour

The context

Whilst the number of evictions from social housing due to antisocial behaviour (ASB) are low each year in Scotland (71 in 2019-20), we know ASB and harassment-type issues play a much larger role in homelessness than simply the number of households evicted for this reason. Recent research^{xxiv} highlights that more than twice as many households become homeless from social housing due to violence or harassment than as a result of landlord action – demonstrating the negative ripple effect of ASB, including violence and substance-related issues, on tenants and wider communities.

Where families with children are involved in ASB, the ripple effect is arguably much wider, more damaging and at times, inter-generational. Families engaged in ASB may face not only housing, community and criminal justice issues, but also child protection concerns and family break-up. This places significant value on the services able to engage such families and reduce these risks – including that of homelessness.

The intervention

Breaking the Cycle (BtC) was initially set up in 2006 as one of three Scottish Government-funded pilots seeking to test the effectiveness of intensive family support delivered entirely on an outreach model. The Dundee Families Project, established in 1996 to support families engaged in ASB, was successful - but it relied on a residential element. This was not only costly, but could be considered stigmatising, artificial and disruptive for families. South Lanarkshire's BtC pilot was the only one delivered in-house by the local authority, and the only one subsequently mainstreamed when funding ended.

BtC comprise a small team of four support officers with low caseloads; on average the team supports 16-20 families at a time (which can include up to 50 children). Workers provide intensive support to families who are involved in ASB, have multiple and inter-related support needs and have generally not 'engaged' with other agencies. Many are either at risk of eviction from social tenancies or are homeless with complex needs that contribute to ASB issues. Officers therefore support both housed and homeless families, and support continues if tenure changes. The service was set up to ensure all relevant partner agencies take an appropriate role in support planning and delivery.

Support is family-centric, with each household planning and setting the goals they want to achieve. This can include working on family routines and dynamics, engaging in new activities/interests or linking in with specialist services, such as counselling, detox or domestic abuse support. Support officers coordinate regular reviews and multi-agency meetings with professionals, especially social work. BtC tends to work with families for between one and two years. Cases are only closed with both the family's and relevant partner agencies' agreement. The team contact families whose cases were closed six weeks later to check this has been a successful step; if not, support can be reopened to address any concerns raised.

The outcome

In the last reporting year pre-pandemic (2019-20), BtC worked with 34 families. Homelessness was prevented for 100% of those - with no household facing legal action for ASB. Of cases closed, ASB decreased for every family, with each one also demonstrating improved wellbeing outcomes. Children supported improved their educational progress and prospects in 78% of cases. Of previously closed cases reviewed at three, six and nine months, none needed further intervention, suggesting sustained improvement.

Key insights

- offering the same support to housed and homeless families creates continuity and parity of service, removing disruptions in support when families are housed, and giving workers first-hand insights into the realities of the homelessness and temporary accommodation systems
- some families feel a stigma in working with social work due to concerns over their children being accommodated; BtC are often perceived differently, enabling better engagement
- in-house intensive support can be a successful model - given a local authority has duties to accommodate and support both homeless families and children requiring protection

Find out more...

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Young people

What did the PRG say about young people?

The PRG noted that homelessness among young people (aged 16-24) is more than twice the rate of that for older people. Young women are disproportionately affected, and there is clear evidence of particular risk factors, including experience of a range of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), running away, truanting or being excluded from school, or being an LGBTQ+ young person.

The PRG recognised that whilst services need to meet the specific needs of this group in relation to age-appropriateness, independent living skills, a strong relational focus with appropriate management of risk, historically, in many areas, little attention has been given to a coherent housing and support offer for young people and those setting up home for the first time.

The PRG recommended

- services should be designed to meet the needs of young people at risk of homelessness, in partnership with relevant partner agencies
- family mediation should be part of the core 'reasonable steps' that should be available to prevent homelessness
- primary responsibility for assisting homeless 16 and 17 year-olds should sit with children's social work, who have expertise in the needs of this group; recognition should be made they are still children under the law (Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014)

While the PRG recognised the particular vulnerability of care leavers to homelessness, they argued that the homelessness system is not an appropriate housing route for care leavers.

The Group therefore did not make recommendations specifically around care leavers, because of the range of ongoing measures being taken to improve support for this group

Note: as a practice guide we have included prevention examples both focused specifically on, and which are also open to, care experienced young people

Our young people examples show how...

- the [Finnish Youth Housing Association \(NAL\)](#) has long recognised the unique affordability, life stage and housing need/ preferences of young people. It makes a substantial contribution to reducing youth homelessness by providing **youth-specific affordable housing**
- [Swansea City Council](#) and [Barnardo's](#) take a multi-agency '**youth hub**' approach to addressing youth homelessness which places social work - not housing - at the forefront of the response, which includes family support, mediation, employability and health
- the [Rock Trust](#) launched an effective **community hosting** service with West Lothian Nightstop, enabling young people to avoid using the

more harmful types of temporary accommodation, including B&B

- [Midlothian Council](#) worked with the national **House Project** to set up one of the first Scottish House Projects - offering secure social tenancies and a programme of peer learning and support for young people leaving care or who are homeless with care experience
- [albert kennedy trust \(akt\)](#) launched a **remote casework service for young LGBTQ+** people facing housing problems and homelessness across the UK during the pandemic. Workers provide digital advice, support and mentoring to people who may not feel able to use mainstream and/or face to face services locally
- [Action for Children West Dunbartonshire](#) is taking steps to address high rates of youth homelessness with a **multi-pronged 'test of change'**, encompassing schools outreach, a distinct youth advice and support offer and development of a range of housing options
- [Hull City Council](#) and [Simon Community Scotland](#) (in partnership with Renfrewshire and West Dunbartonshire Councils and various Glasgow RSLs) have successfully developed different approaches to **shared tenancies** in social housing for young people (including those leaving care)
- London-based charity [Settle](#) is delivering a highly impactful **coaching support** programme for young people deemed to be at high risk of future homelessness who are in, or are shortly moving to, **first tenancies**; and [The Money House's immersive financial training](#) programme reduces homelessness risk for the same groups
- [Safer London](#) developed a **housing 'reciprocal'** (transfer) across social landlords in every London borough to provide an alternative to homelessness for young people at risk of serious youth violence (*example is found in 'justice partners' chapter*)
- [Cyrenians](#) and [The Bridge's mediation](#) and **support** services have significantly reduced the proportion of young people who leave the family home, or leave in an unplanned way (*examples in 'children and families' chapter - as services targeted mainly at school-age children*)
- [Rock Trust](#) and [Almond Housing Association](#) devised an impactful **Housing First for Youth** project for young people leaving care with complex needs indicators predictive of future homelessness (*example found in 'people with multiple complex needs' chapter*)

Finnish Youth Housing Association (NAL)

when: upstream
 where: housing
 who: young people
 which: social rented
 what: housing supply, options & allocations / information, advice & advocacy / individual & family support

Affordable homes for young people on lower incomes

The context

Homelessness in Scotland disproportionately affects younger people. Those aged 16-34 make up over half (56%) of all homeless households, but less than a third of the population. Lower average incomes and lower rates of personal and, in many cases, housing-related benefits, compounds the issue for many people, especially those under 25.

A 2018 international evidence review on youth homelessness found correlations between countries with the lowest rates of homelessness in the world, like Finland, and strong investment in affordable housing.^{xxv} Finland's housing-led approach - investing in affordable supply, floating support and prevention - is widely known to have reduced homelessness from 20,000 households in late 1980s, to less than 5000 today.^{xxvi} Its commitment to youth-specific affordable housing is perhaps less well known.

The intervention

The Finnish Youth Housing Association (NAL), a non-profit agency, founded in 1971 to promote affordable housing for young people, operated largely as an advocacy organisation in its first 20 years. By the 1990s, young Finns were often becoming homeless simply for economic reasons, especially in Helsinki. Despite Finland's national approach to ending homelessness, which includes a large-scale affordable housing programme, NAL recognised a gap for youth-specific affordable homes. And so an advocacy organisation moved into house-building, through its non-profit construction arm, NAL Asunnot. Today, NAL owns 2,000 flats, mainly in the capital.

NAL also formed agreements with local housing associations to dedicate stock to young people; 23 providers across Finland now commit 2,300 flats for this purpose. Each one is small (mostly studio/one-bed with a small number for young families), centrally located or easily accessed by public transport, in a block with a common room, laundry and sauna. To qualify, applicants must be 18-29, of low income/assets and in housing need. 15% of flats in each block go to young people in need of more support (which can be provided by floating support provider NAL Palvelut), but are non-designated properties, to reduce stigma.

Tenancy agreements are fixed until a tenant turns 35. Local associations offer housing/debt advice, counselling, group/resident activities, courses and training to all tenants (if needed). These services are often also available to other local young people. Advisers prioritise trusting relationships and methods of communication which suit young people, like social media and messaging apps. They can also access the rents database and intervene early with budgeting or other welfare supports.

The outcome

Since 1990s, NAL has provided affordable homes for many thousands of young people. In Finland, young people tend to leave home earlier than in UK: only 16% of under 29s live with parents. NAL's existence ensures thousands of young people on lower incomes who can't stay at home do not become homeless.

NAL's average tenancy length is three years, as young people's life situations tend to change often. Though tenancies end when tenants reach 35, most have already made the decision to move on. It's challenging to 'prove' universal prevention, but we know NAL housing is in high demand: the association gets 13,000 applications a year. In 2019-20, around 5,400 people under 25 were registered homeless at any one time in Scotland, compared to 850 in Finland - a nation of a similar population size.^{xxvii}

Key insights

- young people often have different housing needs to older adults/families, in terms of housing size, location, companionship, length of tenure: so a youth-specific affordable housing offer has its place
- integrating young people who need more support into the wider community - without designated, segregated properties - is a key principle: everyone is part of a 'normal' housing community
- young people often don't seek advice or guidance spontaneously; youth-specific housing advisers who are familiar and easy to contact can reach those who may otherwise 'not engage' with services

Find out more...

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Swansea Council & Barnardo's

when: pan
where: children & families / housing
who: young people
which: multi-tenure
what: information, advice & advocacy / specialist assessment / individual & family support / digital support / mediation, befriending & mentoring / navigation, coordination & engagement / onward referral / co-location, embedding & 'hub' approaches / housing supply, options & allocations

Integrated youth hub for 16-21s

The context

A Way Home Scotland's 2020 Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathway notes many homelessness services across the country are planned and delivered for all age groups.^{xxviii} Young people frequently have to navigate adult services, some of which may not recognise the different learning stages of adolescence and the specific needs of young people transitioning into adulthood. Integrated 'hubs' are effective in delivering tailored services to young people at risk of homelessness in general, and as a preventative approach in particular.^{xxix} Whilst only a minority of local authorities in Scotland deliver services this way, youth hubs are increasingly common in Wales.

The intervention

Youth homelessness has long been an area of priority focus in Swansea. Historically, the Council has perceived the issue primarily through the lens of social services, rather than housing. This has fostered a holistic, multi-agency approach to supporting young people in housing difficulty, focusing on prevention, wider wellbeing and needs (including those of a young person's family), as well as housing options. Barnardo's works in collaboration with Swansea Council to offer a prevention, options and support service for young people aged 16-21.

Barnardo's employs a youth homelessness prevention advisor and a trained mediator, who can also provide task-focused, practical support, such as help with income maximisation, school, behaviour or wellbeing issues, to both young people and their families. The purpose is to work with the young person and, where possible, their family, to understand the root of cause of issues, and try to address these. The service also has a schools worker. Where homelessness can't be prevented, Barnardo's works with a young person to make a planned move, which may be through the rent deposit scheme or a social landlord. The service also has access (via the multi-agency Accommodation Pathway) to youth supported accommodation, such as training flats, supported lodgings and Housing First.

In recent years Barnardo's has been located within a wider youth 'hub' or one-stop shop: Info-nation, which has both an office and online presence. Since moving to Info-nation, the service operates from a youth-orientated building in which other agencies relevant to young people have a presence or can be easily accessed. This includes Swansea Council's wider youth services, youth substance misuse and leaving care teams. Young people can access free and confidential advice at Info-nation on careers, education, sexual health, relationships and money matters, use computers or attend a digital drop-in. The ethos of the whole hub is that young people can simply arrive and be seen - quickly - by youth-focused professionals.

The outcome

Barnardo's youth service prevented homelessness for 89% of the young people it assessed during 2020-21. This represents 87 young people, of whom 72 (83%) made use of home support and/or mediation. This level of effective prevention has been fairly consistent over recent years. In total the service received 258 contacts from young people, family or professionals for advice and assistance – much of which represents more 'upstream' preventative work whereby an assessment was not required.

Recent research by Sheffield Hallam University (2019)^{xxx} found implementing an integrated 'hub' model of services for young people had the strongest impact on youth homelessness, and local authorities taking this approach had seen a 'step change' in their ability to respond to the issue. This was especially true of integration between housing and children's social work services.

Key insights

- understanding youth homelessness as an issue for social work as much as for housing teams enables a more holistic, collaborative approach to be taken towards young people's needs
- a (physical and digital) hub makes it easy for young people to know where to go for help or advice – but also helps different services get to know and trust each other, aiding collaboration
- dedicated staff working with young people can understand child and youth development, transitions and changing needs better than those working in generic adult services

Find out more...

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Midlothian Council & the House Project

when: pan
where: children & families / housing
who: young people with care experience
which: social rented
what: specialist assessment / individual & family support / peer support / training & awareness raising / co-location, embedding & 'hub' approaches / housing supply, options & allocations / property enhancements & furniture

Settled homes for care leavers with peer support

The context

Research highlights the importance of safe, settled housing for young people moving on from care. But even in safe, settled tenancies, young people can experience isolation and loneliness. This can, at times, undermine sustainment. Midlothian Council acknowledged it had no consistent pathway to support care leavers into tenancies, resulting in high tenancy failure rates and recourse to the homelessness system. Care leavers on the Midlothian Champions Board also told local authority staff that they wanted more support with housing: these insights led the Council to develop one of Scotland's first 'House Projects'.

The intervention

The first House Project was devised in 2015 in Stoke-on-Trent as a new housing and support option for care leavers. It recognised the key benefits of a stable home, youth choice and agency, and consistent personalised support within a peer community. Funded by the UK Department for Education, the project aimed to secure ten tenancies which care leavers could work on getting ready to live in, whilst learning life skills in a peer group, which would provide longer-term support and connection.

House Projects have subsequently formed in other parts of England, supported from 2017 by a national hub (the National House Project^{xxxi}), which coordinates training, guidance and practice-sharing. In 2020, with funding from Life Changes Trust, the first Scottish House Projects were launched in Midlothian, East Dunbartonshire and Fife. Midlothian's project is led by children's services, with referrals coming from 12+ practice teams, including for young people receiving Throughcare/Aftercare. Young people up to the age of 25 who are homeless and who have previous care experience can also be put forward.

A cohort of ten young people learn together on a programme, supported by community learning and a local community group. In partnership with social work and residential staff, House Project facilitators, with a smaller than average caseload, offer intensive support to each person. There is also an 'open door' Hub, where young people can seek support anytime. Secure tenancies are offered by the Council and Melville and Castlerock Edinvar Housing Associations. Young people have choice on location and the type of property they'd prefer, and are encouraged to participate in the decoration and interior design of their home.

Whilst House Projects differ according to local context, each one adheres to some key principles: a settled home for as long as the young person wants it; personalised, trauma-informed support; a Hub/base offering an indefinite 'open door'; and a cohort of around ten care leavers willing to work together as a group and complete some (often quite informal) learning and training.

The outcome

In Midlothian, all nine young people who joined the first House Project cohort have moved into settled homes. Whilst too early to note long-term outcomes, each one completed the programme and is doing well in their tenancy. They have a positive group of friends with whom they maintain contact, and staff support. One young person who chose to live in a different local authority area has since decided to return to Midlothian and will receive continued support from the House Project with their relocation.

Outcomes recorded across UK House Projects to date (from 2015) show 166 young people have moved into tenancies in 12 project areas, from 29 cohorts. A further 99 young people are engaged in the programme, awaiting a home. 100% have completed education, training and employment modules. **No** tenancy has failed, and **no** House Project graduate has gone onto become homeless.

Key insights

- House Projects can work well for care leavers who may have been deemed 'challenging' and 'hard to house', as they give primacy to youth choice and agency whilst offering unconditional support
-but it's not Housing First: there are elements young people are expected to commit to and want to do – including be part of a peer group (though they can take a large or a very small part)
- securing tenancies for participants has been a challenge in some English projects; Scottish care leaver protocols and social housing entitlements substantially expedite the project's housing-led principles
- a House Project may not suit every care leaver, but expands the range of choices care leavers can make

Find out more...

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Action for Children

when: new duty (6 months) > recovery
where: education / housing
who: young people
which: multi-tenure
what: information, advice & advocacy / individual & family support / training & awareness raising / housing supply, options & allocations

Youth housing options

The context

National statistics tell us young people (16-24) are over-represented in the homelessness system in Scotland, constituting an eighth of the population against a quarter of all homelessness applications. This gives an average rate of 12.7 young people homeless for every 1,000 residents in a local authority. But that statistic hides substantial differences by area: a youth homelessness rate of 3.4 in Inverclyde, against 26.7 in neighbouring West Dunbartonshire – the highest in the country. This context galvanised Action for Children (AfC) to formulate a three-year 'test of change' funded by the National Lottery Community, in partnership with West Dunbartonshire Council.

The intervention

The test of change has been co-produced by 'experts by experience': young people who've used options services, some of whom sit on the project's governance group. In year one, the focus was understanding young people's challenges, goals and experiences, and using evidence to target planned interventions. In year two, AfC began engaging with schools, initially Clydebank High. AfC presented awareness raising sessions in assemblies and began one-to-one drop-ins for pupils referred by teachers or pastoral care, where a possible risk within their housing situation had been identified. This work indicated both professionals and parents often had low awareness of the realities of local housing and homelessness systems.

Acting on feedback that young people were often reluctant to approach the Council's housing options team due to the formal and sometimes intimidating setting, AfC worked with the authority to set up a distinct youth options service. People up to age 25 with a housing issue can self-refer to AfC (instead of the Council) for support; they can also be referred into the service. It is intended that in time, AfC will be responsible for the majority of youth 'PREVENT' cases. AfC workers '*look at everything*': including family (offering a whole family approach where appropriate), relationships, independent living skills, work and health. As young people also highlighted the challenge of re-telling their 'story' to different staff within services, it was agreed AfC can continue to support a young person if they move to a settled home, offering continuity.

In the research phase, young people identified isolation, leading to poor door control; offers of housing in unwanted areas; and lack of support as key reasons for tenancies failing. Partners responded by teaming up with Simon Community Scotland's (SCS) shared living service^{xxxii} to pilot a supported pathway into shared social tenancies in Clydebank, available as either a preventative or rehousing option. AfC has also strengthened links with the rent deposit service - as renting privately can bring additional choice in area and house type for young people.

The outcome

AfC has supported 156 young people since March 2020. Just 17% have gone onto make a statutory homelessness application. Just under a third (31%) stayed in their original home, receiving holistic support from AfC - support that wouldn't have routinely been offered when a young person didn't need temporary accommodation in the past. 27% of young people moved to settled homes, whilst the rest continue to work with AfC on options.

Those securing a settled home moved onto a range of options: 5% a shared tenancy, 7% a private let, 13% a social tenancy and 2% a long-term solution with family. The sharing option has attracted lots of interest from young people, with the SCS pilot recently extended to Alexandria and Dumbarton.

Key insights

- co-production with 'experts by experience' is key to guiding the direction of change, giving insight into diverse reasons for homelessness, the importance of ensuring a range of options, and what young people need to make decisions
- housing outreach in schools has challenged professionals working in and around education – after awareness-raising pupils coming forward with housing issues aren't always 'typical' of who they might expect
- sharing can work: whilst not initially keen to trial shared tenancies, the Council stepped up with good quality two-bed homes in areas popular with young people, significantly improving their housing choices

Find out more...

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akt (albert kennedy trust)

when: pan
 where: housing
 who: LGBTQ+ young people
 which: multi-tenure
 what: information, advice & advocacy / individual & family support / onward referral – digital support / mediation, befriending & mentoring / navigation, coordination & engagement

Digital support for at risk LGBTQ+ young people

The context

Research^{xxxiii} suggests LGBTQ+ people are disproportionately likely to experience homelessness. We don't have accurate data in Scotland on rates of homelessness in this regard; sexual orientation and gender identity data are neither routinely collected by local authorities nor reflected in national statistics. Only a handful of the initial round of Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans (RRTPs) referenced LGBTQ+ groups.

Research from UK charity akt^{xxxiv} and LGBT Youth Scotland^{xxxv} indicate young LGBTQ+ people are over-represented in the homeless population, and more likely to experience domestic abuse. They describe the many barriers people face when interacting with housing/homelessness services, including for basic advice on rights or options. This suggests prevention activity for LGBTQ+ people is under-explored and inadequate. akt's digital casework service gives some clear pointers on how to improve this.

The intervention

akt was set up in Manchester, over 30 years ago, specifically to support and advocate for LGBTQ+ young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. akt now has services in London, Newcastle and Bristol, but its online chat service is available UK-wide. During the pandemic, akt noted a rise in referrals from LGBTQ+ homeless or at risk young people. Their live online chat was inundated with messages from people needing support, as well as professionals, friends, family members and allies seeking advice.

Unable to meet face to face with people during the lockdown, akt stepped up its online services with funding from the Emmanuel Kaye Foundation. For the first time, akt started to offer a full casework service remotely. This meant, also for the first time, akt could provide individual advice and support to young LGBTQ+ people around the UK, rather than just in its four physical sites.

Each young person can choose whether they want to interact by 'phone, email or video call. akt's digital caseworker completes a holistic needs assessment, creates a support plan, agrees on actions and focuses on linking the person into local services, including homelessness/housing agencies, support organisations and LGBTQ+ groups. The role includes advocacy, mentoring, housing search and advice on rights.

The outcome

In its initial eight months, akt's digital caseworker supported 70 young people around the UK, as well as providing information, advice and guidance to over 350 young people through live chat. Whilst many of the individuals supported were already homeless, the digital caseworker recorded a homelessness prevention outcome for 14 people.

Many more were linked in with other forms of support which can contribute to stabilising or resolving a housing situation before a homelessness crisis. 19 young people secured long-term housing, 23 accessed social care services, 15 connected with LGBTQ+ groups and 18 linked in with local support, including for domestic abuse, mental health, finances, education, work and immigration. A second digital caseworker has now been appointed, as the experience has shown akt can offer young people the same level of support as those in their four cities - something they wouldn't have had access to pre-COVID.

Key insights

- a digital advice, support or mentoring service with a range of options on how to engage can reach people who may not feel comfortable accessing mainstream face-to-face services
- clear, visual cues, inclusive language and information on specialist support can help LGBTQ+ people feel more welcome and comfortable coming forward to use housing services before crisis point
- sensitive equalities monitoring in respect of people using homelessness services can help agencies track whether policies designed to promote inclusion, and ultimately prevention, are having impact

Find out more...

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Simon Community Scotland (SCS)

when: new duty (6 months) > recovery
where: housing
who: young people
which: social rented
what: information, advice & advocacy / individual & family support / housing supply, options & allocations / mediation, befriending & mentoring

Shared living: flat-shares with support

The context

We know young people are over-represented in Scotland's homelessness system, with too many forced to use temporary accommodation. A Way Home Scotland's Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathway (2020) highlights the importance of a range of housing options for young people, with an emphasis on affordability, security of tenure and accessibility.

Importantly, options for those at risk of homelessness should *'reflect those of their non-homeless peers - including small scale shared housing'*^{xxxvi}. Simon Community Scotland (SCS) has been developing shared housing options since 2017, across a range of local authority areas.

The intervention

Research with people using SCS's services found a combination of barriers – affordability, social isolation and a need for support – which housing options in Glasgow didn't address. Services seemed to be designed with success equating to living in a flat on your own or sharing in the homelessness system. Whilst sharing is common for students or 'professionals', there was no pathway into sharing for people on low incomes, or who need support. So SCS designed a shared living service, creating referral routes for people in housing need via housing options/support teams, building links with RSLs and offering flat-mate matching and support.

The matching process enables people interested in sharing to be introduced to potential flatmates. A link worker meets each person to understand their life goals, housing preferences and support needs, then facilitates meetings between pairs. This allows them an opportunity to get to know each other and decide if they're a match. Where both agree, SCS approaches partner RSLs seeking two-bed homes in an agreed area. The worker offers support with tenancy set-up as well as individual goals, such as moving into work, creating a plan using the iROC toolkit.^{xxxvii} Support is flexible, for example one tenant may need it longer than the other. It includes mediation between tenants if problems arise in the relationship.

Sharers receive a joint Scottish Secure Tenancy^{xxxviii} with no time limit, though it's acknowledged flat-shares can be more transient than other options. SCS can assist tenants to transfer to a sole tenancy, find a new flatmate or cover rent on an interim basis if one person moves out. In 2019, SCS expanded to Renfrewshire, providing a link worker to the Council's existing youth flat-share scheme, set up in 2017, using Council properties. SCS formed a similar partnership with West Dunbartonshire Council in 2021, focused on young people (under 26). In both, sharing as an option is often proposed when a young person is struggling in the family home, before they may need to use temporary accommodation.

The outcome

SCS has supported the creation of shared tenancies for 42 sharers since 2017, in three Council areas. 86% have proven successful matches, with some sharers subsequently moving on positively to a sole tenancy, or a different share. On average, tenancies have lasted 18 months. Just three pairs ended up not getting on and moving to other options, after an average of 8 months. No tenancy has ended in abandonment or eviction. Mediation was used in a number of cases, but there have been no issues with antisocial behaviour.

An evaluation of sharing in Renfrewshire (undertaken during the pandemic, focusing on tenants from the Council's pre-existing scheme as well as SCS-supported sharers) found young people valued the company and support, as well as the greater affordability, that come with sharing. Most had moved from challenging home circumstances. The service was found to have supported them to improve aspects of well-being, move forward in life and, often, repair relationships with family after moving out.

Key insights

- a supported matching process allows sharers to be in the driving seat, get to know each other and discuss compatibility before moving in, reducing the risk and lack of control inherent in 'stranger shares'
- pre-tenancy mediation – agreement of a set of rules/boundaries before moving in – is vital, especially if sharers are friends; in-tenancy support allows workers to pick up tensions and offer conflict resolution
- sharing is a 'stepping stone' for some, a longer-term option for others; an SST provides such flexibility

Find out more...

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when: new duty (6 months) > current duty (2 months) / recovery
where: housing
who: young people / people with care experience / non UK nationals
which: social rented
what: individual & family support / housing supply, options & allocations / mediation, befriending & mentoring

Shared social housing for young people

The context

Scottish Government guidance^{xxxix} makes clear young people leaving care should not find themselves in the homelessness system. But moving straight into a sole tenancy can also pose challenges. Managing and budgeting for a home on a low income is objectively hard. Experiences of isolation and loneliness can be common, especially for young people used to group living. A Way Home Scotland notes *"the negative impact of abrupt, accelerated transition... the 'instant adulthood experienced by many care leavers'".*^{xi} These factors may also make tenancy breakdown and incidence of homelessness more likely.

To reduce this, A Way Home Scotland's Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathway recommends graduated, flexible housing options serving *"the needs of emerging adults"*, which also offer choice. They suggest housing options for all young people at risk of homelessness should resemble those of their peers, with a focus on affordability and security of tenure.

The intervention

With grant funding from Crisis, Hull City Council was the first English local authority to pilot shared tenancies for young people. Shared social tenancies offer an additional option for young people leaving care and the asylum system (as well as leaving home), which is genuinely affordable and can mitigate isolation. From a Council perspective, sharing enables efficient use of stock and expands the total units of settled housing.

Tenants share two or three bed Council homes in central areas which are well connected to local transport. Furniture, wifi, utilities and Council Tax are provided and recouped through a service charge. Tenants have an individual Council tenancy agreement for their room, and use of shared spaces (i.e. they're not joint and severally liable). For young people, shared Council tenancies are the most affordable housing option in Hull.

Referrals come from children's services as well as youth prevention teams. Tenants complete a matching questionnaire, or 'pre-matched' pairs can apply together. All tenants are flexibly supported by the Targeted Youth Support Team (TYST) whose workers are trained in mediation. Tenants can stay in shared housing as long as they want. The TYST also has an agreement with the Council allocations team, enabling tenants to transfer into their own tenancy in time if they so wish.

The outcome

Since mid-2018, 28 Council properties have been converted to shared tenancies, providing 62 homes at any one time. Around half of the homes are tenanted by young people with care experience. The project has prevented homelessness for more than 100 young people to date. Around a third have moved to their own tenancy in time; others continue sharing with no plans to move on.

Consistently, 73-76% of tenants using the shared tenancy scheme agree the option has improved their motivation, self-care, living skills and ability to manage money. Serious problems with sharing or antisocial behaviour have been rare, with no legal action taken against shared tenants in three years.

Shared tenancies have added a much-needed affordable housing option into the mix for young people and are cost effective for the Council and for tenants. Despite initial scepticism, the service consistently has a waiting list now. The scheme was mainstreamed from 2020, and won the Local Government Chronicle award for best housing initiative the same year.^{xii}

Key insights

- some young people will choose sharing if it's available – they might not demand it if it's not
- concerns about difficulties managing the "sharing" element of tenancies can be over-stated
- sharing can be an alternative and/or a transition, to a sole tenancy – make sure it's not either/or

Find out more...

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The Money House

when: new duty (6 months) / recovery
 where: community
 who: young people
 which: social housing
 what: training & awareness raising

Immersive financial literacy programme

The context

Young people face many challenges setting up and managing a home, many of which have been heightened during the pandemic. Some of these challenges are objective and age-based: young people generally command lower wages, less secure employment and lower benefit entitlements than older people.

For young people who lack strong support (including financial) from parents, other family members or wider social networks, independent living can be even more challenging, with the risk of rent arrears, debt and homelessness high. For the past decade, The Money House has been seeking to reduce those risks for some of the most vulnerable young people across three London boroughs.

The intervention

Youth charity MyBnk developed Money House, a simulated financial education programme delivered in a real house, in partnership with Hyde Housing and London Borough of Greenwich in 2012. The programme encompassed a preventative theory of change targeting young people most at risk of future money problems and homelessness in an independent home. It tracks participants' short- and long-term progress after completing the course via ongoing quantitative and qualitative monitoring and evaluation.

Trainers use non-traditional, immersive and active techniques to animate the five day on-site course. It covers housing elements (tenancy agreements, moving costs, utility providers, paying bills) and more general financial elements: banking, borrowing, budgeting, benefits, spending habits, shopping and future planning. Modules on energy efficiency, designed with UK Power Network and avoiding money scams, developed with the Met Police, have been added more recently. Course participants gain NVQ Level 6.

All referrals come from local authorities, Housing Associations or hostel providers. They target young people aged 16-25 who are leaving care, moving on from homelessness or who have just moved into their first home. Training groups contain between four and ten people. There are Money Houses in Greenwich, Newham and Haringey. The first Scottish site is planned in Glasgow for 2022. During the pandemic, an online version of Money House was created, with learners now offered the option which suits them best.

The outcome

A comprehensive 18-month evaluation^{xliii} in 2018 concluded The Money House addresses a gap in financial education and effectively equips at risk young people to live independently. Relevant to housing, the report recorded: a 62% drop in participants who failed to keep up with priority debts (rent, council tax, bills, fines); 47% decrease in those owing money; 117% increase in those paying off debts regularly; 54% rise in those saving regularly over the long-term. On rent arrears specifically, a long-term reduction of 41% was registered. Young people themselves reported better digital skills and increased confidence. Some formed enduring social networks with other learners.

Housing management data in Greenwich indicated a baseline of 33% of young people were in substantial (over £500) arrears. That reduced to 11% for course participants. Council eviction data also showed only 1% of course participants were evicted, against 6% for young tenants as a baseline. When delivering at full capacity, every £1 spent on Money House was found to generate at least £3.36 of social value.

Key insights

- though a key part of what works well for many, immersive ‘house’ delivery doesn’t suit every single person. Online courses offered during COVID-19 enabled Money House to improve access for certain groups: young people with childcare obligations, travel or access issues and those with social anxiety
- engagement is generally very good (and drop-off low) when young people attend day one, but encouraging them to go in first place can be a challenge. Offering childcare support, travel pass or an online option can help
- mixing classes, for example, to include some young people already in tenancies and others who have not moved in, enables learned, direct experience to complement the training

Find out more...

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when: crisis > recovery
where: housing
who: young people / people with care experience
which: social rented
what: information, advice & advocacy / individual & family support / onward referral / peer support

First tenancy support for at risk young people

The context

Research tells us some young people, especially care leavers, are more likely to experience homelessness and housing instability. We also know homelessness experienced at an early point in life can increase the likelihood of further homelessness later in life.^{xliiii} Moving into a first tenancy, usually on a low income, often earlier than their peers and with fewer strong family and/or social support networks around them, can place some young people at especially high risk of repeat homelessness.

This context underlines the value of exploring and honing what works in supporting first tenancies for at risk young people: something London-based social enterprise Settle has been doing since 2015.

The intervention

Having previously worked in young people’s hostels and supported accommodation, Settle’s founders noticed that despite the huge resources directed to these responses, many people returned to the system. They identified a gap for asset-based, youth-led, first tenancy support for people at high risk of repeat homelessness. The Settle programme, designed specifically for this group, focuses on three core areas: increasing income/reducing costs, improving life skills and accessing specialist support.

Settle takes referrals from local authorities and Housing Associations for young people just moving into their first tenancy or who are in a first tenancy and have been assessed as being at a high risk of repeat homelessness. Many of those young people have recently left the care, homelessness or criminal justice systems. The programme is voluntary and consists of 1:1 coaching, usually for between three to six months, but this is flexible if longer is needed. If a person drops off the programme, they can re-engage at a later point.

All workers are accredited coaches who work with people to set their own goals, fostering agency and trust, and celebrating achievement. People with experience of the care and homelessness systems sit on the Board and staff teams, whilst young people supported form part of recruitment panels and service design workshops. Having identified a need for greater ongoing support with work and social networks, young people are currently co-producing an alumni programme, which includes peer mentoring.

The outcome

In the past year (2020-21), Settle worked with 107 new young people. The programme, albeit voluntary, had high engagement rate, with 87% attending assessment continuing to work with the service. Settle had a 100% tenancy sustainment rate for graduates who they were able to contact six and 12 months after the programme. 93% strongly agreed they felt more confident managing their tenancy. Tenancy sustainment rates for pre-pandemic years have been consistently high (2019-20: 96%)

Many young people supported by Settle were referred by social landlords based on accumulated arrears during a first tenancy. In 2020-21 young people joined with an average of £1,194 arrears. Working with Settle, average arrears were reduced by £792 across the year. One referring Housing Association commented that they found young tenants working with Settle had lower arrears and fewer tenancy breaches after joining the programme.

Key insights

- involving young people who've used the service in all frontline recruitment interviews has helped find workers with the right values and attitude: they spot things others miss
- coaching, as opposed to tenancy support per se, focuses on the whole person, their strengths and goals, not just housing - but the knock-on impact on housing is high
- managing a tenancy as a young person on a low income is objectively difficult – it pays to focus on overcoming systemic barriers, not reproaching young people who struggle in the system

Find out more...

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The Rock Trust & West Lothian Council

when: crisis
 where: housing
 who: young people
 which: family home (supported)
 what: information, advice & advocacy / financial support / housing supply, options & allocations / individual & family support

Community hosting for young people in crisis

The context

We know homelessness experienced early in life can increase the likelihood of further homelessness later in life.^{xiiiv} We also know temporary accommodation, especially hostels and B&Bs, can have harmful impacts on those forced to stay there: impacts which can be even more acute for young people.^{xiv} Less institutionalising, more supportive emergency accommodation options which are more bespoke to young people, such as Nightstop, can play a dual preventative role. They provide a period of respite and 'cooling off', which may precede a return home. Or they can act as a bridging option, buying time to facilitate a planned move - lowering the risk of repeat homelessness, which may be increased by full exposure to the mainstream adult homelessness system.

The intervention

West Lothian is an area of acute housing pressure, with more households registered as statutorily homeless currently than at any time since records began in 2003.^{xlvi} It also experiences one of the highest rates of youth homelessness in the country.^{xlvii} A partnership between Rock Trust and West Lothian Council in 2017 to introduce Nightstop, a network led by Depaul UK,^{xlviii} was therefore welcome, especially as community hosting is compatible with recent legislation which prohibits unsuitable shared forms of temporary accommodation like hotels and B&Bs.^{xlix}

Nightstop works by recruiting, vetting and training local community volunteers who provide a spare room within their home for up to 21 nights to a young person in crisis. The young person can refer themselves or be referred by school, social work, housing or other partners. Hosts provide hot meals, access to facilities in the home, and a listening ear (if wanted). Where needed, Rock Trust's Nightstop coordinator ensures the young person also receives a bus pass, pyjamas, hot meals, toiletries and 'phone top-ups, and offers a 24/7 on-call service to both guest and host.

Whilst they're staying with the host, the coordinator gets to know the young person and their needs. They can help with practical matters, such as accessing emergency funds or ID, applying for benefits (or jobs), doing a CV or negotiating with an employer to prevent dismissal. They can also make referrals to specialist wellbeing support/therapy and mediation. A key role is to find out the young person's housing goals and plans, and support them to secure a suitable longer-term option.

Hosting is a community response to youth homelessness, with the ability to attract hosts in parts of an authority where there may be no temporary accommodation. As a model which prioritises relationships in a family environment, alongside tailored support exploring interpersonal aspects of a young person's situation (such as family relations, social networks and wellbeing), it also responds to the fact that relationship breakdown is the single biggest cause of youth homelessness.

The outcome

Last year, Nightstop West Lothian supported 25 young people through 389 bed nights (average: 16 nights each). 84% were able to avoid unsuitable temporary accommodation entirely, with 8% returning home, 8% moving straight to settled social housing, 4% directly to university halls and 60% to youth-specific supported accommodation. Many guests reported better sleep patterns, improved mental health (particularly reduced anxiety), and are taking positive steps towards their aspirations after using Nightstop. The Rock Trust is working closely with partners (such as schools and social work) to reach young people earlier so that preventative outcomes can be increased.

Key insights

- appointing the right member of staff to promote and coordinate a local Nightstop service is vital: there can be significant attitudinal and cultural barriers when introducing a new, non-traditional housing model
- working with a range of partners to promote and embed community hosting at an earlier point in a young person's journey towards homelessness is a key objective for a Nightstop coordinator
- Nightstop produces better outcomes for young people and causes less harm than emergency accommodation, whilst also bringing benefits to hosts; unlike B&B, the service becomes more cost effective the more it is used

Find out more...

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People experiencing domestic abuse

What did the PRG say ...about people experiencing domestic abuse?

The PRG took a clear stance that people who face domestic abuse should not be forced to become homeless to address their situation.

The Group recommended housing issues related to domestic abuse should be addressed as early as possible through services working in partnership to identify and support individuals facing abuse. Whilst the role of dedicated domestic abuse services is critical in such a specialist area, there is also opportunity for a much wider range of partners to identify risk and prevent homelessness - such as housing maintenance staff and lettings agents.

The PRG recommended that

- assistance from homelessness services to prevent homelessness must include **support** and **security measures** to enable applicants to remain in their homes safely, where this is their preference
- homelessness prevention services should **work with other partners** to ensure they are able to meet the needs of people requiring housing assistance due to domestic abuse. Such an approach should be coherent, including appropriate service planning, joint working across housing, homelessness and other services and training for staff.

- local authorities should ensure that homelessness and housing services have effective protocols in place to identify signs of abuse as early as possible and assist people whose housing is at risk as a result of domestic abuse. In particular, close links should be built with **specialist domestic abuse support services**
- local authorities support victims of domestic abuse to access **exclusion orders**
- people at risk of homelessness as a result of domestic abuse should be able to access **free legal aid** in order to get an exclusion order
- when considering the **suitability of accommodation** offered to a perpetrator or victim of domestic abuse, consideration must be given to its **proximity** to the other party in the abuse

- **social landlords** should put in place **protocols** to address housing issues relating to domestic abuse, based on the guidance produced in 2019 by CIH Scotland, ALACHO, SFHA, Shelter Scotland and Scottish Women's Aid.¹ Consideration should be given to making elements of this guidance statutory if necessary

Note: whilst we have used 'people' to reflect the fact people of all genders experience domestic abuse, it is important to recognise domestic abuse as a form of gender-based violence, and that the overwhelming

proportion of victims/survivors are female, and perpetrators male. Some examples focus exclusively on women in this chapter, whilst others focus primarily on women - in which case we refer to 'people'

Our people experiencing domestic abuse examples show how...

- Scottish Borders Council led a high level, **authority-wide approach** on **safer housing options** for women experiencing abuse including extensive frontline training for housing staff, specialist support and security enhancements, resulting in the main RSLs in the area ratifying a unified domestic abuse housing policy and procedure
- **GPs** in Gwent working with the IRIS (identification and referral to improve safety) programme were trained to identify signs of abuse in female patients, 'ask' appropriate questions and 'act' through referral to Llamau - a charity specialised in domestic abuse and able to offer advice and support, including on safe housing options - with excellent prevention outcomes
- West Dunbartonshire Council's 'no tolerance' approach to domestic abuse in Council homes uses the full scope of powers to take action, including **transferring tenancies** to victims, and **rehousing perpetrators** at a safe distance. This also included appointing a domestic abuse liaison officer to offer practical help, legal assistance and specialist support
- Standing Together coordinates a **sanctuary scheme** on behalf of the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, accepting referrals from a wide range of partners (people experiencing abuse do not need to go through the police or local authority), arranging home assessments, security measures installations and access to specialist support
- Safer London developed a **housing 'reciprocal'** (transfer) across social landlords in every London borough to provide an alternative to homelessness for people at risk of domestic abuse and 'honour'-based violence (example is found in 'justice partners' chapter)
- Jigsaw Housing pioneered the first **Housing First** project specifically for **women** involved in the criminal justice system, finding experience of domestic abuse for these women near-universal. This places a different nuance on the nature of Housing First support required by women (example found in 'justice partners' chapter)
- Welsh charity Llamau - which offers **specialist support** on domestic abuse and housing - **co-located** in Newport City Council's housing options team, enabling trained third sector workers to explore a full range of options for women in a domestic abuse crisis and substantially reducing the proportion forced to use the 'homelessness route' (example found in 'service delivery incentivising earlier intervention' chapter)

Scottish Borders Council

when: new duty (6 months) > current duty (2 months)
where: housing
who: people experiencing domestic abuse
which: multi-tenure
what: information, advice & advocacy / training & awareness raising / specialist assessment & support / navigation, coordination, engagement / property enhancements & furniture / person-centred housing management / housing supply, options & allocations

Safer housing options for women experiencing domestic abuse

The context

Scottish Women's Aid's 2015 *Change, Justice, Fairness* reportⁱⁱ (based on research in Fife) found women experiencing domestic abuse often felt they had no choice but to apply as homeless in order to escape a partner. Whilst for some, leaving home aligned with their own safety assessment, others found options to remain were neither explored nor explained by homelessness staff, with the Council's response repeating and re-inscribing the perpetrator's sense of entitlement and control.

Four years later, Women's Aid's 2019 guidance for social landlordsⁱⁱⁱ reported the majority of housing policy and practice responses in Scotland continued to be based on the assumption that women (and children) experiencing domestic abuse - rather than those who perpetrate it - should leave the family home. In Scottish Borders, a multi-agency, safer housing options approach had been aiming to challenge that assumption for some years.

The intervention

For almost a decade, a range of agencies in Scottish Borders have worked together to improve access to, and provision of, advocacy, advice and support services for women, children (and men) experiencing domestic abuse. The 2012 'Pathway' project piloted an Independent Domestic Abuse Advocacy (IDAA) service for high risk victims; a longer-term community support service for victims to promote recovery; and a 12-week recovery group work programme for children and mothers.

Despite its positive impact, in 2015 agencies acknowledged some gaps in the Pathway approach. Though women received quality support, there was an over-reliance on the 'homelessness route' and refuges as standard options. And Pathway services weren't always reaching women from more marginalised groups. The five-year STEPS project (2015-20) aimed to fill these gaps, recruiting an outreach worker and a safe housing options worker to develop a pan-Borders 'safer housing options service'.

STEPS worked with households cross-tenure, offering advice and practical support; home assessments; safety planning; a (funded) range of safety/security measures; managed transfers (for very high risk cases); coordination of emergency pet placements; and training for all partners on domestic abuse, including in the four main RSLs (as Scottish Borders is a stock transfer authority). The outreach worker targeted, and identified barriers for, women in remote/rural areas; older people; black and minority ethnic women, including the travelling community; and women with 'multiple complex needs'.

The outcome

In five years, a wide range of partners made just under 200 referrals for outreach support, and nearly 700 to the safer housing options service. Of those, 80% of households had safety measures fitted (CCTV, fire retardant letterboxes, enhanced locks). 75% remained at home. None of those interviewed in exit surveys felt a refuge would have been a viable option for them.

Following the end of the funded period, the four RSLs ratified a local unified domestic abuse housing policy and procedure, enabling a consistent approach across the whole authority, with RSLs taking on responsibilities of home assessments and safety enhancements. Scottish Borders Council, in turn, mainstreamed the advocacy support service.

Key insights

- housing is a critical partner in the response to domestic abuse; responding effectively is fundamental to tenancy sustainability
- with quality training and support, frontline housing staff can become confident and skilled in identifying and sensitively responding to domestic abuse, as they do with antisocial behaviour
- a multi-pronged approach - high-level leadership, shared vision, proactive RSLs, workforce planning and interim services which 'join the dots' - helped shift the view homelessness/refuges are the only solutions to domestic abuse. Developing a systemic legacy to sustain good practice is also vital

Find out more...

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Llamau & the IRIS programme

when: pan
where: health and social care
who: people experiencing domestic abuse
which: multi-tenure
what: information, advice & advocacy / specialist assessment / specialist support / training & awareness raising / navigation, coordination, engagement / onward referral / housing supply, options & allocations / property enhancements & furniture

GP training & referral pathway for women experiencing DVA

The context

Research in England^{liii} found people commonly attend their GP *after* a housing problem occurs, but before they've been to housing options services. Scottish research^{liv} shows health activity increases *leading up to* a homelessness assessment. This suggests GPs have a key role in preventing homelessness. But this is also true for GPs - local, universal professionals - in relation to many other social harms. The social franchise model, IRIS (Identification & Referral to Improve Safety), recognises the unique prevention potential which GPs have around domestic violence and abuse (DVA), and supports them to act on it.

The intervention

The IRIS Programme is a specialist DVA training, support and referral programme for GPs that's been positively evaluated in a randomised controlled trial. The initiative is maintained by IRISi, a social enterprise established to promote and improve the healthcare response to DVA: a risk factor for chronic ill health and premature death in women. IRIS is commissioned and delivered in 40 UK areas, in collaboration with third sector agencies specialised in DVA, including Llamau, in Gwent.

As a universal service, GPs will encounter many women experiencing DVA. According to the Department for Health and Social Care, 80% of women in a violent relationship seek help from health services: often a woman's first, or only, point of contact. And for some women in a controlling relationship, going to the GP may be the only time they see a professional alone. But GPs aren't necessarily aware of the signs of abuse, may not feel comfortable asking, or entitled to ask, questions about it, or know what to do if someone confirms this is happening.

The IRIS Programme provides practical and ongoing training to GP teams enabling them to recognise signs of abuse, ask the right questions, and act on what they are told through a simple, one-page referral pathway. The model entails a clinical lead (CL) - a local, practising clinician - and an Advocate Educator (AE) employed by an independent domestic abuse service. In Gwent, one clinical lead and 4 AEs, based at charity Llamau, cover 54 surgeries, each of which contributes to fund the scheme. The CL and AE provide training on a three-tiered model to all surgery staff.

The AE can respond quickly, arranging to meet the victim at a safe place, such as the surgery, so they can tell a perpetrator (often the partner) that they are attending a GP appointment. The AE provides emotional support, risk and safety planning and assesses any wider needs a person may have, for example, advice on financial, legal or housing issues. The AE can then support people into other relevant services. This provides a key opportunity to explore safer housing options, such as legal remedies, sanctuary schemes or managed moves, before a situation escalates into homelessness.

The outcome

In two years before IRIS began in Gwent, Llamau received three GP referrals for domestic abuse support. Six months after joining the IRIS Programme, they'd received 159 referrals. 99% of women accepted support, and none were already receiving other support.

AEs supported 46% of those women with housing risk directly, whilst 79% received support on wider issues which can undermine housing sustainment (such as benefits/arrears and mental health). 84% remained safely in their community through support to access legal routes, injunction/occupation orders and safety planning.

Key insights

- as trusted, universal, local professionals, GPs are uniquely positioned to 'ask and act' – but high quality training and a quick, simple pathway into responsive support are also vital for this to work
- IRIS enables GPs to 'ask and act' on domestic abuse, creating a space to intervene earlier to prevent escalation of harm; it also offers a replicate-able model (training, pathway, dedicated worker) for engaging other public bodies in preventing other harms - such as homelessness
- whilst IRIS comes with a cost, research shows it's cost effective for the NHS and cost-saving for society

Find out more....

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About IRIS/commissioning the programme locally: Geisa D'avo, Comms & Marketing Manager IRISi,
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Standing Together

when: new duty (6 months) > crisis
where: housing
who: people experiencing domestic abuse
which: rented / owned
what: information, advice & advocacy / training & awareness raising / specialist assessment & support / navigation, coordination & engagement / property enhancements & furniture

Sanctuary Scheme for survivors of domestic abuse

The context

Women's Aid's 2019 guidance^{lv} underlined most housing responses to domestic abuse in Scotland still relied on victims leaving the home. This suggests preventative options enabling women (and children) to avoid homelessness may be under-developed. Sanctuary schemes – multi-agency responses whereby practical, tailored security measures are installed in a victim's home alongside specialist support – are one such option. A 2010 Scottish Government enquiry^{lvi} found these schemes less common in Scotland than England; a briefing^{lvii} ten years later for the PRG found the position had changed little. In England too, existence and features of sanctuary schemes vary greatly by area. London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham has funded its scheme since 2006.

The intervention

Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse ('Standing Together'), a national charity which brings communities together to end domestic abuse, has coordinated Hammersmith and Fulham's scheme since 2012. A dedicated coordinator provides a single point of contact between referrers, local domestic abuse services and Safe Partnership – the delivery partner which surveys homes and installs security measures. The coordinator contacts households three to six months after measures are fitted to seek feedback on how well the scheme is working. Standing Together also convenes a sanctuary working group with other London boroughs to improve practice sharing and service consistency.

Sanctuary is seen as an option which should always be offered to victim/survivors, but for which participation must be victim-led. Standing Together offers it as part of a 'Whole Housing Approach'^{lviii}: a framework for addressing the housing and safety needs of victim/survivors in an area covering all housing options. A range of agencies refer to the scheme, including health, children/adult social work and wider third sector, albeit most referrals come from police, housing and independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs) in specialist agencies. Referrals can be made for households in all tenures. Where a person referred has no support from a domestic abuse agency, they're always offered this when the sanctuary referral is processed, though are free to decline it.

The coordinator logs a referral and passes it to Safe Partnership, which contacts the landlord (if rented), to secure consent for any work. Safe Partnership aims to contact survivors within 24 hours to assess the home and install security measures. Installers are trained in domestic abuse awareness. On average,

installations are completed in a few weeks; urgent work is done more quickly. Measures can include secure door or window locks, enhanced lighting, CCTV and 'sanctuary rooms' with a reinforced (and if needed, fire-proofed) door on one room, in which a mobile 'phone is also kept.

The outcome

70 households were referred to the scheme in 2020-21: 94% social and 6% private tenants. Of these, 50 households received a home assessment and had sanctuary measures installed. Survey feedback suggests the majority of victims/survivors feel safer at home and agree the measures have positively impacted their psychological wellbeing. IDVAs from the lead domestic abuse service in the area rated the scheme, finding the process smooth and work carried out within a quick timeframe. On average, a scheme costs £180-£1200 per household (up to £4000 if a sanctuary room is fitted). 2010 UK Government research (when schemes were more commonplace) suggested sanctuary schemes can be cost effective and lead to significant savings, by reducing both incidents of domestic abuse, and homelessness for that reason.^{lix}

Key insights

- a sanctuary scheme isn't simply a lock change by housing or police: it should have multiple referral points; be independent (i.e. not contingent on tenure, or engagement with certain services); and connect to an offer of a wider safety/support package from domestic abuse services
- it's vital to publicise the option of local sanctuary schemes on an ongoing basis, across and within agencies: victims are unlikely to have heard of such schemes, so frontline staff have a key role in explaining and exploring the option
- effective multi-agency sanctuary schemes require adequate funding for a coordinating role and a full suite of security measures a victim may need, according to risk - not just a minimal offer

Find out more...

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West Dunbartonshire Council

when: new duty (6 months) > recovery
where: housing
who: people experiencing domestic abuse / people perpetrating domestic abuse
which: social rented
what: information, advice & advocacy / training & awareness raising / specialist assessment & support / navigation, coordination, engagement / property enhancements & furniture / person-centred housing management / housing supply, options & allocations

Holistic domestic abuse approach, covering victims & perpetrators

The context

In 2019 guidance for providers,^{lx} Women's Aid reports that the majority of housing policy and practice responses in Scotland are based on an expectation that women and children experiencing domestic abuse - rather than those who perpetrate it - need to leave the home. That ties into the position domestic abuse holds as the primary cause of women's homelessness.

The guidance suggests an effective housing response to domestic abuse moves beyond simplistic approaches to both women and men. For victims, that means strengthening the focus on prevention and protecting women's rights to remain in the home, rather than defaulting to homelessness and temporary accommodation. For perpetrators, it means considering their housing needs too, and how their homelessness may heighten risk to their victims.

The intervention

With the highest reported rate of domestic abuse in Scotland, in 2018, West Dunbartonshire Council recognised stronger leadership and a new approach were required to address the issue. 750 women had become homeless for this reason in the past five years - many from Council homes - yet housing was effectively absent from domestic abuse policy. Working closely with the local Violence Against Women partnership, the Council launched a zero tolerance approach: *No Home for Domestic Abuse*:

The Council recruited a domestic abuse liaison officer, enabling women in Council tenancies to access prompt practical help, legal assistance and ongoing specialist support following any incident. The focus is to support women and children to stay in the home and local area, if that is their choice, with enhanced security measures, such as CCTV, lock change or additional lighting. If temporary accommodation is needed, the option of returning home is explored again before a tenancy terminated for good.

The policy makes clear the Council would use the full scope of powers against perpetrators, including antisocial behaviour and matrimonial homes legislation to transfer a tenancy to the victim and remove a perpetrator where possible. Men whose tenancies are transferred to their partner may be offered another Council tenancy at a safe distance, and support to address their own behaviours.

The outcome

In its first year, *No Home for Domestic Abuse* supported 130 women, underlining the need for the service, which was subsequently mainstreamed. In three years, the service supported 426 women, with 159 properties receiving security enhancements. Nine perpetrators had their tenancy transferred to an ex-partner and accepted an offer of a (lower demand) Council home, at a safe distance. Three of the men who were rehoused subsequently (voluntarily) engaged in support. All but one of the women sustained her tenancy and avoided homelessness. The Council's domestic abuse helpline has begun to receive more calls from men, often asking questions about their own behaviour.

The Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Act 2021, which came into force in May 2021, gave Councils explicit powers to take removal action to protect domestic abuse victims. This enabled West Dunbartonshire to update its policy, whose intention pre-empted the legal change.

Key insights

- leadership, visibility and public messaging matter: No Home for Domestic Abuse sets a very clear tone and direction of travel, and is endorsed by a wide range of partners
- it's important to find a balance between taking clear action against perpetrators and recognising that their ongoing unresolved housing needs can put women at higher risk
- local authorities with higher pressures on social housing may find it challenging to address the housing needs of perpetrators timeously using their own stock: linking with PRS access schemes might help

Find out more...

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People with multiple, complex needs

What did the PRG say ... about people with multiple, complex needs?

The PRG noted that people with multiple complex needs are at serious risk of falling through the cracks in mainstream service provision, including in relation to accessing mainstream housing options and homelessness services. Research^{lx} shows homelessness services often 'carry the can' and take the lead on cases with this client group, particularly in the absence of a court order.

The Group recommended that for people with multiple complex needs requiring input from two or more public services – either to support their health or wellbeing, or facilitate community safety – a **case co-ordination approach** be put in place.

'Multiple, complex needs' would include, but not be limited to:

- risk of homelessness
- substance misuse
- involvement with criminal justice

Support and services within a case co-ordination approach may be provided by

- the health board or integration authority
- other parts of the local authority

- community justice partners
- relevant third sector partners

The PRG recommended a case coordination approach consist of:

- **identification** of a **professional** to **lead** on contact with the individual and co-ordinate service provision
- a means for **overseeing case co-ordination** to:
 - identify and address gaps in service provision
 - manage and prevent escalation of risk

Our people with multiple complex needs examples show how...

- [Aberdeenshire Council](#) successfully engaged Council tenants at high risk of repeat homelessness using **Housing First support** in a preventative way
- [Highland Council's Move-On team](#) works with people **mainstream services** (including, but not limited to housing) **fail to engage** and is having success preventing homelessness, co-ordinating care and linking people back into services
- [Turning Point South Lanarkshire's Crisis Response Outreach Team](#) supports people during **non-office hours** who are experiencing a **crisis**

– of any type. Offering **short-term, responsive** (often face-to-face) **support** from peer workers at times when people are actively seeking help, then following-up by linking them into mainstream services fills in an important gap people with multiple, complex needs often fall through

- Rowan Alba has all but eliminated repeat homelessness for men who've almost always been homeless many times and/or for very long periods through its Thorntree Street project, which offers **permanent tenancies with 24/7** support within a community: an alternative to Housing First which still adopts housing-led principles
- Rock Trust and Almond Housing Association's Housing First for Youth plays a doubly preventative role for care experienced young people. Housing First is highly effective in reducing repeat homelessness, but this project enables it to be offered preventatively, to young people leaving care for whom (based on current available housing options) homelessness appears a predictable future – but as yet not always experienced – pathway
- Medics Against Violence's navigator project in Emergency (A&E) Departments offers trauma-informed support to people with multiple complex needs following an episode of violence, substance abuse or self-harm. Support starts in hospitals at what can be a '**reachable moment**' and continues in the community, linking people into services, including housing (*example in 'health and social care partners' chapter*)
- Pobl Group and South Lanarkshire Council's dedicated teams supporting **families** with multiple complex needs – which include antisocial behaviour, domestic abuse, child protection concerns, truancy, substance issues and health problems – are successful in reducing risk of eviction and improving family outcomes more widely (*example in 'children and families' chapter*)
- Midlothian Council set up one of the first Scottish **House Projects** offering secure social tenancies and a programme of peer learning and support for young people with care experience who often have multiple, complex needs, as an alternative to Housing First (*example found in 'young people' chapter*)
- Jigsaw's Housing First for women involved in the criminal justice system was highly effective reducing repeat homelessness but also significantly reducing incidence of offending in relation to the women the project housed (*example is found in 'justice partners' chapter*)

Aberdeenshire Council

when: current duty (2 months) > recovery
where: housing
who: people with multiple, complex needs
which: social rented
what: individual & family support / specialist assessment / onward referral / navigation, coordination & engagement

Preventative use of Housing First support

The context

To date, in the UK and internationally, Housing First projects have almost exclusively targeted people with the most complex needs who are *currently*, as well as often chronically or long-term, homeless, and who experience the worse homelessness situations, such as rough sleeping and/or a cycle of evictions from hostels and B&Bs, for example. And it is right that in localities with high levels of rough sleeping, large amounts of congregate temporary accommodation and significant entrenched homelessness, Housing First is primarily targeted at those households.

But there's also a case to explore preventative use of Housing First. Indeed, the second round of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) recommended this as a next step in upscaling the programme in Scotland.^{lxii} Aberdeenshire Council has been an early adopter of this approach, offering Housing First support to a small number of tenants at high risk of repeat homelessness, before they became homeless.

The intervention

Aberdeenshire Council successfully piloted an in-house rural Housing First service from 2017. In 2018, the Council became one of the consortium partners in the Aberdeen City/Shire Housing First Pathfinder, which ran until 2021, when the Council 'mainstreamed' the service. By this point, 41 Housing First tenancies had been created in Aberdeenshire, with an 88% sustainment rate.

Whilst the great majority of Aberdeenshire Housing First tenants came from a situation of long-term homelessness, cyclical use of temporary accommodation and/or institutional settings such as prison, a small number were current tenants of the local authority. In each case, a referral to Housing First support by Council housing management or housing support teams was seen as a 'last ditch' attempt to prevent eviction, or a tenancy otherwise failing. In all cases, the tenant concerned met Housing First service criteria, and was imminently facing repeat homelessness.

The outcome

Five tenants have been supported by preventative Housing First so far. One young tenant, homeless since 16 with many stays in temporary accommodation, had tenancy support, but was struggling to keep it in good order and settle into the area. The tenant received neighbour complaints, then an Antisocial Behaviour Order (ASBO), and was facing eviction. Housing First supported the tenant with a managed move to an area where people had no preconceived ideas about them. The person's now making good use of support, taking pride in their home and *'has completely turned things around'*.

Another tenant, who has alcohol problems and frequent prison stays, had very high rent arrears. Other agencies hadn't managed to engage them in sorting out a claim for housing costs, and they were facing eviction. A Housing First worker succeeded in creating a positive ongoing relationship with the tenant, enabling their rent to be paid, arrears halved, and a threat of homelessness averted.

In each case where Aberdeenshire's Housing First team has offered support to a tenant referred at high risk of repeat homelessness, they've succeeded in engaging the person and creating an ongoing supportive relationship. None of those tenants has gone on to become homeless.

Key insights

- person-centred, assertive engagement using Housing First support can work with people in tenancies, as well as those who are homeless: averting tenancy failure before it happens
- an 'in-house' Housing First service closely linked to other support teams can help stop people falling through gaps in support
- Aberdeenshire has very low levels of rough sleeping and congregate temporary accommodation compared to other parts of Scotland, so preventative Housing First may come more 'naturally' here

Find out more

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Highland Council

when: new duty (6 months) > crisis
where: community
who: people with multiple, complex needs
which: multi-tenure
what: information, advice & advocacy / individual & family support / onward referral / navigation, coordination & engagement

Engaging those disengaged from services

The context

All 'mainstream', and especially statutory, agencies have experiences of people who don't take up offers of a service. This may take the form of people simply not responding to contact, dropping out of touch or not 'engaging' with the service in the manner it deems acceptable. Services have their own definitions of 'disengagement' and their own processes on how to address this, with some more proactive, self-reflective and flexible than others.

But we also know people labelled as 'dis-engagers' are often those most in need of (especially) statutory services in the first place - a phenomenon described as the 'inverse care law'.^{lxiii} In a rural authority spanning an immense geographical area - such as Highland - ensuring people who most need services can access them presents even greater challenges. This is where the Move On project, jointly funded by European Social Fund (ESF) and Highland Council, comes in.

The intervention

Move On workers take referrals from any statutory or 'mainstream' service (including housing, mental health, Jobcentre Plus, criminal justice) for people who have 'not engaged' or who have subsequently disengaged from support. Officers take an assertive, persistent approach, trying diverse means of establishing contact, then focus on building a relationship. They work on the issues a person wants to work on (which might not always be issue the referrer prioritises), with no set time limit on support. In this way, the service ethos resembles the principles^{lxiv} of Housing First support.

Housing partners (both local authority and RSL) are primary referrers to Move On. They tend to refer tenants with arrears and/or other tenancy sustainment problems, including tenants already in the repossession process. Move On workers coordinate services which directly support people in areas such as debt, money problems, employment and social networks/activities. They aim to connect people with other services holistically. Though Council employees, Move On workers don't 'belong' to any related department - which allows a more independent approach to be taken.

Whilst Move On's purpose is to work with people other services have 'failed to engage', a corollary aim is to influence and improve how those services approach engagement in future. They give feedback and tips on what works, and what can lead to a better outcome. In some cases, simple changes to ways of working, such as letters with less formal language or not closing referrals after a missed appointment, is all someone may need. Mental health services initially agreed to refer to Move On after second missed appointment, rather than close a case after someone misses a third (albeit this has been a challenge to implement consistently)

The outcome

Though not a housing or homelessness-specific service, since 2019, Move On has recorded a 44% reduction in arrears for social tenants the service has worked with, a 30% reduction in Council Tax arrears, and a 47% reduction in overall debts. That includes £71,855 in backdated benefits, including housing-related benefits, for 98 households.

Of those referred in the late stages of recovery action, Move On workers prevented eviction on 22 occasions. Many more people referred at an earlier stage were positively engaged, averting the escalation of issues which can lead to homelessness. The team has built relationships with over half of all people other services were unable to reach.

Key insights

- support services working across multiple statutory services have a key role in preventing not only homelessness, but multiple social harms
- small changes in practice can have a big impact when engaging people deemed 'hard to reach'
- person-centred, persistent, 'sticky' support works well across a whole range of services

Find out more...

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Turning Point Scotland (TPS)

when: new duty (6 months) > recovery
where: community
who: people with multiple, complex needs
which: multi-tenure
what: information, advice & advocacy / individual & family support / peer support / onward referral / navigation, coordination & engagement

Assertive support for people in any out of hours crisis

The context

We know people's interactions with the more 'crisis' focused parts of the health service (such as Accident & Emergency (A&E); admissions for injury, substance use or acute mental health) generally rise in the period leading up to homelessness. It's possible interactions with the 'crisis' focused parts of the criminal justice system – mainly the police – show a similar pattern.

Whilst some people experiencing a crisis due to health, substances or crime (victim or perpetrator) may already be homeless, others may be struggling to keep their home, and perhaps, engage in support. So a universal crisis-response service sensitive to the signs of potential housing breakdown may play a key role in preventing homelessness.

The intervention

The Crisis Response Outreach Team started as a 12-month 'test of change' service across South Lanarkshire in spring 2021, funded by a combination of RRTP and Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP) monies. The team, comprising two harm reduction practitioners and two peer workers, operates entirely out of hours, Thursday to Sunday. It aims to respond to the age-old issue whereby many crises people experience (such as suicidal ideation, self-harm, substance misuse, leaving prison) don't happen in 'office hours' when routine support services tend to be available.

The team offer a rapid, flexible response to anyone in crisis, using an assertive outreach approach which prioritises face to face contact and home visits. Referrals can be made via a free-phone number, or by email from people themselves, friends or family, emergency services or other professionals. Workers can also check in proactively on people known to be at risk of crisis at key times. They offer a range of interventions, focused on harm reduction in the widest sense (i.e. not only in relation to substance misuse). This includes immediate emotional support, wellbeing conversations, supply of injecting equipment/naloxone, emergency supplies i.e. food, mobile 'phone, and engagement with family.

The purpose is to keep people safe, reduce harm and connect - or reconnect - them into mainstream services/supports after crisis. This includes advocacy, assertive linkage into treatment and addressing any access or engagement barriers. People referred may be housed or homeless: sustaining housing (or occasionally, arranging temporary accommodation) is a key element of the work. Where tenancy breakdown is a potential consequence of someone's life spiralling into crisis, the service provides a protective buffer and bridge into onward support to prevent this, for example, referral to, or coordination of, housing or other agency support. A number of people referred have one or more issue which may impact on their housing stability

The outcome

In its first six months, the service received almost 200 referrals and completed over 250 interventions, with a low non-engagement rate (7%, most recently). More than half of people were visited at home. Over half referrals related to substance use and over a fifth to suicidal ideation or self-harm; other common issues were physical health, violence/domestic abuse, social isolation or leaving prison/court. Housing agencies (including Council housing teams, Housing First and temporary accommodation) made over 70% of referrals. The great majority of people were able to be connected or reconnected to onward support.

Key insights

- responding quickly and supportively to a person in a crisis can generate engagement which can be hard to achieve by appointment in office hours; following up after the crisis is equally vital
- a team offering responsive support for any crisis – rather than only a specific type of crisis - is especially beneficial from a housing lens, as any type of crisis could contribute to homelessness
- visiting people at home is preferable: support offered face-to-face is more impactful and a visit gives workers a full sense of the person's living conditions, practices and risks

Find out more...

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Rowan Alba & Bield Housing Association

when: recovery
where: housing
who: people with multiple, complex needs
which: supported
what: information, advice & advocacy / individual & family support / specialist assessment & support / housing supply, options & allocations

Preventing repeat homelessness: a housing-led alternative to Housing First

The context

Scotland's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) installed the concept of Housing First "as the first response"^{1xv} for people with 'multiple, complex needs' – those most likely to experience long-term, or repeat, homelessness (or both). Housing First should therefore be the default option offered to this group, as opposed to the last resort when everything else has failed. HARSAG made this recommendation as evidence of the effectiveness of Housing First was found to be 'overwhelming'. The Government's Action Plan subsequently specified that every local authority must include plans for Housing First in its RRTP.

Yet as overwhelming as evidence in favour of Housing First is, there is a minority of people – around 10-20% - for whom the approach appears not to work, not to work right now, or just isn't wanted. To truly embed rapid rehousing in Scotland, people who are most excluded from housing also need options – including options if Housing First fails or isn't someone's choice.

The intervention

Edinburgh-based charity Rowan Alba set up its Thorntree Street project in Leith in 2005. It offers Scottish Secure Tenancies (SST) through Bield Housing Association, coupled with onsite 24/7 support from Rowan Alba, to 12 older men with histories of long-term rough sleeping, repeat homelessness and problematic alcohol use. It was the first project in Scotland to offer *permanent homes* to this group.

Rowan Alba's values are "accept, support, include". A guiding principle of Thorntree is that people have a right to a home, without needing to first change themselves or their behaviour, or meet conditions. All tenants have access to person-centred support, but they don't have to use it, or 'engage' in any particular way. Support will be there if it's needed. Importantly, tenants don't have to stop or reduce their drinking before getting their tenancy. Instead, a harm reduction approach is used.

Thorntree also operates as a community: there's a dining room, garden and lounge. Meals are cooked fresh according to tenants' preferences, but they also have their own kitchens. Tenants have access to staff any time, and can have visitors, including overnight. But staff can also monitor and mediate access to the building and store and administer medication, sometimes multiple times a day, as many tenants have chronic and, at times, life-threatening, health conditions.

The outcome

Since 2005, Thorntree has supported 87 men into a permanent home. Only one tenancy has ended in eviction (and repeat homelessness), with three other tenants moving onto other housing options (either more independent living, or residential nursing care). All other tenants (99%) have sustained their homes. This suggests an extraordinarily effective approach to preventing repeat homelessness for people with some of the very highest levels of past housing failure.

An independent evaluation^{lxvi} in 2019 concluded that Thorntree offers a home where tenants feel safe, are more able to maintain self-control, think clearly, look after health, eat well and gain a sense of belonging. The evaluation completed a cost consequence analysis which found for each £1 spent on Thorntree, £3 is saved to the public purse on homelessness, health and criminal justice.

Key insights

- with the right values, Housing First principles can also work in non-dispersed housing models
- in order to exercise choice and control in a rapid rehousing system, people - including those who are most excluded and who have multiple, complex support needs - require more than one housing option to choose from
- a communal setting with peers, in a context of individual homes, can help reduce loneliness and isolation and build social capital: areas Housing First tenants often struggle with

Find out more...

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Rock Trust & Almond Housing Association

when: new duty (6 months) > recovery
where: housing
who: young people with care experience / people with multiple, complex needs
which: social rented
what: individual & family support / specialist assessment / navigation, coordination & engagement / onward referral / housing supply, options & allocations / property enhancements & furniture

Preventative Housing First for care experienced young people

The context

Research consistently highlights that young people leaving local authority care are more likely than other young people to become homeless or experience housing instability.^{lxvii} People leaving care are people who have always already faced adversity, and will often still be dealing with complex issues without parental/wider family support. This can place them at higher risk of homelessness.

Like the care system, the homelessness system can exacerbate trauma, institutionalise, and cause harm. In 2017, the Care Inspectorate found 45% West Lothian care leavers presented as homeless at least once.^{lxviii} The youth homelessness charity Rock Trust and local social landlord, Almond Housing Association (Almond HA), responded by devising a new housing and support option for young people leaving care facing the highest probability of homelessness.

The intervention

Whilst Rock Trust had long provided housing support in temporary and settled tenancies in West Lothian, they knew services didn't work for a small cohort of young people. Almond HA similarly had experience of referrals for homeless young people with very high needs, which local support services were not designed to meet. It was at West Lothian Council's 15+ Planning Group, attended by both agencies, where the need for an alternative housing and support option for care leavers with 'complex need indicators' crystallised.

To meet this gap, Rock Trust and Almond HA, with additional funds from Housing First Europe Hub, committed resources to a two-year Housing First pilot for five care leavers. Rock Trust employed support workers whilst Almond HA pledged secure tenancies, a budget for personalised furniture and input from a dedicated housing officer. Referrals were limited to care leavers with 'complex needs indicators' for whom no appropriate temporary, supported or permanent housing option appeared to exist.

Initial referrals were for 16-17 year old care leavers, all of whom had experienced childhood trauma, multiple moves, instability, a lack of security and a history of behavioural problems. A majority had experience of substance and mental health issues. Support was designed on a Housing First for Youth model (developed in Canada^{ix}). Housing First principles apply: but there's a distinct emphasis on youth choice and self-determination, positive youth development orientation and social/community integration.

The outcome

By 2020, Housing First for Youth had been expanded and secured Council funding. 12 young people had been housed, with all but one sustaining their tenancy (including some planned moves between tenancies). The one person who decided to end their tenancy continued to work with Rock Trust support. More Scottish authorities have started to explore Housing First for youth (not always exclusively for those with care experience), with Rock Trust support now expanding to Fife.

Two thirds of young people housed responded to an evaluation survey. All but one said their home made them feel they were 'doing well in life', and that they no longer worried about losing it once they'd been there six months. They valued the sticky, 'portable' relationship offered by Rock Trust support. The long-term, unconditional nature of care seemed to make young people more receptive to positive life changes. All but one said mental health and satisfaction with life had also improved.

Key insights

- Housing First for Youth can play a preventative role for people in the care system for whom, when existing housing options are considered, homelessness appears a predictable future outcome
- for people leaving care who've often experienced trauma, multiple moves and a lack of security, the personalised, 'sticky', relational support of Housing First for Youth can be transformative
- Housing First for Youth projects may need to develop strategic approaches for influencing access to, and delivery of, services for young people by other statutory providers, especially mental health

Find out more...

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Health & Social Care partners

What did the PRG say about Health and Social Care?

The PRG recognised that a high proportion of homeless applicants have health and social care needs, and that people with experience of homelessness make up the majority of attendees at some health services, particularly more acute services. The Group also noted that whilst mental and physical health needs contribute to loss of housing for a substantial proportion of applicants, there is also evidence of a lack of co-operation and/or join-up between health and social care and homelessness services as regards preventing homelessness.

The PRG recommended:

- **Health and Social Care Partnerships** should

- set out a clear statement of their contribution to preventing homelessness within the Local Housing Strategy
- identify the housing circumstances of patients, and where necessary, work with partners to ensure patients are assisted into suitable housing or that a risk of homelessness is prevented. Often the point of entry will be a critical point to intervene, for example where someone is entering hospital for inpatient psychiatric assistance. Where the housing need is related to a lack of accommodation or housing support needs, this should be a referral to the local authority

- for housing options and homelessness assistance
- hold the primary responsibility for meeting accommodation needs of people whose needs are of such complexity they cannot be supported in mainstream housing, even with additional support (this is intended to capture the needs of those who require highly specialist medical or other support, not needs that might be met by Housing First)
- have a statutory duty to co-operate with the local authority in planning to meet an individual's health and social care needs identified as part of an assessment of homelessness, risk of homelessness, or housing support needs

- **GP practices** should

- refer to the local authority where a housing need is identified

- **social workers or social care workers** should

- make a referral to the relevant part of the local authority where a risk of homelessness is identified
- carry out a care needs assessment if they consider such an individual has unmet social care needs

- the **local authority**, working with other partners, must

- ensure homelessness prevention/alleviation services are designed to meet needs

of people leaving hospital and people with mental illness or impairment
– provide assistance to anyone who is going to be discharged from hospital in the next six months and is considered as threatened with homelessness

Our health and social care partner examples show how...

- community link workers in **GP** practices in Renfrewshire Health & Social Care Partnership's 'community connector' project refer patients with housing problems, in any tenure, to [Linstone Housing Association's health and housing hub](#) for advice, support and casework – an ideal opportunity to intervene early to prevent homelessness
- [Glasgow Health & Social Care Partnership](#) **embedded welfare advisers** in nine 'deep end' GP surgeries, resulting in a high number of patients with substantial housing debt, many of whom had not previously received advice, getting help to stabilise their situation
- [London Borough of Lewisham](#) appointed a dedicated officer in **adult social care** to coordinate the Council's cross-tenure response to people with **hoarding** tendencies. A trauma-informed approach, based on trust and engagement rather than a one-off 'quick fix', is helping address a complex issue which can both lead to and perpetuate homelessness
- [Moray Council's co-located Occupational Therapist](#) in the housing service (jointly funded by Health and Social Care and housing) has benefited people with health issues which impact housing, as well as both departments, by reducing delayed discharge and homelessness for health-related reasons
- [Wakefield District Housing \(WDH\)](#) seconded clinically trained '**mental health navigators**' from the local NHS Trust (which jointly funds the project) to intervene earlier to support tenants with low to moderate mental health issues, improving tenancy sustainment
- [Glasgow Health & Social Care Partnership's](#) housing and health link worker, an NHS staff member who is expert in Glasgow's housing system, trains and educates **health visitors** on housing-related challenges families may face as well as advising on and coordinating housing-related follow-up across multiple landlords and services in the city
- [Connection Support](#) embedded housing workers in **hospital wards** in Oxford, leading to much earlier focus on housing needs of patients in routine enquires, and earlier support to prevent both homelessness and delayed discharge, with benefits felt by patients, homelessness services and hospitals
- [Medics Against Violence's](#) Navigator project in **Emergency (A&E) Departments** offers trauma-informed support to people with complex needs. Support starts in hospitals, in a 'reachable moment', and continues in the community, linking people into services – including housing and homelessness – which are issues for a proportion of 'frequent attenders'
- **GPs** in Gwent were trained to identify signs of domestic abuse, 'ask' appropriate questions and 'act' by referring to specialist charity [Llamau](#) - whose remit includes advice and support with safer housing options, as part of the [IRIS \(identification and referral to improve safety\)](#) programme (example in '[people experiencing domestic abuse](#)' chapter)

Linstone Housing Association & Renfrewshire H&SCP

when: upstream > current duty (2 months)
where: health and social care
who: people with health issues
which: multi-tenure
what: information, advice & advocacy / individual & family support / onward referral / navigation, coordination & engagement / co-location, embedding & 'hub' approaches

Multi-tenure health & housing hub

The context

In 2020–21, 17% of homeless applicants in Scotland cited a mental health difficulty as a reason for losing housing. 9% listed a substance dependency, and 5% a physical health issue. As applicants can select multiple 'homelessness reasons', it is likely there's some overlap in these statistics, but it appears that well over a fifth of households experience health-related reasons for homelessness. This intersection can lead to some housing staff feeling like quasi-health workers.

But the dynamic also occurs in the opposite direction. GPs often encounter patients whose housing problems negatively impact their health, but which they have neither time nor expertise to resolve. Community Link Workers (CLWs) – generalist social practitioners who work with patients on non-clinical issues – have more time to spend. But they're not housing experts either: which is where Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership (H&SCP)'s collaboration with Linstone Housing Association adds value.

The intervention

The 'Community Connectors' project, funded by the H&SCP, began in 2016. It comprises CLWs based in local GP practices and three local agencies with expertise on the challenges most frequently experienced by patients referred. They are Linstone HA, a community based landlord of 1600 homes, which takes on the housing role; Active Communities, which leads on local, often volunteer-led, wellbeing activities; and Renfrewshire Association for Mental Health (now We Are With You, from April 2021), focusing on mental health recovery.

GPs can refer patients with health problems related to these areas to a CLW. Where housing is an issue, the CLW links the person in with Linstone's Health and Housing Hub. Hub staff have an understanding of the whole local housing system, as well as relevant links and networks with landlords, advice and support services. People don't need to be Linstone HA tenants: they can be from any housing tenure (or none).

The Hub provides information, advice and guidance, explaining individual options, rights and how the housing system works. Advisers can signpost and/or refer into specialist advice or support, such as welfare rights, grants or financial assistance, health assessment or tenancy support. They also offer hands-on help, such as completing applications for local landlords, house moves or transfer schemes, advocating or following up with partners, and coordinating support.

The outcome

CLWs made over 2,200 referrals to Community Connectors in 2019-20. Around 10% were to the Hub, with referrals increasing over time. In the most recent quarter (summer 2021), of 51 referrals received from 16 GP surgeries, 92% engaged with the Hub. The majority of people referred are social or private tenants, or owners. 88% wished to move from their current home, with a third citing antisocial behaviour or neighbour issues; 23% mobility problems; 17% overcrowding; and 15% property condition.

Last quarter, the Hub linked people in with 12 different agencies including mediation, housing support, advice services, social work, advocacy and the noise team, with over 40 applications completed. Through direct support, five people were rehoused into a more suitable home, five awarded health priority, three awarded funding for essential furniture/broadband, and two supported to resolve repair problems.

Key insights

- many people with health vulnerabilities simply don't understand the housing system or know where to start – a Hub approach simplifies this complexity for people (and for health professionals)
- people don't always have a good relationship with their own landlord (social and private), so being able to access a service through a professional they do trust (their GP) is valuable
- most people referred have never accessed advice services or tenancy support before, showing the service can reach those not using what's already available

Find out more...

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Glasgow Health & Social Care Partnership (H&SCP)

when: new duty (6 months) > crisis
where: health and social care
who: people with health issues / people with money issues
which: multi-tenure
what: information, advice & advocacy / navigation, coordination & engagement / onward referral / co-location, embedding & 'hub' approaches

Embedded welfare advice in GP surgeries

The context

We know from recent (2018) health and homelessness research^{lxx} in Scotland that people who have experienced homelessness are, as a group, more likely to interact with health services than those who have not. We also know health activity for those people rose in the period leading up to a homelessness assessment. Research^{lxxi} on homelessness in England found GPs are one of the most common services people access *after* a housing issue has occurred, but before they've been to housing options.

This indicates GPs have key opportunities to prevent homelessness. In 2020 Scottish Public Health Network reported that 100 welfare advisers were based in GP practices.^{lxxii} This embedded model shows what can be achieved for people from a housing, as well as a financial inclusion, perspective.

The intervention

Glasgow 'deep end'^{lxxiii} GPs found they were spending increasing time on patients' socio-economic problems: problems which impacted health, but had no clinical solution. If patients trusted their GP enough to disclose money worries, it might follow that they'd act on the GP's suggestion to see a welfare adviser. Locating the advice service within the surgery made this easier for patients, and reduced stigma.

In 2017, following a successful pilot embedding a money advice worker in two 'deep end' GP practices in Parkhead, the service was expanded to cover nine surgeries in North East Glasgow. Three advisers were embedded in practice teams. Administrative staff were able to make advice appointments on NHS systems for patients, and with appropriate consent, advisers had access to medical records. Various members of practice staff, such as GPs, health visitors and nurses could make referrals.

Access to medical records enabled welfare advisers to obtain accurate evidence to submit and support benefit and other financial applications, increasing the chance of right first time positive decisions, thereby reducing the potential for appeals: a process which can be long, stressful and resource-intensive for claimants, some of whom may abandon the process before its conclusion. Welfare advisers also referred patients onto other sources of community support where needed.

The outcome^{lxxiv}

Over a year, GP practices referred 654 patients to welfare advice, with high uptake. Advisers secured £1.5million in financial gains, of which £470,000 related to household debt, including rent and Council Tax. Housing and homelessness reasons made up over a third onward referrals - by far the largest proportion of these. 71% of referrals with housing status recorded were tenants (11% private; 60% social) and 13% were owners. 85% of patients hadn't used any advice service in the past year. They were often unaware of their entitlements and/or felt unable to ask for help through existing routes.

Healthcare staff were already able to make advice referrals to locality services. Yet referrals to the embedded workers in nine surgeries exceeded those of all health staff in 35 surgeries in the locality. GPs made 87% of referrals, being more proactive asking about money worries knowing a trusted expert was on site. Monitoring shows for each £1 invested, around £25 in financial gain was generated.

This example does not evidence that homelessness was prevented for any patient. But the level of housing-related issues/gains, lack of prior service use and high take-up of advice shows the role GP-led intervention can play in reducing homelessness risk for some of the most disadvantaged patients.

Key insights

- trusted, universal professionals like GPs are able to engage some people at higher homelessness risk who may not disclose problems to, or act on advice from, other services (including landlords)
- making financial (or housing) situation a subject of routine enquiry by GPs can help overcome the stigma barrier around accessing earlier help which can prevent homelessness
- a high proportion of patients accessing advice via GPs were social tenants: there may be various reasons why they hadn't accessed advice through their landlord, but this deserves further scrutiny

Find out more...

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London Borough of Lewisham

when: new duty (6 months) > current duty (2 months)
where: housing
who: people with health issues
which: multi-tenure
what: information, advice & advocacy / specialist assessment & support / navigation, coordination & engagement / training & awareness raising / onward referral

Co-ordinated approach to engaging people with hoarding tendencies

The context

US research suggests that people with hoarding disorders are over-represented in homeless shelters and eviction prevention services.^{lxxv} UK research also highlights the role hoarding plays in evictions^{lxxvi} and in preventing prompt hospital discharges.^{lxxvii}

Though national statistics in Scotland cannot tell us how prevalent the issue of hoarding is as a direct cause of, or contributor to, homelessness, the link between hoarding and potential housing crisis for individuals is well understood by public services. But effective interventions in respect of this notoriously complex issue have been in short supply. London Borough of Lewisham is aiming to implement a more consistent, sustainable way of working with people who hoard.

The intervention

Local evidence suggested hoarding affected a high number of households in Lewisham. In 2019, the Adult Safeguarding Board piloted a comprehensive, cross-tenure approach, appointing a Hoarding and Self Neglect Specialist Officer to research best practice, coordinate multi-agency input and source suitable support resources across Lewisham. The role was funded by the NHS and based in the adult social work team. Referrals can be made by the fire brigade, hospitals, GPs, housing, environmental health, family or friends, as well as by individuals who have a hoarding tendency and want help (though this is rare).

The officer visits a referred household, jointly with other agencies if appropriate, to carry out a welfare check and an assessment. They take time to understand underlying reasons for the issue, as there is no one reason why people hoard. People are offered help from Clouds End, a specialist social enterprise that supports and negotiates with householders to gradually declutter. They use the clutter image rating tool to develop realistic goals, and also offer a small repairs service. Environmental health only become involved if a home is verminous. Its input is carefully coordinated, so as to maintain trust.

As a hoarding tendency can rarely be entirely curbed, the officer aims to ensure ongoing support for each person once a home is decluttered, based on their own situation and needs. This could be a befriending service or access to community activities from Age UK, for example if an elderly person has started to hoard due to social isolation. It could be domestic support as part of a care package, or access to peer support groups in the local area. Enforcement action is only taken as a last resort. Lewisham's dedicated officer has also developed training and a comprehensive toolkit for other agencies.

The outcome

Approximately 70 households were referred to Lewisham's dedicated officer in year one. A high proportion engaged with the service, once it was explained decluttering support would take a gradual, tailored approach, with the person at the centre, rather than a standard, one-off 'clear and clean'. Persistence is sometimes needed to gain trust in the first place, with some people taking many months to open the door. Only a minority of cases, which were of a particularly complex nature, proceeded to enforcement action.

Whilst challenging to evidence directly, it's possible households could potentially become homeless without this multi-agency, trauma-informed service. Its value has been recognised by the social work department, which is now continuing to fund the officer. This marks a sea-change from the past, when the issue was regarded as 'too difficult', passed between departments and invariably dealt with by a one-off clearance.

Key insights

- a specialist decluttering service, rather than a one-off clearance company, can engender greater trust from households, increase understanding of causal issues and reduce potential for re-occurrence
- hoarding is not an issue subject to a 'quick fix' and will often be costly to address. An aftercare offer (such as a support group) is vital to reducing potential for hoarding problems to reach crisis point again
- a dedicated officer able to coordinate, educate and assign tasks to the right agencies prevents the complex, expensive issue of hoarding being passed round departments and inconsistently addressed

Find out more...

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Wakefield District Housing (WDH)

when: upstream > current duty (2 months)
where: housing
who: people with health issues
which: social rented
what: specialist assessment & support / onward referral / person-centred housing management / navigation, coordination & engagement / co-location, embedding & 'hub' approaches

Mental health navigators

The context

Large-scale research in Scotland gave clear evidence of the relationship between homelessness and poor health.^{lxviii} It showed interactions with health - especially mental health - services increased in the lead up to homelessness, and concluded mental health issues are likely to be homelessness risk factors. Since 2007, 'mental health reasons' have been cited as a reason for failing to maintain housing for a growing number, and proportion, of Scottish homeless applicants. In 2020-21, 27% of households identified mental health as a support need at assessment.

The research also found people who are homeless are more likely to present from deprived areas, which often have higher proportions of social housing. All this suggests closer preventative working between mental health services and landlords of those at higher risk of housing failure makes sense. This is something that social housing provider, WDH, and its local NHS Mental Health Trust have been doing since 2015.

The intervention

Stock transfer social housing provider WDH, which owns over 32,000 homes in Yorkshire, carried out research on health inequalities with its (then) Primary Care Trust. It found around a quarter of tenants experienced mild to moderate mental health issues, for which there was little local support provision. WDH assessed that these issues often, when unsupported, impacted on tenants' abilities to manage various aspects of their homes, including neighbour relations, maintenance and rent.

As a response, South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and WDH jointly funded a 12-month pilot of 'mental health navigator' roles. This saw mental health clinicians seconded to WDH to support tenants with low to moderate issues. Their early interventions proved fundamental to tenancy sustainment - so much so that the pilot was subsequently mainstreamed, with three navigators becoming a permanent part of WDH's wellbeing service offer. The team, which is conceptualised as '*estate management in different guise*', also contains five wellbeing caseworkers.

The service is open to all WDH tenants and receives over 1,000 referrals a year. Each one is triaged by the team. Some tenants benefit from a wellbeing worker, who takes a holistic, person-centred approach to helping them address barriers and achieve goals (for example, diet, lifestyle, social anxieties). Others require input from the mental health navigators: someone who is able to make clinical judgements, offer coping mechanisms and strategies, and/or facilitate access to specialist recovery services.

The outcome

WDH's mental health navigators and wider wellbeing service have been busy, with referrals rising by around 30% each year. 95% of tenants referred for support engage with it. By intervening early, with expertise, to assess what support is needed and making sure that this is put in place, WDH calculated approximately 50% of tenants identifying an antisocial behaviour issue at the point of referral no longer had the issue when the case was discharged following supportive interventions. As such, the housing provider believes the service more than pays for itself.

WDH determines the presence of navigators as part of the housing service also reduces demands tenants may place on other health services including Accident & Emergency (A&E), GP surgeries and crisis mental health services.

Key insights

- navigators have a different feel/look to other staff working for the landlord, and this works well
- mutual understanding of the challenges of both housing and health systems allows for closer integration and deeper collaboration
- early evaluation capable of showing outcomes and cost effectiveness really helps a business case

Find out more...

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Moray Council

Co-located Occupational Therapist in housing team

when: new duty (6 months) > recovery
where: housing
who: people with health issues
which: multi-tenure
what: information, advice & advocacy / specialist assessment / training & awareness-raising / onward referral / housing supply, options & allocations / property enhancements & furniture / navigation, coordination & engagement / co-location, embedding & 'hub' approaches

The context

As evidence of the relationship between housing problems, homelessness and health inequalities becomes ever clearer, calls for partnership working between health and housing are heard more loudly. Whilst GPs, hospitals and community mental health are often cited as teams housing agencies should collaborate with more effectively, the role of Occupational Therapists (OTs) – a naturally preventative, person-centred, community-based profession working across all areas of health and social care – can sometimes get overlooked. Moray Council's co-located housing OT has been playing a key role in preventing homelessness since 2015.

The intervention

In 2015, homelessness and Health and Social Care (H&SC) teams in Moray realised customers of both services could benefit from them working together at an earlier point. People applying for health-related moves were waiting months for an OT assessment, with health points awarded on a 'medical model'. In some cases, a person's health had deteriorated to the point homelessness was the only option by the time they received an assessment. Hospital patients whose health issues had made their home unsuitable were often discharged into temporary accommodation.

The Council's housing team and Integrated Joint Board (IJB) got together to jointly fund (and line manage) an OT post, based in housing. The OT engaged a range of health teams (community OTs, GPs, mental health and learning disability services) to shift the focus of housing assessment from a medical to functional one: how does a home undermine or support a person's health? (rather than how many points is a medical condition worth on a housing list?) This included training for H&SC professionals on completing applications with relevant health details from a housing perspective.

All housing applications (from people in any tenure) with a health issue or disability cited go to the OT for assessment. Given their specialised housing focus, the OT can act quickly and flexibly, with knowledge of options and processes gained from being embedded in the housing team. The OT takes a person-centred approach, trying to elucidate what, if anything, could be done in the present home to reduce barriers, including aids and adaptations. The OT has good links with community teams across health and wider services, with an ability to plug people into support.

In a hospital setting, the housing OT effectively contributes to multi-agency discharge meetings. They also sit on the lettings panel, and work with planning colleagues to flag up housing types most needed from the affordable supply programme - especially ground floor, fully adapted homes.

The outcome

Since introducing a housing OT, the number of households who become homeless and/or require temporary accommodation on grounds of health has substantially reduced in Moray. The number of appeals received against medical points for housing has decreased. The wait for OT assessment has significantly declined for housing applicants, with some people able to move through earlier OT input, bypassing the need for a homelessness application and temporary accommodation. The OT post has been made permanent, and continues to be jointly funded by both the IJB and housing.

Key insights

- embedding a member of staff generates insight and opportunity for improvements in processes for both host and home services, but inter-agency training/awareness-raising remains a constant task
- a housing OT feels like a 50/50 role: it took being permanently based in a housing team to grasp how to complete an OT assessment which could *really* make a difference to a person in housing terms
- not everyone can cope with a 50/50 type role: an embedded worker needs to be confident enough to cope with what can feel like a 'blurring' of professional identity, and genuinely enjoy partnership working

Find out more...

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Glasgow H&SCP & NHS

when: pan
 where: housing
 who: children & families
 which: rented / owned
 what: information, advice & advocacy / onward referral / training, & awareness raising / individual & family support / navigation, coordination & engagement

Health visitors & housing link worker

The context

A number of factors make health visitors natural agents in preventing family homelessness. They provide a universal service, take an early intervention approach, stay in contact with a family from a child's birth to school age, and visit the home. This offers a unique vantage point to build trust and gather insights on a family's wider environment and dynamics, including homelessness risk factors, with more impact than a health professional simply asking about someone's housing in an office setting.

In Glasgow, housing is recognised as a key element in health visitor assessments. But the city's notoriously complex housing system, with 55% households renting from almost 70 different social landlords^{lxix} and over 30,000 registered PRS landlords,^{lxxx} makes it challenging for non-housing partners to identify, let alone engage with, a family's landlord when attempting to act on housing concerns. In this context, dedicated health and housing 'link workers' play a pivotal role.

The intervention

Glasgow's Health and Social Care Partnership (H&SCP) has long understood the need for link workers. Health and housing leads were seconded from NHS to the H&SCP in the early 2000s, as large hostels were decommissioned, to ease access to mainstream H&SC services for people moving to tenancies. Link workers outlived the hostel resettlement programme, as the value of embedded, single points of contact/information on housing and H&SC, with no caseload, became clear. The roles work in two ways: making the housing system intelligible and navigate-able for H&SC professionals, and vice versa.

The health and housing lead facilitates training and resources on housing for health visitors, including sessions on the PRS from the Council's PRS Hub. Student health visitors receive housing training as part of professional learning and induction before they go to a patch. This ensures they know enough about housing to ask the right questions. If a family they're working with has a housing issue, they can use their knowledge to act directly, or complete a simple referral to the health and housing lead for advice, navigation or advocacy. The lead can identify who the landlord is, has agreed contact names in all RSLs, and set up a referral pathway to the PRS Hub for private tenants.

The families health visitors work with frequently experience problems with overcrowding, domestic abuse, debts and repairs. They often find families open up to them about housing problems, or about other problems which can impact on housing. Often supported by the lead, health visitors can advocate for additional support for a family, explore options for resolving rent issues, progress repairs, engage with a landlord on a family's behalf, help a family move or refer onto legal or other advice.

The outcome

Over the past calendar year, the health and housing lead noted 100 referrals related to social housing. Homelessness was prevented in 92% of those, with interventions by health visitors leading to arrears being cleared or written off, families rehoused (without becoming homeless) and additional support being provided.

Since offering training and setting up a referral pathway with the PRS Hub, health visitors have become the Hub's second most prolific referrer (after housing teams), making high quality referrals. To date, the Hub has prevented homelessness for 85% of the households it has worked with.^{lxxxii} This shows what can be achieved when health visitors use their unique position with families, centred around on a trusting relationship,^{lxxxiii} to ask about and act on housing issues.

Key insights

- health visitors can at times make headway with families in addressing housing problems (or problems which impact housing) which their landlord, or other professionals such as social workers, cannot
- asking about housing is a natural part of health visitors' holistic approach with families - but a linking, navigating or coordinating role from the housing sector is needed to meet them halfway
- as universal (cross-tenure) workers, health visitors have the potential to be particularly effective reducing housing risks for families renting privately, who can often be more 'hidden' from support

Find out more...

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Connection Support Oxford

when: pan
where: health and social care
who: people with health issues
which: institutions-transitions
what: information, advice & advocacy / onward referral / training & awareness-raising / navigation, coordination & engagement / co-location, embedding & 'hub' approaches

Embedded housing workers in hospitals

The context

We know some people present to housing options too late for their homelessness to be prevented. But often, those people have interacted with, or even resided care of, other statutory bodies shortly beforehand. During consultation for the Oxfordshire Homelessness Trailblazer (2017-19), both professionals and people with lived experience of homelessness repeatedly put forward the concept of on-hand housing expertise in non-housing settings as a solution to this systemic problem.

The intervention

Embedded housing specialists were employed by Oxford charity, Connection Support, and based in other public services (health, criminal justice and children and families social work). Two housing workers were located in general and mental health hospital wards. Their remit was to operate as an onsite housing expert, directly engaging with and trying to resolve the housing issues of patients. But it was also to educate and upskill other staff to detect and act on housing problems, build relationships across systems and establish in-house housing expertise in hospital discharge and social work teams.

Housing workers were initially allocated to help patients whose housing situation was preventing them leaving hospital. They discovered the housing issues had only come to the fore at the point a patient was medically fit for discharge. The housing workers started attending ward rounds with social workers and medical staff, finding opportunities within routine enquiries for the right questions to be asked about potential housing problems and flagged earlier. They also built relationships with specific wards and attended discharge meetings.

Housing workers noted staff in hospital settings had limited understanding of housing and homelessness law, especially tenants' rights. For example, they might accept a patient's own understanding – or a landlord's suggestion – that a tenancy could not be returned to, when, in fact, the person had a right to do so. Workers upskilled health and social care staff on systems, services and legislation, attending routine meetings to ask key housing questions, and creating step-by-step guides and resources.

The outcome

Over 17 months, embedded housing workers received 422 referrals. Whilst the Trailblazer's purpose was 'upstream' prevention, 50% of referrals concerned patients who were already homeless. A third of patients were threatened with homelessness in two months, with 17% at risk of homelessness beyond two months. Overall, workers achieved positive housing outcomes for 51% of referrals, with more success in the 'prevention' group: almost half were helped to secure alternative housing before discharge, and a smaller number to retain their previous housing - all avoiding homelessness.

From a hospital perspective, workers reduced delayed discharge by 38% in one NHS Trust and by 66% in another. In the mental health hospital, the project had a substantial positive impact, with individuals under section no longer placed out of area - which had been a large problem beforehand. The embedded housing worker led to 'quick wins' for both housing and health systems. Connection Support received continuation funding, partially from the NHS, for housing workers. From 2021, the service was commissioned on a long-term basis.

Key insights

- whilst workers successfully put housing on the radar of hospital staff, high pressure and staff turnover/capacity in hospital settings points to an ongoing need for a housing expert on site
- operating as an embedded worker can be hard until the host team sees its value in practice - for example, a positive outcome for a patient, or saving staff time unpicking housing queries
- to break down barriers and forge relationships, embedding requires a face-to-face presence

Find out more...

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Medics Against Violence

when: pan
where: health and social care
who: people with health issues / people with multiple, complex needs
which: multi-tenure
what: information, advice & advocacy / individual & family support / peer support / onward referral / navigation, coordination & engagement / co-location, embedding & 'hub' approaches

Navigators in the Emergency Department

The context

Research on health and homelessness in Scotland (2018)^{lxxxiii} showed people's interactions with health services increased in the period leading up to homelessness. This was especially true for presentations to the Emergency Departments (ED) due to injury, substance use or poor mental health.

Hospital-based interventions, such as Navigator, which support individuals with multiple, complex needs who attend the ED, often as a direct result of violence, injury or substance use, could play a role in preventing violence/substance-related homelessness, as well as reducing re-attendance at the ED.

The intervention

Navigator was launched in the ED at Glasgow Royal Infirmary in 2015 and now serves nine hospitals in eight local authority areas. Funded by Scottish Government, NHS Trusts and ADPs, Navigator is managed and developed by the health-led charity, Medics Against Violence. Navigators are based in the unique environment of ED at its busiest times - including overnight and at weekends - to offer support to patients who have social, in addition to medical, needs. These include issues related to violence, including sexual violence, substance use, domestic abuse, poor emotional and mental wellbeing and homelessness. In many cases, people present with more than one issue, and their needs are complex.

Before Navigator, NHS staff treated the medical issue and discharged people - but often remained concerned about the circumstances they were returning to. ED staff lack the time and expertise to help patients address the complex social problems impacting on their lives. So many return to the ED repeatedly, seeing it as their place of last resort. Navigators aim to reduce that 'revolving door'. They tap into the desire for change that often accompanies a person's time in the ED - a 'reachable moment' - and turn it into action, with non-judgemental, motivational, holistic, emotional and practical follow-up support.

Many Navigators have relevant lived experience; some are specialists in substance use, domestic abuse or emotional wellbeing. They've got time to spend, and work hard to source the right support - understanding many people have tried things in the past that haven't worked for them.

A Navigator's work starts but doesn't end in hospital. They're well connected to local services and agencies, and have good understanding of the statutory systems people may be dealing with, such as housing, criminal justice or benefits. Navigators can accompany people to, or advocate for people with, these services, helping them make the right links. Then they work to empower people to navigate services themselves, staying involved for a handover period.

5-10% of Navigator patients (varies by hospital) have issues with 'homelessness' at presentation. Most of the rest have a mix of other issues which can lead to homelessness - like domestic abuse, substance use or issues with wellbeing. Where relevant, Navigators connect with private and social landlords, provide advice and assistance around finances and safety planning, and link in with domestic abuse services.

The outcome

Navigator has provided support to over 5,000 people, up to April 2022. Rate of engagement is high, at around 70%. A study, focused on Glasgow, showed engagement with the service can reduce ED attendance. This fell by 24% in 12 months for those accepting Navigator support, whilst attendance rose by 15% in the same period for those who declined it. This suggests the additional layer of support started in hospital and continued in the community that Navigator provides can make a real difference to patient outcomes.

Intervening at a key moment and offering support where housing risk is an issue may also offer an opportunity to prevent homelessness - as well as many of the other social harms people experience.

Key insights

- having a service based within the hospital to which staff can refer appropriate adds an additional layer of care, as well as reducing pressure on NHS staff
- 'being in the right place at the right time' is a key element in Navigator's success - opening up the possibility of change in different areas of a person's life at a 'reachable moment'
- interventions which address many aspects of complex lives may have less impact on reducing homelessness specifically - but their holistic approach engages with all the factors that contribute to and perpetuate it

Find out more...

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Justice partners

What did the PRG sayabout justice partners?

The PRG considered the role of police, prisons and the courts in preventing homelessness - especially noting the high chances of people revolving between prison and homelessness.

The Group also noted the need for co-ordination and consistency of service across the country between prisons and local authorities, recognising the challenges of prisons working across multiple different local authority homelessness services, as well as the importance of the location of accommodation for many people leaving prison.

The PRG noted the start of a custodial sentence or remand is a vital time to access housing advice - both for those facing court and for wider family.

The Group recommended **police** should

- make a referral to the local authority where they identify a risk of homelessness (with a corresponding responsibility on the authority to act on the referral)
- ask about an individual's housing circumstances where there is a reasonable belief someone may be homeless. Specific circumstances may be identified in appropriate regulations or guidance, including someone rough sleeping, cases of domestic abuse or a household dispute leading to possible homelessness

In relation to **prisons** the PRG recommended

- amendments to prison rules, so prisoners are asked about their housing situation as soon as reasonably possible on going into prison, and referrals are made to the local authority identified by the prisoner for homelessness assistance as soon as possible
- where housing issues are identified, prisons should work with partners, including housing options services and RSLs, to address the issues
- local authorities must ensure that the service for prevention and alleviation of homelessness is designed to meet the needs of people leaving prison or youth detention, and anyone at risk of homelessness due to impending court proceedings. Relevant partners should include the Scottish Prison Service and the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service

In relation to the **courts**, the Group recommended

- local housing options services work with the courts service to ensure housing options advice is easily accessible within a court setting

Our justice partner examples show how...

- Durham Constabulary's Checkpoint programme takes a public health approach to offending, asking offenders about their barriers in relation to various '**critical pathways**' which - if unaddressed - undermine attempts to prevent re-offending. **Navigators** with personal experience of all 'critical pathway' issues (of which stable housing is one) work with people to address any barriers - with positive outcomes in both housing and offending domains
- Ayr Housing Aid Centre has built strong relationships with links centre staff in HMP Kilmarnock, HMP Barlinnie and HMP Greenock, where housing is part of core screening for all new prisoners, with **outreach housing advice** appointments booked automatically two months before liberation. Interventions by advisers prevented loss of over 120 Council tenancies in South and East Ayrshire alone in the past year
- Angus Council and justice partners implemented an effective **prisons protocol** in 2010, which had success in preventing homelessness on entry to prison. The protocol was recently strengthened to improve information-sharing and streamline housing pathways on release - including amending the common (Council and RSL) social housing allocations policy to prioritise those leaving institutions to whom the Council has rehousing duty
- Safer London's **housing 'reciprocal' scheme**, funded by the Mayor's Office for Police and Crime, improves safety and prevents homelessness for social tenants who are victims of domestic abuse, sexual exploitation, 'honour'-based violence, hate crime, serious youth violence and other serious community safety risks by enabling supported moves to homes across all 33 London boroughs
- Dumfries and Galloway Citizens' Advice Service offers an **in-court advice** service (civil - not criminal justice) which is highly effective engaging tenants and home owners who are often at a late point in a journey towards homelessness and have not made use of/been offered previous help
- Jigsaw's **Housing First for women** involved in the criminal justice system received most of its referrals from criminal justice partners. It succeeded not only in decreasing repeat homelessness, but also in very significantly reducing the incidence of offending by the great majority of women housed by the project
- Medics Against Violence's Emergency (A&E) Department Navigator project was originally conceived of and implemented by the **Scottish Violence Reduction Unit** as a public health approach - offering support to people at a 'reachable moment' following violent injury or self-injury and linking them into services, including housing and homelessness (*example in 'health and social care partners' chapter*)

Durham Constabulary

when: pan
 where: justice
 who: people in the justice system / people with multiple, complex needs
 which: multi-tenure
 what: information, advice & advocacy / specialist assessment / individual & family support / peer support / onward referral / navigation, coordination & engagement / co-location, embedding & 'hub' approaches

A public health approach to low level offending

The context

Research draws a link between offending and homelessness, as well as between repeat offending and repeat homelessness.^{lxxxiv} Whilst evidence suggests housing-led interventions like Housing First not only reduce repeat homelessness, but also repeat offending,^{lxxxv} it's possible that justice-led interventions can have similar, mutual benefits.

Being arrested can represent a crisis point in a person's life, setting off a downwards chain of events - but it can also present a window of opportunity where the right offer of support can galvanise change. Diversion schemes addressing the full range of a person's needs which may lead to reoffending, including housing and homelessness issues, are thus especially valuable.

The intervention

In 2015, Durham Police acknowledged traditional methods of 'processing' low level offenders with out of court disposals did little to address the root causes of crime. But people still acquired a criminal record and the associated impact of that on life chances. The area had some of the highest reoffending rates in England, as well as some of the country's worst health inequalities. The Police responded by devising Checkpoint: a public health approach to reducing reoffending. This *voluntary* diversion scheme works with offenders to improve their health and wellbeing, rather than simply processing them.

Checkpoint is a four-month programme aimed at lower level offenders (for whom there is enough evidence to charge). It helps them identify and address the underlying reasons for crime. If a person completes the programme and doesn't reoffend during it, they're not 'labelled' an offender. If an offender accepts Checkpoint, they quickly meet a 'navigator' - someone employed by Police, but who isn't a police officer. Some navigators are ex-offenders and/or in recovery from substance use. Their role is to build trust and offer consistent, practical support and advocacy through the programme. They agree a contract with the client, which includes a condition to take part in a restorative approach, if a victim wishes.

Each contract is bespoke, with support tailored to each person's needs. Navigators fully assess all aspects of a person's circumstances and support needs. Contracts include conditions to address any issue a person faces on a 'critical pathway' which can lead to offending. As housing is one of these 'critical pathways', the assessment includes questions on housing tenure, arrears, income, debt, risks to accommodation and homelessness. Navigators support clients with any housing issue identified: negotiating with landlords, setting up payment plans, getting white goods, improving family relationships, advocating/assisting with moves and liaising with housing options.

The outcome

In 2016-2018 Checkpoint was evaluated in a 'randomised controlled trial', which found a 13% reduction in reoffending and 30% reduction in future risk of same for Checkpoint clients, two years after the offence. Offenders' other 'critical pathways' reduced by 18%, suggesting the programme addresses underlying causes of offending.

On entry, clients' average score on 'housing' was the second highest (worst) of all (8.2), against an average exit score of 2.2 - showing significant improvement. Most clients on Checkpoint are 'housed', so it can be concluded that the programme plays a role in stabilising housing and reducing homelessness risk, alongside risk of offending. Durham Constabulary subsequently extended and diversified the Checkpoint offer, based on consistently positive outcomes.

Key insights

- criminogenic needs (needs likely to lead to crime) persist if they're not addressed properly or holistically, which is why a detailed assessment on all 'critical pathways' is crucial - and stable housing is one
- employing navigators with lived experience has shifted Police culture on accepting people with different backgrounds, improved understanding of causes of offending and enabled clients to see visible recovery
- intervening earlier when problems are less serious is key - so navigators learn to read 'warning flags' on each 'critical pathway'. For example they may sense an offender living with parents is at risk of being ejected in future and pre-empt this by considering what can be done now to avoid or plan for that

Find out more...

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Ayr Housing Aid Centre

when: new duty (6 months) > crisis
where: justice
who: people in the justice system
which: institutions-transitions
what: information, advice & advocacy / navigation, coordination & engagement / onward referral / co-location, embedding & 'hub' approaches

Preventing avoidable homelessness for people in prison

The context

Statistics tell us that in the last reporting year, 1,574 people presented as homeless to Scottish local authorities citing their last settled address as prison (2020-21). Prison is the only category of 'property type' from which both the number and proportion of presentations (6%) have increased since 2007-08. But statistics don't tell us how many people became homeless during and/or because of their imprisonment, much less how frequently that outcome may have been preventable.

Insights from the Scottish Prisoners Survey consistently suggest that around half of prisoners lose their home when they enter custody. Around a third say they don't know where they'll stay on release.^{lxxxvi} Of those answering a question on tenure, around 35% tend to be social tenants and between 11-16% private tenants. As most prisoners serve short sentences, the opportunity to prevent homelessness, with the right advice, appears to be present for a high proportion of people.

The intervention

Ayr Housing Aid Centre provides outreach advice in HMP Kilmarnock, HMP Barlinnie and HMP Greenock. The service is jointly commissioned by South and East Ayrshire Councils. It is especially well embedded at HMP Kilmarnock where strong relationships with prison officers and links centre staff have been forged. Housing advisers attend prisoner inductions, ensuring their faces are seen and their names known. Housing is part of core screening for all new people entering prison, with appointments made at the Links Centre (remotely during the pandemic) if they have a housing issue.

Advisers open a case when they meet a prisoner on entry, and don't close it until that person is liberated. Everyone is automatically booked an appointment two months before release to discuss housing and benefit needs, aspirations and expectations. Many request additional appointments if their circumstances change, or if they have complex issues to sort out. Workers give impartial advice on housing rights, explaining and exploring all possible options. They highlight the pros, cons and impact of different courses of action, with the aim of avoiding homelessness. However, at times, tenants serving long sentences choose to terminate where they have no way to meet their rental charges.

Advisers liaise and advocate with landlords and benefits agencies. They explore assignation, sub-letting and rent payment via grants, help from family/friends or prisoners paying direct from custody. Most people in prison with a tenancy have a social landlord, but advisers also liaise with private landlords where relevant. If a person will be homeless on release, workers ensure housing and homelessness applications are made, with onward housing arranged in advance if needed. This tends to be temporary accommodation in South Ayrshire. In East Ayrshire, release straight to a settled tenancy is at times possible. Advisers also refer direct into rent deposit schemes and external housing support services.

The outcome

Two Ayr Housing Aid advisers supported 439 prisoners in 2019-20 (90% in HMP Kilmarnock) through 935 appointments. 82% of appointments made were attended. Homelessness was prevented for 221 people, from 383 cases closed in 2019-20 (some cases opened the previous year). This gives a 58% prevention rate, bearing in mind some people were already homeless on entry to prison.

Advisers dealt with a wide range of queries, including 369 contacts with landlords and 184 with benefit agencies. By far the majority of tenancies protected were in social housing: a total of 121 last year.

Key insights

- establishing strong relationships with prison and Links Centre staff and becoming well known within the prison helps maximise the number of people who engage with the service
- more bespoke support (i.e. grants, funds) to address arrears for prisoners could reduce the proportion who feel their only choice is to terminate a tenancy, inevitably leading to homelessness on release
- length of sentence (and lack of other justice disposals i.e. tags, home detention curfews) is one of the main barriers to preventing homelessness, which often leads to further offending

Find out more...

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Safer London

when: crisis
where: housing
who: people experiencing domestic abuse, youth violence, homophobic hate crime or 'honour'-based violence
which: social rented
what: information, advice & advocacy / onward referral / navigation, coordination & engagement / housing supply, options & allocations

Pan-London social housing reciprocal for victims of violence/abuse

The context

Domestic abuse is the leading cause of women's homelessness in Scotland, accounting for over a quarter of female applicants in 2020-21. Fife Women's Aid's 2015 report^{lxvii} underlines the extent to which the 'homelessness route' – with all the loss, harm and lack of choice that entails – was the primary housing option offered to women experiencing abuse. Whilst a violent or abusive relationship at home accounts for 12% of homelessness applications, other violence-related reasons, including hate crime and gang violence, make up a further 3% of presentations.

It's not always a safe option for a person or family to remain at home when subjected to abuse or violence, even with enhanced security measures. But where households are social tenants, a third alternative, which protects safety and security of tenure whilst also preventing homelessness, is possible. A coordinated, multi-agency approach, such as Safer London's reciprocal transfer scheme, shows how managed moves can work with a large number of different landlords.

The intervention

The Pan-London Housing Reciprocal was set up in 2017 for social tenants at risk of domestic abuse, sexual exploitation, 'honour'-based violence, hate crime, serious youth violence and other community safety risks. The Reciprocal enables transfer to a new tenancy in a safer area of the city. It is funded by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime and coordinated by Safer London.

Referrals to the Reciprocal can be made by social landlords themselves, supporting agencies, or other professionals. Safer London coordinates property requests between landlords and applicants and also ensures movers get the support they need throughout the process. This includes ensuring resettlement and tenancy sustainment support following a move.

Though the scheme is voluntary for social landlords, Safer London seeks commitment from each for a target number of homes per year (based on stock size). They match households with suitable homes put forward by participating landlords. Through Safer London's partnership with the Greater London Authority's choice-based letting scheme, applicants can bid on homes across the city (apart from in the borough of risk), with top priority. Safer London also asks landlords to consider waiving policies on arrears, as economic abuse often overlaps with domestic abuse, creating a further barrier to safety.

The outcome

Since the scheme was piloted, the Reciprocal has signed up 83 social landlords, including all stock-holding London Councils, spanning homes in every borough of the city, and processed over 1,920 requests for tenancy transfers. 63% of requests came from applicants fleeing a form of violence against women and girls. 86% of referrals had a female lead applicant, of whom 71% had children.

56% of applicants received an offer, with 441 adults and children ultimately moving to a new social tenancy in a safe borough, avoiding homelessness. Feedback sought by Safer London from applicants who have moved has been positive: all but one tenant reported feeling safer in their new home. Professionals involved in the process valued strong communication and coordination from the team.

Key insights

- discuss property commitments and quotas from landlords at the outset of partnerships (the Reciprocal has experienced a shortage of larger and ground-floor, adapted homes)
- ensure the scheme is accessible to marginalised groups: for example, make links with LGBTQ+ specialist organisations to ensure a safe pathway for those fleeing homophobic hate crime
- moving to a choice-based bidding system can be incredibly empowering for survivors of abuse, giving people an element of choice and control back over their housing situation

Find out more...

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Angus Council & Scottish Prisons Service (SPS)

when: new duty (6 months) > recovery
where: justice
who: people in the justice system
which: institutions-transitions
what: information, advice & advocacy / onward referral / navigation, coordination & engagement / housing supply, options & allocations / property enhancements & furniture

Multi-agency (entry/exit) prisons protocol

The context

Research indicates spending time in prison increases a person's homelessness risk: directly, through loss of previous housing, and indirectly, by increasing barriers to sustainable housing on release. A lack of stable housing makes recidivism more likely.^{lxxxviii} The nature of some temporary accommodation in particular can exacerbate pre-existing problems and create new ones.^{lxxxix} We observe not only a link between offending and homelessness, but also between repeat offending and repeat homelessness.

2017 Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone (SHORE) standards,^{xc} collaboratively developed by SPS and housing partners were cited in almost all initial RRTPs as areas of focus.^{xc} Though currently aspirational guidelines, not statutory requirements, Angus Council, supported by the wider Community Justice Partnership, has given substantial focus to this area.

The intervention

Angus Council has operated a prison housing protocol since 2010, including fortnightly advice surgeries delivered in HMP Perth for Angus residents, focused on housing and homelessness rights. The protocol was revised and strengthened in 2019, in line with SHORE standards and rapid rehousing guidelines. The focus is on partnership working to prevent homelessness on entry to prison, and to avoid unplanned homelessness on release.

The Council has an information-sharing agreement in place with SPS and receives weekly reports on prison admissions and upcoming liberations. A central team of housing staff identify and cross-check housing tenure and related issues, liaising with landlords, benefit agencies and any relevant support providers to prevent housing loss across all tenure, including Council, RSL and PRS, with the Council's PRS officers linking in with private landlords where appropriate.

Options staff aim to assess prisoners' housing needs early, avoiding the need for a homelessness application and temporary accommodation where a housing situation can't be salvaged, or a prisoner was homeless on entry. Angus has a Common Housing Register (CHR) and Common Allocation Policy (CAP) encompassing housing owned by the Council and three RSLs. In 2019, partners revised the CAP to award highest priority to applicants in institutions, including prisons, to whom the Council has a rehousing duty. Prisoners are supported with furniture, utilities and benefits claims, where needed, through housing support and justice services, on release.

The outcome

Angus Council has recorded a substantial reduction in homelessness applications from people previously in prison since introducing its protocol in 2010. This underlines the success of in-prison advice, preventing the loss of housing when incarcerated. Since implementing its updated protocol in 2019, the Council has noted a 260% decrease in people applying as homeless directly from prison.

Effective partnership working has been key to preventing tenancy loss on admission, and facilitating housing on release, where a prisoner would otherwise be homeless. In one case, information-sharing between SPS, Angus Council, Angus HA and benefits staff identified a prisoner with high arrears and legal action. A substantial backdate was successfully applied for on mental health grounds, cancelling arrears and legal action, and the person able to return home on release.

Key insights

- a central point of coordination (in this case, a team within Housing Strategy) for multi-agency institutional protocols is vital for communication, liaison and monitoring. Staff also provide a report on a shared system so other partners are able to check status of individual cases
- achieving buy-in from Council teams and RSL partners is key to securing housing for release
- joint training on trauma-informed practice for housing and justice colleagues is beneficial

Find out more...

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Jigsaw Homes

when: recovery
where: housing
who: people in the justice system / people with multiple complex needs
which: social rented
what: individual & family support / specialist assessment / onward referral / peer support / navigation, coordination & engagement / housing supply, options & allocations

Reducing repeat homelessness for women in the criminal justice system

The context

Relationship breakdown is the leading cause of men's homelessness in Scotland. But domestic abuse takes that place for women. 2014 research^{xcii} by Solace Women's Aid found domestic abuse is closely associated with women's repeat homelessness, with almost a third of participants having moved at least twice, and over a quarter three or more times. Domestic abuse was an almost universal experience for women facing severe and multiple disadvantage in 2020's Hard Edges research,^{xciii} yet few had accessed existing specialist domestic abuse services, including refuges.

Hard Edges concluded survivors of domestic abuse who also experience severe and multiple disadvantage, including homelessness, needed more 'innovative provision' than standard refuges. Jigsaw Housing First for women in Manchester (initially delivered by Threshold) - widely recognised as the first Housing First project specifically focused on women - had already risen to this challenge.

The intervention

Threshold Housing First was set up as a two-year pilot in 2015. It aimed to support homeless women involved in offending, into social or private tenancies, with Housing First support. In view of the project's criminal justice lens, two thirds of initial referrals came from services associated with that sector. Of 33 women supported in the pilot's first two years, 31 (94%) had experience of domestic abuse. 91% reported mental and physical health issues. 79% were parents.

Threshold workers supported up to six women at a time; some workers had lived experience of using women's services. Workers used an intensive case management approach, including personalised budgets and daily welfare checks. The service built links with Housing Associations and private landlords locally in order to broker tenancies that met women's housing choices and needs.

Men using Housing First often experience extreme social isolation, typified by a lack of relationships. In contrast, Threshold found helping women manage existing - albeit often abusive or fractured - relationships, was a vital element of support. That required close partnerships with domestic abuse services and women's centres, and a focus on safety planning. Recognising women as mothers, supporting them to cope with the loss of, and at times reconnection with, children, was also key.

The outcome

In 2017, the service was expanded (and funded) to 2020, becoming Jigsaw Housing First. In its first five years, 23 women were housed. The project's tenancy sustainment rate is 81%, including six planned moves (some linked to domestic abuse). Three women who struggled living on their own were supported to move in with family. Just one tenancy was abandoned. This suggests the service is remarkably effective in reducing repeat homelessness for women facing the most severe forms of disadvantage.

The project also saw a dramatic reduction in offending: 79% of women, once housed, did not reoffend. Of five who did, three were 'low tariff' offences. Only one woman returned to prison. Whilst support managing domestically abusive relationships and safety planning did not always succeed first time, women said the project helped them process and move away from harmful relationships, and that they benefited from being linked into specialist services they may not previously have accessed.

Key insights

- Housing First support for women requires a greater emphasis on women's key relationships, including addressing domestic abuse and recognising their experiences as mothers
- future Housing First projects should be able to offer appropriately gendered support without requiring small-scale, specialist women's projects
- with the right housing and support, women can quite rapidly leave criminal behaviour behind; services invested in continuing to define women by their offending past can set progress back

Find out more...

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Dumfries & Galloway Citizens' Advice Service (DAGCAS)

when: crisis
 where: justice
 who: people in the justice system
 which: renters / owners
 what: information, advice & advocacy / onward referral / co-location, embedding & 'hub' approaches

In-court advice for repossession cases

The context

Until the COVID-19 pandemic, between 12-15% of homelessness applications in Scotland each year consistently resulted from loss of a rented or owned home, following repossession action by a landlord or lender. One of the key principles of recent PRG proposals is incentivising earlier intervention to prevent homelessness.

But it's equally important that preventative services exist and can be accessed at any point in a journey towards homelessness, including at courts and tribunals, where decrees to evict are just about to be granted. In-court advice services, like that provided by Dumfries and Galloway Citizens' Advice Service (DAGCAS), step in at just that moment.

The intervention

DAGCAS has a small in-court team providing independent advice, support and lay representation to people at Dumfries and Stranraer Sheriff Courts, mainly in Heritable Court cases, that is, eviction or repossession actions for rented or mortgaged homes. The team work with people whose case is already at the court stage: some seek or are referred for advice before they've had to appear. In those cases, in-court advisers have an opportunity to establish the facts, provide advice and support, for example, on debt or benefit issues, and negotiate with landlord or lender before the case escalates to court.

But a key feature of the service is its availability and accessibility for people who are at court unrepresented at a 'last minute' stage in the process, and who have often had no prior advice. In-court advisers are able to get involved on the day and offer advice, support and lay representation. Over years, advisers have built relationships and become familiar faces, so court officials and sheriffs signpost people to the service proactively. Advisers can also monitor cases listed for eviction and approach unrepresented people. For some, being at court can be daunting and intimidating; but it can also bring the first full realisation of a situation, and with it, the first time a person may be receptive to help.

Whilst most of DAGCAS's in-court work relates to social housing and mortgage repossessions, the number of eviction cases from the PRS is growing. Whilst in-court advisers offer advice and lay representation at First Tier Tribunals (FTTs) as well as courts, the open access and opportunistic nature of service availability works less well in the multiple venues and less open setting used by the FTT. The face-to-face, last minute aspects of the service have also been compromised by transition to digital courts during the pandemic. Though an online service has worked better for some, it has disproportionately disadvantaged many others benefited by an on-the-day, in person approach.

The outcome

DAGCAS's in-court advisers assisted just under 500 people in 2019-20; over two thirds of these were facing eviction or repossession. Following representation in court, homelessness was prevented in 98% of all cases. In the few cases where decree was granted (which is more likely for home owners than tenants) 99% of people received a more positive outcome than they would otherwise have done without in-court advice - for example, an extended time to plan or more comprehensive advice on options and support. Having engaged with in-court advice, many people also accessed help with debt management/reduction, and increasing income.

Key insights

- going through the doors of a court is the first time some people at imminent or immediate risk of homelessness are able to make use of support; in-person, in-the-moment, independent, in-court advice is unique in meeting this need - digital equivalents may exclude some of those most likely to benefit
- private tenants have fewer protections and less access to advice/support than social tenants. Tenants are also less likely to be represented at tribunals than their landlords yet access to in-court advice is perversely lower in the tribunal system. This must be addressed if we want to prioritise prevention
- in-court advice plays a key role in preventing homelessness. But though tenants/owners face court action in every part of Scotland, in-court advice provision and capacity can be a postcode lottery

Find out more...

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Wider community partners

What did the PRG sayabout community partners?

The remit of the PRG was to focus on legal duties that might be placed on relevant public services. However, we know that other partners in the community can make significant contributions to preventing homelessness. These partners will often be crucial in the design of an effective system of preventative services.

In addition to action to prevent homelessness in individual cases, effective homelessness prevention requires services to **work together** and **plan strategically** to identify need and ensure structures and arrangements are in place to address issues which may eventually lead to homelessness as early as possible.

Requiring a focus on homelessness prevention in **planning across public services** builds on the Fairer Scotland public sector equality duty to reduce inequalities of outcome as a result of socio-economic disadvantage, and will help to join up related strategic local priorities, such as child poverty, community justice, mental health, employment opportunities, addressing violence against women and girls, missing persons etc.

The PRG recommended that:

- community planning partners set out and establish in **Locality Plans** the impact of homelessness, emerging issues and joint working to address this
- a community planning statement be included within the **Local Housing Strategy**

Note: 'Community planning partners' include

- public bodies responsible for facilitating and managing the community planning process (local authorities, NHS Scotland, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Scottish Enterprise)
- bodies required in law to participate in community planning (including Scottish Government agencies, educational bodies)
- any other public body (i.e. DWP) or organisations that represent private companies (i.e. employers)
- third sector or community organisations (feeding in through third sector interface)

Our wider community partner examples show how...

- Crisis Skylight Edinburgh **co-located** a **housing coach** in Wester Hailes **Jobcentre Plus** to improve work coach awareness of homelessness and encourage referrals for advice and support. The partnership grew into a citywide initiative, which now sees work coaches identifying housing risks which could lead to homelessness, and acting on that information - enabling prevention work to take place
- Aspire Oxford employed **community navigators** – people with personal experience of homelessness – to connect with people in the places they already go to (i.e. Jobcentres, community centres, foodbanks) and offer navigation, brokerage and support to prevent homelessness, with a great success rate
- Bethany Christian Trust's befriending service, funded by Edinburgh's Integration Joint Board, works with people at risk of homelessness or recently rehoused, recognising the key role played by **community connections** and **social networks** in preventing housing breakdown. A key difference with formal support is that a befriender, as a volunteer, is not paid to be in a person's life
- community food initiative Sufra NW in Brent, purposefully created as 'more than a **food bank**', aims to address the root causes of poverty, strengthen community and connect people into mainstream services. Hundreds of guests used Sufra's **in-house advice** and **housing support** last year, with 46 guests helped to regularise immigration status and 27 directly housed through their community landlord liaison work
- Street Connect's community drop-in cafes, **recovery** groups, 1:1 work and facilitated access to residential rehabilitation from various West coast churches offers low threshold, ongoing support to people at different stages of recovery. Many people using Street Connect's community recovery services report substance issues have affected their housing stability and report improved housing outcomes after engaging in support
- Link Up's community development programmes act as a long-term, 'bottom up' catalysts in local areas experiencing multiple disadvantage, bringing local people together to have fun, make friends and progress issues which matter to them. **Inspiring Leith** runs a community garden, 'dry' music/open mic nights and resident activity improving experiences of life in multi-storey blocks
- East Ayrshire Council's approach to improving outcomes for **Gypsy Travellers** cuts across many community planning partners and is focused on engagement not enforcement. A dedicated officer aims to gather a more sensitive understanding of housing needs and wishes, challenge stigma and improve processes (i.e. planning) for this group
- Oxfordshire Homeless Movement demonstrates the way in which a committed group of community partners can come together with purpose to raise funds and fill gaps in services statutory partners can't always fill - in this case, providing a housing-led service for people with **no recourse to public funds**, preventing street homelessness

Crisis Skylight Edinburgh & Jobcentre Plus (JCP)

when: new duty (6 months) > crisis
where: social security & welfare
who: people with money issues
which: multi-tenure
what: information, advice & advocacy / individual & family support / onward referral / training & awareness raising / co-location, embedding & 'hub' approaches

Co-located housing workers in Jobcentres

The context

Many of the situations which bring people into contact with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), such as changes in household circumstances and reductions in income, can also be causes and/or indicators of housing difficulties and, in the most extreme cases, homelessness. So the DWP is uniquely placed to identify housing risk and intervene before someone becomes homeless, thereby simultaneously improving their ability to look for, obtain and stay in work (or work-related activity).

In England, the 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) placed new duties on local authorities as well as on certain public bodies. As one of those bodies, Jobcentre Plus (JCP) is now subject to a duty to refer homeless or at risk households to Councils. Before the HRA became law, joint preventative working between Crisis and JCPs was already happening in Edinburgh. This shows what can be achieved in practice when partners work together, outwith the statutory framework.

The intervention

Crisis Skylight Edinburgh and Wester Hailes JCP began to work together in 2016. Their initial objective was to improve the support available to people who were homeless and using JCP services, reducing the 'pillar to post' experience many faced when interacting with homelessness and benefits systems. Working with JCP's homelessness lead, Crisis delivered training on homelessness and wider support services to JCP staff, and offered an informal point of contact for work coaches with housing and homelessness questions. Crisis co-located a progression coach in Wester Hailes JCP once fortnightly.

Work coaches book in appointments for claimants who are homeless or at risk. Crisis provides information, advice, signposting, advocacy, and a full keyworker service, if needed. It transpired early on within the partnership that defining 'at risk of homelessness' was not clear-cut for work coaches. So it made sense for referrals to be made for 'housing problems' more widely, enabling earlier preventative work, as well as support for people who were already homeless.

The approach was extended to the other Edinburgh JCPs, with a dedicated Crisis coach partnering with a particular JCP and building a relationship with work coaches. Later in 2016, a similar integrated model of housing and employment support, also involving the local authority and largest social landlord was trialled in Newcastle, with subsequent Crisis/JCP partnerships in Merseyside, Birmingham and Brent.^{xciiv}

The outcome

In the early years of the partnership, training and regular presence of the Crisis worker increased work coaches' confidence, understanding and skills identifying homelessness and homelessness risk. Crisis workers noted lower use of sanctions and increased use of homelessness easements for shared clients.

More preventative referrals have increased over time. The Crisis coach has strong links with other housing (and non-housing) advice and support agencies in the local area with an earlier intervention remit, and can 'plug into' these services. In the past two years (2019-2021) Wester Hailes JCP made over 100 referrals to Crisis (figures lower than previous years due to the pandemic). Around a third of those were for households at risk of homelessness - with homelessness prevented in 81% of cases.

Key insights

- co-locating a dedicated worker in a service builds confidence, trust and understanding in both directions; as a relationship, it grows over time: one-off training doesn't pay the same dividends
- identifying homelessness can be easier than picking up housing risk more widely: it's taken time to shift referrals further 'upstream', to a point when intervention can be most effective
- designation of a homelessness Single Point of Contact (SPOC) in local JCPs been key in raising awareness with work coaches, and refining identification and referral of appropriate clients

Find out more...

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Aspire Oxford

when: new duty (6 months)
where: community
who: anyone at risk
which: multi-tenure
what: information, advice & advocacy / individual & family support / peer support / onward referral / navigation, coordination & engagement / co-location, embedding & 'hub' approaches

Connecting people with support further 'upstream'

The context

By the time some households present to housing options, it can be too late to prevent homelessness. When a crisis point is reached – be that with financial, relationship, landlord or neighbour problems – a situation can already be past the point of repair. There are many reasons people may not come forward promptly for help with housing problems: stigma, lack of awareness of what's available or what they're entitled to, complexity of systems, a feeling of overwhelm, poor previous experiences.

But those same people may already be interacting with other services, agencies or places (statutory, community or voluntary) who can act as local eyes and ears to spot early signs of homelessness. As one part of the Oxfordshire Trailblazer, Aspire Oxford's community navigators aimed to embed themselves in places people already used, knew or were connected with, offering tailored support, advocacy, navigation and brokerage.

The intervention

Aspire employed three navigators and three 'grow' workers, some of whom had personal experience of homelessness. Early mapping showed a wide range of local services existed. But research with those who had been homeless found people lacked confidence approaching or using services, or didn't know about them or how to access them. Key insights gleaned were that support should provide continuity (i.e. a single point of contact), involve people with experience of services in delivery, raise awareness of what is available, and work on alleviating low self-esteem.

Navigators had a dual role: direct support, focused on building individual resilience and confidence, and gap-filling, connecting and brokerage in respect of existing services. Aspire had autonomy in identifying which services to approach to find people at risk of future homelessness further 'upstream'. They linked up with over 30 agencies, including Jobcentres (JCPs), community centres, Housing Associations (HAs), GPs, social work, community link workers, volunteer centres and third sector partners.

Navigators forged especially positive links with some agencies. Work coaches in JCPs adapted questions to include housing risk, referring people with housing problems earlier. In deprived rural areas with poor transport links, community centres can be the only local 'Hub'. Volunteers, often inundated with requests, forged strong partnerships with navigators. HAs acknowledged some tenants didn't engage with them: they recruited navigators to reach those tenants and sought feedback on improving their communication.

The outcome

Navigators received just under 450 referrals during Trailblazer. 97% were at risk of homelessness, with 56% further 'upstream' than two months. Homelessness was prevented for people supported in 58% of cases. Just 3% were known to become homeless (the rest had unknown outcomes).

Research by Aspire found 100% of people supported felt understood and respected by navigators. 86% felt they'd been connected to the right services to address their housing problems, and that their life had changed for the better. 93% said they'd gained skills and knowledge, whilst 62% thought they could handle future housing problems on their own. Aspire continued to fund the service for three more years, and three Oxfordshire local authorities have gone onto recruit navigator roles on account of this impact.

Key insights

- navigators often acted as interpreters of housing-related correspondence full of jargon, technical terms and/or a judgemental tone. Such communication could cause upset and confusion, lower people's motivation to respond and make them more inclined to hide from addressing problems
- low levels of trust in 'authorities' meant good advice wasn't always acted on; greater trust in navigators meant people were more likely to act on the same advice relayed by them
- recruiting navigators with strong relational skills and with personal experience of systems reduced power dynamics and heightened trust and engagement

Find out more

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Inspiring Scotland / Bethany Christian Trust

when: pan
 where: community
 who: anyone at all
 which: multi-tenure
 what: information, advice & advocacy / individual & family support / peer support / onward referral / navigation, coordination & engagement

Long-term, place-based community-led work in Leith

The context

Factors contributing to homelessness look similar across the UK: poverty, social isolation, antisocial behaviour, poor environment (including issues not being dealt with by landlords), limiting health or addiction issues, and, overwhelmingly, relationship breakdown. Strong personal networks and strong communities, which most people rely on before seeking 'formal' support from 'services' and/or after such support ends, can be protective factors against all of these.

Yet we often fail to consider the role of community in preventing homelessness. Recent research^{xcv} suggests social/community integration (the stage beyond 'paid' support), represent '*the nut that's not yet been cracked*' in relation to Housing First. Place-based approaches like Inspiring Scotland's^{xcvi} Link Up, running since 2012 in nine areas amongst the 5-10% most deprived nationally,^{xcvii} grasp the foundational role personal relationships and community can play in addressing complex social problems.

The intervention

Link Up was devised for the 'long-haul', in recognition that short-term, 'innovation' funding is often ineffective in addressing longstanding inequality. Use of the SIMD to target localities is Link Up's only 'top-down' aspect. Its projects don't 'provide a service' and have no set agenda. But they all seek to enable individual and local change, using an asset-based community development approach. This means teasing out what's strong in a locality, not what's wrong. Link Up workers act as catalysts, harnessing people's interests and helping building trust and connection. Each project is based within a local 'host' organisation.

In Leith, Edinburgh,^{xcviii} homelessness charity Bethany Christian Trust hosts 'Inspiring Leith' and two Link Up workers. Anyone in the community can join. People *can* be referred (often by community link workers, or other statutory/non-statutory local services), but 'word of mouth' works best. The focus is on inclusion and ability to work with the complexity of people's lives. Workers don't do assessments or hold caseloads. They tailor their approach, for example, meet someone one-to-one for coffee if they're anxious about coming to a group. They have flexibility to offer more direct help if someone is facing practical challenges, such as benefits, housing or court issues, or needs emotional support.

Link Up workers support people to build friendships, share skills, take forward purposeful activities and have fun. Inspiring Leith's groups (all of which came from, and are run by, local people) include peer recovery, upcycling, books, Zumba and a monthly, dry, open mic event. They support two community gardens, and are supporting a new residents' group in multi-storey block, Cables Wynd House, to advocate for housing rights and engage constructively with the Council, as the principal landlord.

The outcome

In 2020-21, 449 people engaged with Inspiring Leith. Over 50 (many impacted by trauma, addiction, poor health or isolation) engaged weekly. In Cables Wynd House, the residents' group hosted a councillor walk-about, triggering action from the Council, and a longer-term improvement plan. A 2020 survey found most Link Up participants knew no one locally they could rely on for help, lacked confidence around others and felt unable to influence what happened locally, before engaging. All indicators reversed - some significantly - after getting involved. 70% said they now had more friends; 62% were more able to cope with life.

An early analysis found for every £1 invested, Link Up delivered economic benefits between £2.14 and £3.53.^{xix} This doesn't directly evidence homelessness prevention. But projects which show they bolster social capital, inclusion, self-efficacy, resilience and active citizenship in areas of higher homelessness risk clearly play an upstream role in reducing this risk, by enhancing fundamental, human, protective factors.

Key insights

- projects which offer flexibility of access and relational engagement suit people who can't engage with traditional models of 'help'; they feel natural and normal, rather than stigmatising, or targeted at deficiencies
- supportive relationships, confidence and self-esteem – between individuals and across a locality – play a primary role in addressing the inequalities which concern every public service (including housing)
- all homelessness starts (and ends) in a community, so place-based work is a crucial element of prevention

Find out more...

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Sufra NW London

when: new duty (6 months) > crisis
where: community
who: people with money issues / non UK nationals
which: multi-tenure
what: information, advice & advocacy / individual & family support / peer support / onward referral / co-location, embedding & 'hub' approaches / housing supply, allocations & options

In-house welfare & housing advice in local foodbank

The context

Whilst some people facing serious housing problems are in contact with other statutory agencies before they approach homelessness teams, others who are at risk may have no prior contact with public services, for various reasons. But some of those people may use community-based, low threshold services, such as foodbanks.

The Trussell Trust says hunger in the UK is not a question of food, but a question of poverty.^c The main drivers of foodbank use are benefit issues, changes in circumstances, ill health and a lack of formal or informal support: all factors which contribute to homelessness. One foodbank in the London Borough of Brent has been making these links since it opened in 2013.

The intervention

Sufra NW London (Sufra) is a community food initiative, served by over 150 local volunteers, based on St. Raphael's Estate - Brent's most disadvantaged neighbourhood. Food poverty is linked to high rents and the welfare system, particularly the benefit cap. Over a quarter of Sufra's guests in a typical week are in work; over half are families with children; and many live in the PRS. Brent is one of the most diverse boroughs in the UK, with over 600 languages spoken. Many guests are not proficient in English and a significant group have no recourse to public funds due to their immigration status. This includes high numbers of refugees and asylum seekers, as well as European Economic Area (EEA) nationals.

All foodbanks mitigate the impact of poverty, but Sufra explicitly aims to address its root causes at the same time. Its founders recognised the potential of foodbanks to reach vulnerable people, often those in 'hidden' poverty who may not be in touch with other services. But they also believed more needed to be done to help people solve the problems which brought them there in the first place. So Sufra developed a variety of other services in the same premises: services reflective of the experiences of their guests, for which there is little or no provision locally. Sufra is also well linked into statutory services, including local authority welfare and housing options and the NHS. Its aim is to connect people into support, rather than duplicate work.

Sufra offers a welfare rights service, including housing advice and advocacy, to guests using the foodbank. Advisers help with issues such as rent, Council Tax, service charges, energy advice and landlord negotiation. Advisers also provide support to people with immigration-related issues, including access to pro-bono solicitors, English classes, education, volunteering and work. Support includes help to get ID, navigate forms and applications, challenge decisions and regularise status. For people who are street homeless (often EEA nationals), the service can help directly to find and access private lets.

The outcome

In 2019-20, over 12,300 people used Sufra's foodbank. A third of guests received professional welfare advice, with the service obtaining £268,566 in benefits or other payments for guests. Many people accessing welfare advice also had housing problems. Last year, over half of those also received housing advice, advocacy or support – all helping to reduce homelessness risk. 46 households with no recourse to public funds were assisted to regularise their status and access services. Over 60 homeless households were supported with advice and casework, with 27 (some of whom first presented with no recourse to public funds) housed directly through Sufra's advice service and landlord liaison work.

Key insights

- many people attending foodbanks are entitled to benefits or welfare support they're not claiming. This can be due to lack of awareness or understanding, a lack of proficiency in English or digital exclusion
- running specific campaigns at the foodbank and in the wider community, such as support to apply for warm homes discounts or a drive for school uniforms, can help highlight issues
- Universal Credit has generated a greater need for advice and support on various matters Housing Benefit automatically catered for in the past, such as Council Tax support and certain service charges

Find out more...

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Street Connect

when: pan
where: community
who: people with substance issues
which: multi-tenure
what: specialist support / peer support / onward referral / mediation, befriending & mentoring

Faith-based, community-led recovery support

The context

In Scotland statistics consistently indicate that around 13% of homelessness applications each year (just over 3,000 households) cite drug or alcohol dependency as a reason for failing to maintain housing. This may not be the direct cause, or the only contributing factor, but substance use clearly has a close relationship with homelessness. Recent research cited substance misuse as a risk factor in tenancy breakdown in Scottish and international contexts, whilst also noting a “*range of community factors*” associated with tenancy sustainment, including integrating or reengaging with ‘housed’ society.^{ci} Street Connect offers support to people with substance issues in a local community context.

The intervention

Street Connect's origins are as a Glasgow City Church 'soup kitchen' outreach project for people who were homeless, often rough sleeping, in 2013. It became evident a crisis service based on emergency provision did little to address underlying causes of homelessness, especially substance issues. Informed by their own experiences of homelessness and addiction, two church members decided to establish an independent charity. Street Connect now offers support to people struggling with substances at various stages of recovery. Many are at risk of homelessness, repeat homelessness, or are homeless. They don't need to be or become a Christian to use the service, but support does have a spiritual dimension.

Street Connect works in partnership with local churches, expanding from its first home in Glasgow city centre to Possilpark, Royston, Clydebank, Greenock, Paisley, Wishaw and Blackwood. Drop-in cafés, held at different times depending on location, are the main 'gateway' into support. They occur in safe, welcoming spaces run by staff and volunteers from local communities. People can get a tea or coffee, chat and explore issues in more depth. Cafés are promoted via local agencies, leaflets, posters or by word of mouth from friends or family, as well as through street outreach by Street Connect in each area. People can also be formally referred, but 'walk-ins' are more common.

From attending a café, support is offered based on an individual's goals and preferences. Street Connect offers community recovery support via groupwork, and 1:1 support if people want this. The service can facilitate access residential rehabilitation and shared 'dry' move-on housing (five rooms in three flats), with aftercare, where a person leaves rehab but doesn't want to, or can't, live alone. People using 1:1 support complete a transformation plan, where support is provided for other issues identified as barriers, such as housing and mental health. Those attending recovery groups can formulate a support plan if they want to, but they're not required to, as this is intended a 'low threshold' support.

The outcome

In the past year (2020-21), Street Connect provided support to 1,049 people, of whom 766 engaged in informal 1:1 support and 132 with more formal 1:1 keywork. 15 people entered residential rehabilitation. For people engaging in formal recovery support (either 1:1, housing-related support or groupwork, and who chose to complete a transformation plan), 75% reported improved or stabilised outcomes in their living situation (which includes housing or homelessness issues for people reporting these). Many of these people had multiple previous failed recovery attempts and recorded improved outcomes across a whole range of wellbeing outcomes.

Key insights

- the role of community in recovery and sustainment can get overlooked: partnering with churches and using local volunteers offers valuable support through a model which can be replicated in most communities
- recovery can be a long journey of years, with twists and turns; a low threshold, always accessible, community-led service that doesn't close the door based on time limits or 'chances', has a role to play
- some people seek out a spiritual element to recovery, others benefit from support without engaging in this aspect. Others will find it's not for them: so it's vital to have pathways into other services

Find out more...

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Bethany Christian Trust

when: new duty (6 months) / recovery
 where: community
 who: anyone at risk
 which: rented / owned
 what: mediation, befriending & mentoring

Volunteer community befriending

The context

Recent research on tenancy sustainment in Scotland underlined social isolation and lack of connections in an area often feature as reasons for tenancies breaking down.^{cii} Research tells us people often lose or reduce their informal support networks during homelessness, relying more on formal, paid supports.^{ciii} This can create a trigger point when support ends on or soon after rehousing.

Scottish Government's 2009 Guidance^{civ} recognised the positive role of social networks in preventing homelessness, "particularly befriending, mentoring and mediation". But 2013 research^{cv} found though most Councils saw a link between social networks and prevention, less than a third commissioned mentoring or befriending services. Bethany Christian Trust's Passing the Baton service has been making these connections since 2006.

The intervention

Bethany's befriending service was devised by a hostel manager who noticed a gap in support for people moving on from temporary accommodation into their own homes – often in areas of Edinburgh they didn't know well or have connections in. Whilst formal housing support was available for initial tenancy set up and practical help, a more holistic focus on building confidence to make connections in the local area and be part of a community was often lacking. The Health and Social Care Partnership now funds the service, in recognition of the role befriending can play in reducing health and social inequalities.

Passing the Baton is run by two paid staff and has 19 volunteer befrienders. As it's specifically focused on sustaining homes and preventing homelessness, referrals can be made for people who've just moved into a home from homelessness, or who may be at risk of future tenancy breakdown. Most referrals come from community link workers, social workers and housing support agencies. Befrienders are PVG-checked and offered prior and ongoing training on subjects like good listening, self-care and mental health awareness. Befrienders are members of a local church; people they befriend can be of any faith, or none.

Befrienders are carefully matched with a befriender and offer up to two hours weekly for up to a year, based on mutual agreement. They aim to journey with the person, find out their interests and goals, and build a relationship. They might do this by meeting for coffee, going for a walk or supporting them to get to know and/or attend local gyms, creative classes or support groups. Befriendeds may also go onto other roles at Bethany, such as volunteering in their other services or, for example, sitting on interview panels for senior staff (including the CEO). The service is qualitatively different to a support worker. The befriender isn't paid to be in a person's life, and generally derive as much benefit as the befriender.

The outcome

Since 2019, 86 people have been befriended by Passing the Baton. Each one is sustaining their tenancy. 60% feel more connected to the community and report feeling less isolated. 50% agree they've increased their 'circle of relationships' and feel more positive about the future. 40% deem their health and well-being has improved (note: these outcomes were achieved during the COVID-19 pandemic).

Analysis^{cvi} by consultancy Oxera in 2015 for St Vincent de Paul, which also offers volunteer-led befriending, found a benefit–cost ratio of 2.87 (i.e. £2.87 of benefits for £1 of costs). The consultant stated explicitly they expected similar ratios for agencies offering similar services. The low cost of a largely volunteer-run service, with the added mutual benefit accrued by volunteers, makes befriending especially cost-effective and replicate-able, as recommended by the Cinnamon Network,^{cvi} which endorsed Passing the Baton.

Key insights

- social/community networks should form a greater part of a housing support assessment so befriending referrals can be made early, and not simply because formal support is ending
- it's crucial to ensure volunteers have the right resources, training and supervision, and to keep in regular touch with them to ensure they feel supported and know their contribution is recognised
- whilst volunteers need to be available and responsive, it's also important to set clear boundaries with people supported, for example, around exchanging gifts or sharing personal information

Find out more...

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East Ayrshire Council

when: upstream
where: community
who: Gypsy/Travellers
which: multi-tenure, including mobile
what: information, advice & advocacy / training & awareness raising / navigation, coordination & engagement / housing supply, options & allocations

Engaging with Gypsy / Travellers & roadside encampments

The context

Gypsy/Travellers have some of the poorest life outcomes in society, and can experience discrimination as part of everyday life. Housing is a key terrain on which the circumstances of this ethnic minority can be substantially improved or worsened. In Scotland, we know there's a shortage of stopping places and fixed sites, barriers to accessing planning processes, and poor standards on some sites. Such factors may lead to unauthorised roadside encampments or Gypsy/Travellers feeling conventional housing is their only choice. Racial harassment is an additional issue that can affect housing sustainment, be that settled or mobile.

HARSAG's 2020 report^{cvi} recommends RRTPs include bespoke prevention, support and housing pathways for the Gypsy/Traveller community. Preventing homelessness has different meanings and risk factors for travelling and settled communities. One Scottish local authority has been taking steps to elaborate a more bespoke approach across the board.

The intervention

In 2018, East Ayrshire Council recognised its understanding of Gypsy/Travellers residing in and passing through the area could be improved. High level census data, local counts and annual records of unauthorised encampments could not on their own offer an accurate picture of the housing needs and preferences of Gypsy/Travellers. A more person-centred, consultative approach was needed. In 2019, the Council created the role of Gypsy/Traveller Integration & Engagement Officer to provide a consistent point of contact between Gypsy/Travellers and various Council teams. The Officer set up a Steering Group to ensure a systematic approach to enhancing Council services for Gypsy/Travellers in East Ayrshire.

The Council is currently developing an 'engagement-based approach' to encampments - moving away from the previous focus on enforcement. The Officer engages in meaningful dialogue with families at roadside encampments, providing multi-agency services where needed. Basic provision such as access to water, waste disposal and other services are offered throughout the encampment's stay. The Officer engages with families and where appropriate facilitates access to health, education and welfare services. This also provides an opportunity to consult Gypsy/Travellers on their needs and preferences for future temporary and permanent, culturally appropriate, accommodation locally, to inform the Council's strategic plans.

Negative beliefs, stereotypes and discrimination can undermine housing for Gypsy/Travellers, frustrate planning applications and fuel community hostilities against sites. The Officer thus has a remit to improve cultural awareness and understanding of Gypsy/Travellers across the Council, community planning partners, elected members and communities. In line with the training and development framework, over 500 staff completed awareness-raising training on issues faced by Gypsy/Travellers. The Officer also worked closely with the Council's media team to devise content which challenges stereotypes and promotes inclusivity.

The outcome

The engagement-based approach resulted in a 'no evictions' policy being extended to roadside encampments, as well as rented tenures, during the pandemic. Since the onset of the pandemic, there has been fewer roadside encampments visiting East Ayrshire than in previous years. However, where there have been encampments, the approach has enabled the Council to build trust, leading to improved engagement. This helps in identifying the actual housing needs of Gypsy/Travellers on encampments. This approach will be further developed and applied to future encampments.

Key insights

- challenging discrimination, tackling stigma and promoting inclusion is a key part of any work to improve the lives of Gypsy/Travellers (including work on improving housing and support)
- promote engagement and inclusion in managing roadside encampments - rather than enforcement
- preventing homelessness is not just a task for homelessness services: many Gypsy/Travellers don't wish to use these services nor see themselves as homeless, even if they are in law

Find out more...

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Oxfordshire Homeless Movement

when: crisis > recovery
where: community
who: non-UK nationals
which: rented
what: information, advice & advocacy / specialist assessment & support / peer support / financial support / onward referral / navigation, coordination & engagement / housing supply, options & allocations

Partnership approach to housing people with no recourse to public funds

The context

The PRG focused on people at risk of homelessness who are eligible for statutory assistance. Yet early intervention can ring hollow for those who have no recourse to public funds (NRPF), and for whom stable housing can be impossible to achieve in the first place. During the pandemic, however, progress was made for people with NRPF in the 'crisis' prevention space. Public health measures across the UK required anyone who was roofless to be offered accommodation, regardless of entitlement.

This period of respite '*motivated a higher ambition and lower tolerance of this issue in Scotland*'.^{cx} It stimulated statutory and third sectors to shape a systems approach to 'designing out' destitution. The resulting Fair Way Scotland plan sets out a range of housing and support pathways for people with NRPF at risk of homelessness. It seeks to connect existing services and leverage new funding to fill gaps. Procurement of safe housing in ordinary community settings is one of these. A partnership in Oxfordshire has been on a similar journey - and is taking an innovative approach to this challenge.

The intervention

Councils in Oxford and adjoining Shires were planning a regional rapid rehousing transition before the pandemic,^{cx} which saw over 200 people who had been sleeping rough accommodated. True to housing-led principles, Councils, housing providers and third sector partners worked together to find homes for those people. But strengths-based assessments carried out in interim accommodation venues showed 21 individuals with NRPF faced an end to their accommodation and a total absence of onward housing options. Oxfordshire Homeless Movement (OHM)^{cx1} - a 'gateway' or 'shop window' which connects partners and fills gaps in services - identified this group as a priority statutory services could not help with before COVID-19. The pandemic gave them the impetus to launch a five-year 'NRPF project'.

OHM set up a working group, which designed a prospectus for the project. A mini-tender process followed, with three delivery partners chosen. Asylum Welcome offers immigration advice and advocacy. Connection Support provides support; their workers have personal experience of NRPf status, and speak many different languages. Aspire carries out property management. OHM continues to fundraise from campaigns, philanthropy and grants, to meet the project's annual budget (circa £250,000). By supporting people with personal and legal matters in a settled home, some will obtain settled status. Others may decide to return to their country of origin. But the project is also committed to supporting people who are in neither of these groups.

The project follows rapid rehousing principles (which Oxfordshire Councils have also adopted). The core insight is that without stable housing, no person is likely to be safe, well or able to contribute to society. Securing safe housing is the first, not last, step for people with NRPf (as with anyone else). OHM has tested various ways of procuring housing, including appealing to (social and PRS) landlords for units at peppercorn rent, negotiating 'meanwhile use' of empty homes and exploring cross-subsidy models. Housing must be available for a period of years - not days or months - and costs kept low.

The outcome

In year one, the project housed 12 people, and is supporting others not yet housed. The plan is to house the full cohort of 21 people identified. Local Housing Association, Soha, has provided housing for 10 people so far in dispersed homes across Oxfordshire, at peppercorn rent, and offered two more units. Two people have been housed by Edge Housing, who've offered one further space. All 15 units are on a long-term basis.

Most people share a two-bed home, but some have chosen to share a three-bed, or live alone. One person recently obtained settled status, so can start a move-on process, meaning someone else can eventually move into this property. Others are receiving support to learn English, volunteer or get ready for work (where status allows this).

Key insights

- it's vital to select the right delivery partners for a project of this nature: each must be willing to 'flex' standard rules/policies, leave organisational egos aside, adapt quickly to challenges and work with risk
- 'red lines' are important, even when working on a shoestring budget with a disenfranchised group
- a solution for people with NRPf exists - if every housing provider in an area pledges just one unit

Find out more...

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Service delivery incentivising earlier action

What did the PRG say ...about service delivery supporting earlier intervention?

At an early stage, the PRG expressed its intention to ensure prevention activity started as soon as possible when a risk of homelessness has been identified. It determined the current statutory 'threatened with homelessness' time threshold of 56 days seemed arbitrary, and too short to be effective.

The Group recommended that

- a local authority must assist anyone threatened with homelessness **within the next six months**

The PRG underlined that a duty starting so early would need:

- a **cultural shift** in homelessness services and across the local authority
- a strong emphasis on **integrated or co-ordinated working** with other services
- **strategic planning** across local services within and beyond the local authority

Our examples aim to showcase organisations whose methods of service delivery – often across multiple departments and teams – aim to incentivise this sort of early intervention.

Our service delivery examples show how...

- South Norfolk Council took a wholesale early intervention approach across a wide range of services through its '**help hubs**' - with services co-located, a 'low threshold' model and 'community connectors' reaching out proactively to people in community settings
- local authorities can partner with **data analytics** companies to identify homelessness risk earlier, and target support. Maidstone Borough Council worked with xantura using predictive analytics to find households six months away from homelessness and offer help proactively, whilst Cornwall Council worked with Policy in Practice to pinpoint private tenants with shortfalls to target Discretionary Housing Payments more effectively

- North Lanarkshire Council's positioning of the Scottish Welfare Fund as a '**Gateway**' for all food crisis referrals shows how a local authority-run service can take a holistic, coordinated approach across an area which maximises opportunities to reach people in crisis and address root causes – with integral links to housing/homelessness services in the model
- by partnering with Newport City Council to provide a **co-located, third sector** specialist support within the **housing options team**, Llamau has ensured all safe prevention options are explored - without gate-keeping - for women experiencing domestic abuse
- **co-located community solutions teams** in London Borough of Barking and Dagenham take an assertive prevention approach going beyond statutory duties, lowering the threshold for assistance and front-loading the housing options service with prevention officers
- by working closely in partnership with asylum accommodation provider, MEARS Group, local RSLs and the Home Office through the pandemic, Glasgow City Council has started to '**design out**' homelessness as an inevitable stage in the journey for **new refugees**
- Derby City Council has embedded a **place-based, strengths-based Local Area Coordination (LAC) model** of support across the whole city, with preventative benefits, including in the area of tenancy sustainment, felt across the whole public service system – including by people who can traditionally fall through the gaps in services

South Norfolk Council

when: pan
 where: community
 who: anyone at risk
 which: multi-tenure
 what: information, advice & advocacy / individual & family support / specialist assessment & support / financial support / onward referral / navigation, coordination & engagement / co-location, embedding & 'hub' approaches

Help Hubs & community connectors

The context

The nearer a household is to homelessness, the easier it is for a housing agency to identify and 'own' a positive prevention outcome, such as direct financial help or advocacy with a landlord. Moving prevention upstream looks more complex. A problem with housing may be only one part of a household's issues; creating a truly sustainable home may require input from other services.

On a universal model, earlier support has the potential to prevent escalation of a whole range of social harms - amongst which a housing crisis is just one. Whilst harder for each agency to prove causation and 'own' outcomes, a low threshold, pan-service approach to 'early help' is having impact across a whole range of sectors in South Norfolk.

The intervention

An OFSTED report was a catalyst for Norfolk County Council's Children's Services making radical changes to services supporting children and families. The 2013 report found services generally worked in silos and rarely shared information, resulting in duplication, delay and waste. People had to repeat their stories; support was fragmented. Low risk issues experienced by families were often not identified and/or supported by services - with the result problems, needs and harms escalated. Reaching the high level threshold for statutory intervention was all too often the first time families were offered any support.

South Norfolk Council worked with Norfolk County Council to turn this around. They devised an 'early help' model of quick access to holistic, tailored support for any resident who didn't meet statutory thresholds, accessible by a single 'front door', behind which multiple agencies collaborated. 'Early help hubs' were set up in local areas, with Council, statutory and voluntary partners using simple referral routes, multiagency information-sharing and triage, and a 'one team' ethos. A key strand was appointment of six 'community connectors' to reach out to families in places they already go (i.e. playgrounds, cafés and community venues), and use a friendly, informal approach to link them into supports.

Whilst not the driving force behind the hubs, housing and related services play a key role within them. Hub partners include housing teams, domestic abuse services, tenancy sustainment, mediation, DWP, employability, benefits, debt advice, mental health support, landlords (both social and private), as well as homelessness services. Early intervention on any problem faced by residents encompasses all issues which may trigger homelessness, with the entire hub focused on keeping residents on 'universal' service pathways, avoiding the need for acute crisis interventions from 'specialist' teams (such as homelessness or temporary accommodation).

The outcome

Prevention statistics in UK Government data only reflects work carried out within the 56 day legal 'window' of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA), so don't capture the bulk of early intervention activity carried out by hubs. However, the rate of homelessness per 1,000 households in South Norfolk shows a sharp downwards trend, from 5.6 in 2013, before the approach changed, to 2.25 in 2021. It is now significantly below English average (6.34), and in the lowest quartile for all English authorities.

The early help approach also led, in the first three years of implementation, to a 20% decrease in children in need, a 20% drop in persistent truancy and 7% reduction in looked after children. 95% of families receiving help through hubs did not see their issues escalate. The New Economy Cost Benefit Analysis tool anticipated savings of £1.2billion Norfolk wide through comprehensive adoption of the approach.

Key insights

- co-location and a 'one team' ethos educates professionals from all services on the full range of support available to people they work with, builds inter-agency and interpersonal trust and destabilises silos
- a universal low threshold approach to offering support reduces stigma and catches problems early
- combining housing and benefit teams ensures all tools available to each can be marshalled to prevent crisis; local landlords also benefit from a single platform for quick access to the level of support their tenants need

Find out more

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Maidstone Borough Council / xantura

when: new duty (6 months)
where: social security & welfare
who: anyone at risk
which: multi-tenure
what: information, advice & advocacy / financial support / onward referral – navigation, coordination & engagement / data analytics

Using predictive analytics to target earlier help

The context

The Scottish Government's Action Plan commits to preventing homelessness for groups at highest risk.^{cxii} Many services already target activity at groups who are over-represented in our homelessness system, on the basis "if you can predict it, prevent it".^{cxiii} There's rightly a focus on improving the efficacy of prevention activities. But perhaps services should also consider getting better at prediction itself?

One way some agencies have addressed this challenge is through 'predictive analytics': solutions ethically linking data from across council services and third party agencies to build up holistic views of households at risk. This allows agencies to target advice and support to individual households upstream, when problems may only just be emerging. Maidstone Borough Council was one of the first to team up with public sector data specialist xantura to test the use of predictive analytics designed specifically to prevent homelessness.

The intervention

In the five years before England's Homelessness Reduction Act came in in 2018, Maidstone recorded a 58% rise in applications and a doubling of households in temporary accommodation. Inspired by a conference talk, the Council funded a pilot to test whether predictive analytics could increase prevention. xantura provide an enabling infrastructure to analyse structured (i.e. statistical) and unstructured (i.e. case note) data, enabling risks and trends to be better understood by frontline teams and help them target support.

Aided by EY, the Council and xantura agreed information governance and secure GDPR-compliant data-sharing via a process of pseudonymisation across 15 internal services and external agencies, including housing register; council tax and housing benefit data, tenancy debt data from Golding Homes (Housing Association); domestic abuse sanctuary scheme and 'troubled families' data from Kent County Council.

In partnership, they designed a suite of dashboards and a textual case summary, accessible through existing housing software and enabling staff with the correct data-sharing protocols and legal gateways to obtain a holistic view of households. They agreed 'risk thresholds' that would trigger alerts to the housing team, wherein an officer with a financial inclusion background was appointed to review and act on the alerts, getting in touch with households to offer advice, assistance and support.

The outcome

In year one, 650 alerts were generated for households at risk of homelessness in three to six months, according to agreed thresholds. Due to capacity, the officer could only attempt contact with 260 of these, offering, for example: income maximisation; budgeting and debt support; Discretionary Housing Payments and/or mediation. 0.4% of those households went on to present as homeless. In contrast, during the period, 40% of alerted households the officer did not have capacity to contact went on to present as homeless. A further 30% presented as threatened with homelessness.

Many households for whom the Council received alerts were unexpected, being identified three to six months before crisis point. The Council estimated the intervention saved over £225,000, with potential to save over £550,000 if they had been able to respond to all the alerts. The unintended 'control group' caused by limited capacity enabled them to make a case for further investment. The Council has now recruited a second officer to enhance their ability to act on every alert for a household at risk.

Key insights

- predictive data doesn't just point you to households you already know/can tell are at risk: it enhances a local authority's existing abilities to target proactive advice and support
- the Council overestimated customer concerns on data-sharing across different departments: most customers expected the Council already internally shared their data this way
- the potential of predictive data can be optimised if a service commits to new ways of working, and ensures that it has capacity to act on the data

Find out more

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North Lanarkshire Council

when: new duty (6 months) > crisis
where: social security & welfare
who: anyone at risk
which: multi-tenure
what: information, advice & advocacy / financial support / onward referral / navigation, coordination & engagement / training & awareness-raising

Maximising the potential of the Scottish Welfare Fund

The context

One issue facing housing options teams across the UK is that some people present at too late a stage in a crisis to avert homelessness. In some, or perhaps, many, cases they have sought help somewhere else first, through agencies in the statutory or voluntary sectors. Foodbanks are now well-known and widely available: people in financial crisis, and agencies supporting them, are likely to be aware of foodbanks and make use of them.

There's arguably less awareness of the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF): a source of cash-based support in a crisis, which has the capacity and reach to link in with other services offering vital advice and support. North Lanarkshire Council's model for addressing food poverty, which situates the SWF at the centre, offers interesting learning for holistic prevention.

The intervention

In 2014, when foodbanks were becoming more busy and numerous across the UK, research was undertaken across North Lanarkshire with people who run and use these services. The Council discovered a wide range of provision, including longstanding services, local faith-based projects and even cupboards in Social Work offices. People using foodbanks highlighted the embarrassment and loss of dignity they experienced, and noted a lack of choice in relation to fresh food. All stakeholders agreed that foodbanks should both be the last resort for people in crisis, and the ambition across the local authority should be to reduce overall reliance on them.

Foodbank staff at the time believed anyone using their service had no other option. The Council decided to explore this, by co-locating a welfare rights adviser in one foodbank. Over a period of nine months, the officer determined 87% of people referred should not have required the service. Many had benefit/allowance shortfalls, were entitled to other, ongoing financial assistance, such as Council Tax support or disability payments, and/or could access a crisis grant (a cash payment) from the SWF. Though co-located welfare advice was successful, the extent of entitlements people were missing out on, coupled with the sheer number of foodbanks, suggested a need for a more comprehensive, authority-wide solution.

The Council decided to make SWF the central hub through which people get help in a food crisis, launching the Food Referral Gateway in 2015. It enables the right questions on underlying factors to be asked by the SWF, and eligibility for a crisis grant assessed. Where a grant can't be awarded, the SWF makes a foodbank referral. If someone presents/is referred to a foodbank outwith the Gateway, the foodbank can link into SWF for the same advice. The model ensures sustainable solutions are sought, with crisis grants, not foodbanks, the first option for those in crisis. If needed, SWF refers or signposts people for financial inclusion, debt/budgeting advice, housing support or other help. Where a person's finances may lead to a housing, not only a food, crisis, they can access timely advice via a single pathway.

The outcome

After introducing the Gateway, the Council registered a 22% drop in use of foodbank, and an 87% decrease in referrals from Social Workers, suggesting more sustainable options weren't being exhausted before that option was taken.

In 2021-22, the Council's financial inclusion team received 110 referrals through the Gateway which originated as 'food crisis'. By asking questions on housing, they directly helped just under half of referred households (45%) with Housing Benefit/Universal Credit housing cost issues, leading to total annual income of £134,500. Whilst this does not prove any homelessness was averted, it does model a 'maximalist', universal approach to advice for people already in crisis - some of whom will certainly have high homelessness risk factors.

Key insights

- with its holistic ethos and strong connections to other statutory and voluntary services, the SWF presents an ideal - and unique - opportunity to 'ask and act' on homelessness risk factors
- establishing trust and asking the right questions through SWF, rather than emphasising rules, conditions and evidence, maximises chances to pick up and address all root causes of crisis
- ongoing work to promote awareness across agencies of any pathway model is vital

Find out more...

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Llamau & Newport City Council

when: crisis
where: housing
who: people experiencing domestic abuse
which: multi-tenure
what: information, advice & advocacy / specialist assessment & support / individual & family support / navigation, coordination & engagement / onward referral / housing supply, options & allocations

Specialist domestic abuse service, co-located in housing options team

The context

We know some service responses to women presenting in housing crisis due to domestic abuse in Scotland have room for improvement, despite progressive legislation in both areas.^{cxiv} Women's Aid pinpoints common challenges in service delivery, including default responses which push women into homelessness, simplistic thinking on housing options and inadequate frontline knowledge of legal action, safety planning, risk assessment and trauma-informed approaches.

In broad terms, this picture suggests that too many women enter the homelessness system in Scotland without exploring safe alternatives or being offered appropriate support. One effective way of addressing both challenges for local authorities is to embed an independent, specialist domestic abuse service (or worker) in the housing options team, as Newport City Council has recently discovered.

The intervention

Newport City Council invited homelessness charity Llamau to co-locate a specialist domestic abuse worker in their homelessness service in 2020. This is funded through the Welsh housing support grant, with an element of funding from the homelessness service. People who contact or present to the Council at risk of, or currently experiencing, homelessness as a result of any form of violence against women, domestic abuse or sexual violence (VAWDASV) are directed by homelessness staff to the specialist worker. This is a voluntary service, which victim/survivors are free to decline if they would prefer to deal with the Council alone (albeit this is rare).

The worker completes an initial assessment of need, carries out safety planning with the victim/survivor and provides direct housing advice/advocacy and support, including on non-housing matters such as finances, mental health or childcare. The worker is person-centred and looks into all options, without directing a person into any particular one. The aim is to provide consistent advice and support, ensuring people are well informed enough to make decisions. This can result in a person becoming (and feeling) safe to remain at home with additional measures in place, rather than being forced to flee.

Llamau workers explore legal options (such as injunction orders or occupation orders); sanctuary schemes (whereby security enhancements are provided^{cxv}); managed moves, if a person is social tenant; and coordination of emergency/safe placements, including women only refuges, whilst 'target hardening'^{cxvi} is carried out on a home. The worker liaises with the wider options team to access suitable temporary accommodation, where risks are such that this is necessary to create safety. They continue to support victim/survivors through the homelessness process where that option is taken.

The outcome

In its first full year (2020-21) Llamau's co-located service received 318 referrals. 264 people (83% female; 17% male) engaged in support. Of cases since 'closed', 41% remained safely in their own home, 33% were supported to access settled housing whilst 26% entered temporary accommodation and the homelessness system.

It is the assessment of partners that the proportion of people able to remain at home or make a planned move - after exercising legal rights, acquiring security enhancements or simply receiving safety planning and support - significantly increased in Newport following introduction of the co-located service, when compared to a previous, signposting-based service model.

Top tips

- an independent VAWDASV service/worker embedded within housing options can reassure local authorities that all appropriate prevention options have been explored without risk of 'gate-keeping'
- a co-located independent advocacy worker in options teams (VAWDASV or other) can improve relations and mutual understanding between authority and third sector staff, reduce litigation and offer a more 'joined up' service to customers
- co-location improves access to and engagement in specialist support for victim/survivors who approach the Council for housing during a crisis

Find out more...

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London Borough of Barking & Dagenham

when: pan
 where: community
 who: anyone at risk
 which: multi-tenure
 what: information, advice & advocacy / individual & family support / financial support / onward referral / housing supply, options & allocations / co-location, embedding & 'hub' approaches / data analytics

'Community Solutions' approach to early intervention

The context

In 2017, Barking and Dagenham was facing multiple challenges. Home to the youngest, most transient population in London, the borough also had the city's highest poverty and multiple deprivation rates, and second highest rates of unemployment. Internal research showed one in ten residents owed the Council money. Demand for public services was rising.

Homelessness was also on the increase, with households in temporary accommodation more than trebling since 2010. Due to a dire shortage of affordable housing, families were increasingly placed out of borough with costly private providers, at astronomical costs to the Council. This context and the borough's future outlook demanded far-reaching change - in the direction of prevention.

The intervention

The Council acknowledged reactive approaches, siloed working and service pathways were inadequate to address the complex, interconnected challenges residents faced. Different parts of the Council could appear to residents to work at cross purposes, for example one team enforcing debt collection whilst another was offering support. A concept of a holistic, low threshold, prevention-focused service - where teams work together with residents to find the root cause of problems and prevent them escalating - was born. The new Community Solutions service brought together 16 frontline teams, including housing, money, children's social work, libraries, learning and skills.

The first Community Solutions 'Homes and Money Hub' opened in Barking's Learning Centre in 2018. It employed staff, often on generic job descriptions, with greater emphasis on finding ways to offer support than discharging narrowly defined statutory responsibilities. A second element of the service was community food clubs, located in areas of extreme poverty. Residents could become members for £3.50 week in return for a weekly shop worth £20. Food clubs were seen more as points of engagement than transactional food banks, with co-located services, such as digital skills, job clubs adult learning and income maximisation, as well as volunteer opportunities for local people.

Within the homelessness team, seven times as many officers were assigned to prevention as to statutory assessment roles, aided by co-location with tenancy support, antisocial behaviour and income maximisation teams. Prevention officers act early if a person had a housing issue and aren't limited to the 'at risk within 56 days' window of the HRA. The Council also works with external public sector data specialists to bring together separate, internal datasets. This helps officers easily identify then proactively target people entitled to benefits they aren't claiming, and pinpoint those at highest risk up to six months before crisis and offer earlier support.^{cxvii}

The outcome

Two years after Community Solutions was launched, whilst 97% more at risk households approached the Council, more than double the number had their homelessness prevented than was the case in 2017-18 (134 monthly, against 66). Use of temporary accommodation fell from 1,876 households in 2018 to 1,404 in 2021 (26% decrease) saving over £1million - reinvested into communities. 3,000 residents were supported at Homes and Money Hubs, with over 1,000 entering work and 500 starting volunteering. Data analytics and targeted support secured £1.4 million extra help for people in the worst financial situations. The borough also recorded a 24% drop in antisocial behaviour.

Key insights...

- progress on prevention is possible: even in one of the most challenging boroughs of London
- not all staff members respond well to working in a less siloed, more generic, person-centred way: large scale changes are not pain free and some people will decide new roles are not for them
- more sophisticated use and analysis of Council data aids prevention by enabling a better diagnosis of the problem, easier identification of households at risk and more targeted support

Find out more...

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Glasgow City Council, MEARS Group + UK Home Office

when: crisis
where: immigration system
who: non-UK national
which: institutions-transitions
what: information, advice & advocacy / individual & family support / navigation, coordination & engagement / housing supply, options & allocations

Partnership approach to designing out homelessness for refugees

The context

The PRG explored ways in which homelessness could be better prevented for people leaving state institutions. The Group concluded that intervention starting at the point a household first enters, rather than just before they leave, an institution, may be most effective in practice. The proposed extension of the legal definition of 'threatened with homelessness' from two to six months supports planned work with institutions at a much earlier stage for these groups.

At an individual level, these proposals don't seem to benefit people leaving the asylum process with positive decisions (i.e. refugee status) who have no onward housing. Refugees receive 28 days' notice to leave asylum accommodation: just half the current 'threatened with homelessness' time period. This makes early action to prevent homelessness appear impossible. Yet in Glasgow, where between 10-17% homelessness applications come from refugees each year,^{cxviii} joint work between Glasgow City Council, MEARS, the Home Office and RSLs during the COVID-19 pandemic, shows progress – and prevention – is possible.

The intervention

As the Scottish Refugee Council's (SRC) 2021 guide for housing practitioners^{cxix} highlights, refugees coming through the UK's asylum process have always already faced challenges and often, trauma, before they encounter the homelessness system. Alongside the experience(s) which caused them to flee their home country, people seeking asylum are subjected to a 'no choice' system as regards location in the UK, and, often, multiple moves between properties whose minimum standards are set lower than those for temporary accommodation. If they receive a positive decision, refugees then have 28 days to move again – usually into the homelessness system - which often causes trauma of its own.

Unlike other cities (especially Edinburgh), Glasgow saw no drop in homelessness applications during the pandemic.^{cxx} Yet focused efforts between the Council and RSLs to improve Section 5 processes led, for the first time in five years,^{cxxi} to more people leaving the system with a settled home than entered the system as homeless. The impact of these changes across the wider system enabled the Council (via its dedicated team) and asylum accommodation provider, MEARS, to devise a more planned approach to housing new refugees. They prioritised early identification of onward housing needs for those intending to stay in Glasgow, with Council and MEARS staff ensuring people received clear, consistent messaging.

The Council explores all settled housing options to avoid temporary (particularly emergency) accommodation. This includes coordinating Section 5 offers as early as possible, negotiating a pilot to 'flip' asylum accommodation to a settled tenancy (if owned by an RSL, and desirable for the household) and exploring options within neighbouring authorities, especially those with larger sized social stock. With agreement from the Home Office, the focus of all partners shifted from evicting people out the immigration system into the homelessness system, to planned moves into suitable temporary, or where possible, settled, housing. Though people still 'overstay' in asylum accommodation, they more frequently have positive moves and move-on identified, reducing protracted and/or acrimonious eviction processes.

The outcome

In 2021, refugee households made up 12% of Glasgow's homelessness applications, compared to 18% the year earlier.^{cxxii} 112 households moved directly from asylum accommodation to settled homes, without having to use temporary accommodation. Use of hotel/B&Bs, and the multiple moves they imply for this group, greatly reduced. The SRC assesses this planned response to refugee homelessness is offering a much more positive experience for people navigating these challenging transitions.

Key insights

- whilst current Home Office processes don't allow intervention earlier than 28 days before homelessness for refugees at the individual level, local practice changes can make this possible at a system level
- given the 'no choice' asylum system refugees have always already gone through, choice in settled housing is especially important; speed of rehousing should not undermine that choice
- rapid rehousing practice changes leading to better 'flow' through the system ultimately benefits refugees

Find out more...

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Derby City Council

when: upstream > recovery
where: community
who: anyone at all
which: multi-tenure
what: information, advice & advocacy / individual & family support / onward referral / navigation, coordination & engagement

Local Area Coordination: place-based support

The context

A rapid rehousing system, in which homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurrent, requires services and supports – in the broadest sense – to be delivered in communities, not institutionalised settings. It relies on a responsive 'wider service system' capable of offering the right advice and support to people when they need it, and ideally, before problems escalate. But people often find services and systems – especially statutory ones – complex to access, navigate and engage with. Short on resources, they may ration help, step in too late, focus on problems and offer little, if any, meaningful choice.

Improving interactions with the 'service system', so people can live well and avoid crisis, is a challenge for all sectors, not just housing. Originally developed in Australia as a place-based model of supporting people with learning disabilities, over the past decade Local Area Coordination (LAC) has been adopted by some English local authorities – including Derby City Council – for a wider range of people.^{cxxiii}

The intervention

LAC revolves around Local Area Coordinators (LACs). LACs are attached to a place, not a specific service. They don't use eligibility criteria, referrals or assessments. Anyone resident in that community can seek support – for themselves or someone else. All relationships are voluntary, non-time-limited and start from a person's own vision of the 'good life'. LACs first consider a person's strengths, and what their family, friends and local resources can bring. If 'service solutions' are needed, their task is to simplify, ease access to, and help navigate, local systems for people.

LAC was introduced in Derby, initially in two wards, in 2012, as part of Adult Social Care personalisation, for anyone over 18. As evidence of its impact grew^{cxxiv}, LACs were recruited in all wards. In 2018, LAC was extended to young people (16+) leaving care, and, in 2019, to people who use primary care services intensively, where a non-medical reason may drive their attendance. LACs work at three levels. They offer short-term help and advice; longer-term, relationship-based support, where this is required; and development/partnership support to community projects, partners and activities. They directly support 40-50 people (and their families) at any one time, with contact lasting eight months on average, though there is no time limit or cut-off.

Over 75% of people in Derby introduced to LACs experience social isolation, 68% face barriers connecting with others, 45% struggle to have their voice heard and 35% have money problems. Many issues people need help with pertain directly or indirectly to housing. LACs work with people on neighbour problems, homes/gardens in poor condition (including hoarding), safety/security, managing correspondence/budgets and engaging with landlords, as well as on health and wellbeing. Around 40% of people supported are tenants of the city's main social landlord, Derby Homes, which contributes to LAC's funding, in recognition of the role it plays supporting their tenants.^{cxxv}

The outcome

10% of Derby Homes tenants supported by LAC resolved or reduced arrears, 11% resolved neighbour problems and 21% sorted out issues with the 'state' of their home or garden. It's estimated LACs helped prevent tenancy loss in 9% of cases. The 2021 evaluation only covered landlord repossession-type homelessness reasons for Derby Homes tenants. As LACs work cross-tenure, and on all issues which may contribute to people abandoning or ending a tenancy, or leaving a housing situation, the preventative benefits likely range much wider.^{cxxvi} Multiple independent evaluations of LAC programmes point to increased supportive relationships, greater confidence, improved access to information, greater sense of control and improved access to specialist services for people supported.^{cxxvii}

Key insights

- the principles of LAC have much in common with, and much to offer, rapid rehousing approaches
- as a universal, place-based, generalist approach, LAC works well for people who often 'fall through the gaps' in service systems, and who may be more likely to end up homeless
- LAC plays a part in mitigating many of the risk factors associated with homelessness, as well as other social harms; it offers a model of 'joined up', upstream prevention across public services

Find out more...

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Cornwall Council / Policy in Practice

when: new duty (6 months) > current duty (2 months)
where: social security & welfare
who: private tenants
which: private rented
what: information, advice & advocacy / financial support / onward referral / data analytics

Using data analytics to target discretionary funds

The context

A Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) is a key tool to prevent homelessness, as Scottish Government's £5 million uplift to DHP during the pandemic showed. Scottish statistics don't give a breakdown of recipients by tenure, but use of DHP to mitigate bedroom tax, underspend on benefit cap cases, lower DHP awareness among private tenants and landlords, and increasingly routine use of DHP for items like advance rent in social housing suggest PRS tenants lose out. As the PRS causes more homelessness than social housing, approaches targeting DHPs towards at-risk PRS tenants have a key prevention role to play.

The intervention

Cornwall faces many challenges: an expensive PRS, a small social sector, prevalent second homes and a dispersed geography. COVID-19 has exacerbated all of these factors. Whilst DHP of £1.5 million in 2020 was welcomed, Cornwall Council has historically struggled to fully spend its budget. Most people eligible for DHP did not apply for it - especially private tenants - with the result monies flowed to better supported, better protected social tenants. To drive up DHP requests, the Council sent out colourful leaflets in handwritten envelopes with clear advice that financial help was at hand: but hardly any PRS tenants responded.

Working with the Council, social policy software and analytics company Policy in Practice found 33% of poor households in Cornwall had experienced welfare-reform related income reductions. So the Council subscribed to Policy in Practice's 'LIFT' (Low Income Family Tracker) service to help them to better identify residents most at risk and in need of support. Using data compliant measures, LIFT receives and organises Council data from various sources (Council Tax, rents, revenues, benefits), presenting it back in a simple, granular online format. Officers can 'drill down' to wards, streets and individual households, or filter (including by tenure) to target help to those facing the most significant financial (and housing) challenges.

Over three weeks in 2020, a Council officer used LIFT to identify PRS tenants most at risk of financial problems and homelessness: ultimately pinpointing 150 households, in a PRS of over 30,000. The officer contacted each tenant via a mix of personalised letters, generic flyers and calls, asking them to get in touch to apply for a DHP. Response rates showed calls were much more successful, so the officer went on to call all identified tenants, offering advice and assistance on DHP and other discretionary support, and referring to wider services if needed. Some tenants wanted to speak a number of times before agreeing to accept help.

The outcome

58% of at risk PRS tenants contacted engaged with the officer, from a baseline of hardly any responses from this group in past initiatives. Of tenants for whom DHP was indeed required, 80% successfully applied for it. The Council awarded £11,000 to rent and over £2,000 for Council Tax debt - from a few days' proactive work. Some tenants were referred on to other services for more holistic support or to help with specific issues highlighted, such as Community Energy Plus and Inclusion Cornwall.

This was a short-term pilot exercise, from which it can't be claimed a DHP prevented homelessness. But the Council deemed the dual prongs of the LIFT platform and a dedicated officer the most effective approach to date in identifying poverty-related homelessness risk, targeting help and securing engagement from tenants. It also provided a blueprint for tailored, upstream prevention work for other groups in future.

Key insights

- a data-driven approach can help identify households at higher homelessness risk, enabling discretionary support to be well targeted, rather than reactively spent
- using data analytics can help Councils address the lack of parity between social and private sectors in access to/awareness of DHPs and other support: targeting help to those in the PRS who often experience higher shortfalls and lower security, and tend to have less well informed/connected landlords
- data-led projects need to be properly resourced to fulfil their potential: LIFT automates data collation and presentation, but a real person (i.e. a staff member) is still needed to act on data to engage tenants

Find out more

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Endnotes

- i A full report on the North & Islands Hub 2019 Section 11 Project, as well as a process guide for RSLs and local authorities can be found at: [Scotland's Housing Network - Section 11 \(scotlandshousingnetwork.org\)](https://scotlandshousingnetwork.org)
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- iii *Ibid.*
- iv All homelessness and social housing statistics quoted in examples are from Scottish Government HL1 returns at: [Homelessness statistics - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot) or annual Social Housing Charter data supplied to the Scottish Housing Regulator and from 2013-21 at: [Statistical information | Scottish Housing Regulator](https://www.shr.gov.uk)
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- vi *Op. Cit.* Gray, T (2022: forthcoming)
- vii Nichols, A & Donovan, C (2021) [No Place Like Home: Poverty and Furnished Tenancy Provision in Social Housing. End Furniture Poverty](https://www.nicholsanddonovan.com)
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- xvi See Dundee City Councils one year RRTP update at: [RAPID REHOUSING TRANSITION PLAN \(dundeecity.gov.uk\)](https://www.dundee.gov.uk)
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- xviii Improvement Service (2021) [Access to Welfare Advice in Schools](https://www.improvement.org.uk)
- xix Edinburgh Poverty Commission (2020) [A Just Capital: Actions to End Poverty in Edinburgh](https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk)
- xx See page 102 in Dunn, L (2020) [Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans: A Scottish Overview: Crisis](https://www.scottishconflictresolution.org.uk)
- xxi More information can be found at: [Scottish Centre for Conflict Resolution - SCCR \(scottishconflictresolution.org.uk\)](https://www.scottishconflictresolution.org.uk)
- xxii A new evaluation is in process at time of writing.
- xxiii Alma Economics (2019) [Causes of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: Rapid Evidence Assessment. MCHLG/DWP](https://www.almaeconomics.com)
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- xxv See page 13 in *Op. Cit.* Schwan, K et al (2018)
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- xxvii In Finland this is a cross-section measurement giving the number of homeless people in one day, calculated once a year. This has been compared to the number of live homelessness applications on one day (31 March 2020) in Scotland (23,256) - with the proportion of under 25s (23%), extrapolated from the proportion in annual assessments (7303 of 31,333).
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- xxix St Basil's (2020) [Positive Pathway Framework: Preventing Youth Homelessness and Promoting Positive Transitions](https://www.stbasils.org.uk)
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- xxxii For a more in-depth example of SCS's shared living service on page 103
- xxxiii Nugent, B, Nicolson, B & Doherty, J (2022) [Not Just a 'Youth Problem': LGBT+ Experiences of Homelessness Across the Life Course in Fife, Scotland. European Journal of Homelessness Volume 16, No. 1 2022](https://www.eurojournalofhomelessness.org)

- xxxiv The Albert Kennedy Trust (2015) [LGBT Youth Homelessness: a UK national scoping of cause, prevalence, response and outcome](#)
- xxxv See online information at: [Youth Commission: Housing and Homelessness | LGBT Youth Scotland | LGBT Youth Scotland](#)
- xxxvi *Op. Cit.* A Way Home Scotland (2021)
- xxxvii IROC (Individual Recovery Outcomes Counter) is an outcome measurement tool, originally developed by Penumbra, which measures the recovery journey of people using services which aim to improve wellbeing.
- xxxviii As the law stands in Scotland, only one Scottish Secure Tenancy (SST) can be created within a 'dwelling'. This means shared social housing projects can only use joint tenancies. This is not the case in social housing in England, where individual tenancies can be created by 'room' in a dwelling which has shared common areas.
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- xl *Op. Cit.* A Way Home Scotland (2021)
- xli See [Winners of LGC Awards 2020 revealed | Local Government Chronicle \(LGC\) \(lgcplus.com\)](#)
- xlii ERS Research & Consultancy (2018) [The Money House: Preparing young people to live independently: final evaluation report. MyBNK](#)
- xlili *Op. Cit.* Alma Economics (2019)
- xliv *Op. Cit.* Alma Economics (2019)
- xlv See page 50 in Watts, B & Blenkinsopp, J (2018) [Supported Lodgings: Exploring the feasibility of long-term community hosting as a response to youth homelessness in Scotland](#). Shelter Scotland "There is a longstanding evidence base from the UK and beyond regarding the potential negative impacts on young people of staying in unsuitable and or 'low-support' 'congregate, 'institutional' models of temporary or supported accommodation". These themes are also reflected in the wide-ranging study on temporary accommodation in Scotland by *Op. Cit.* Littlewood, M *et al* (2018). Particular concerns around experiences of young people in temporary accommodation were also highlighted by the Local Government & Communities and the Equal Opportunities Committees' enquiries into homelessness, and by Homeless Network Scotland's (then Glasgow Homelessness Network) consultation with people with experience of homelessness for HARSAG.
- xlvi Just over a fifth of Scottish local authorities share this position. The others are Edinburgh, East Lothian, Stirling, South Ayrshire, East Renfrewshire and Orkney.
- xlvii The 3rd highest in Scotland in 2019-20 and 7th highest in 2018-19
- xlviii Depaul UK is responsible for the strategy, quality and development of Nightstop services UK-wide. Local partners are responsible for its operational delivery.
- xlx The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2020, effective from October 2021, outlaws some types of shared temporary accommodation for all households for longer than seven days, mainly B&Bs. Specific exemptions apply to community hosting models, 'rapid access' accommodation and small-scale shared temporary flats.
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- li Women's Health Improvement Research Project (2017) [Change, Justice, Fairness: "Why should we have to move everywhere and everything because of him?"](#)
- lii *Op. Cit.* Ozga, Jo & Henderson, S (2019)
- liii This finding came from research on experiences of the first two years of the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017). See Boobis, S, Sutton-Hamilton, C & Albanese, F (2020) [A foot in the door: experiences of the Homelessness Reduction Act. Crisis](#)
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- lv *Op. Cit.* Ozga, Jo & Henderson, S (2019)
- lvi Scottish Government (2010) [Domestic abuse, housing and homelessness in Scotland: an evidence review](#)
- lvii Dore, E (2020) [Domestic Abuse and Homelessness: Introductory Briefing. Crisis](#)
- lviii This approach was developed by the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA), a partnership between Standing Together and two Housing Associations (Peabody and Gentoo) set up to improve the housing sector's response to domestic abuse. More information on the 'Whole Housing Approach' including how to implement a sanctuary scheme locally can be found at: [Whole Housing Approach - daha - Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance \(dahalliance.org.uk\)](#)
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- lxiv There are eight Housing First principles, as outlined by the Housing First Europe Hub: [About the Hub - Housing First Europe Hub](#): 1) housing is a human right; 2) choice and control for people using service; 3) separation of housing and support; 4) flexible support for as long as required; 5) active engagement without coercion; 6) recovery orientation; 7) harm reduction approach; 8) person-centred planning
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- lxvi Wallace, D (2019) ["From the pits to the Ritz!" External Evaluation of Thorntree. Rowan Alba](#)
- lxvii CELCIS (2019) [Homelessness and Care Experience: Beyond the Headlines](#)
- lxviii Care Inspectorate (2017) [Services for children and young people in West Lothian: Report of a joint inspection](#)
- lxix See [THIS is Housing First for Youth | The Homeless Hub](#)
- lxx *Op. Cit.* Bramley, G *et al* (2018)
- lxxi *Op. Cit.* Boobis, S *et al* (2020)
- lxxii Burton, K (2020) [Welfare Advice and Health Partnerships in Scotland: General Practice. Scottish Public Health Network](#)
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- lxxix When the city's Council tenants voted in favour of homes being managed by an RSL, the resulting stock transfer of 2003 was the largest the UK had seen to date: [Housing Stock Transfer in Glasgow—the First Five Years: A Study of Policy Implementation \(tandfonline.com\)](#)
- lxxx Based on 2015 figures from Arneil Johnston (2015) [Role of the Private Rented Sector in Meeting Housing Need in Glasgow Final Research Report. Glasgow City Council](#)
- lxxxi Glasgow's PRS Hub is explored in more detail on page 64
- lxxxii The central role of trusting relationships for health visitors is discussed in detail in Doi, L, Eunson, J, Ormston, R, Morrison, K, Astbury, R & Jepson, R (2021) [Evaluation of the Universal Health Visiting Pathway in Scotland Phase 1 Report. Scottish Government](#)
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- lxxxvii *Op. Cit.* Women's Health Improvement Research Project (2017)
- lxxxviii See Dore, E (2015) [Prison leavers and homelessness. Iriss](#)
- lxxxix *Op. Cit.* Littlewood, M *et al* (2018)
- xc Scottish Prison Service (2017) [SHORE standards: housing advice, information and support for people in and leaving prison](#)
- xcii See page 103 in *Op. Cit.* Dunn, L (2020)
- xciii Kelly, L, Sharp, N & Klein R (2014) [Finding the Costs of Freedom How women and children rebuild their lives after domestic violence. Solace Women's Aid](#)
- xciv *Op. Cit.* Bramley, G (2019)
- xcv Detailed findings from these pilots and recommendations for future collaboration between housing/homelessness services and the DWP can be found in Neibig, S (2021) [The role of Jobcentres in preventing and ending homelessness: learning from Crisis and DWP pilots 2016-2020. Crisis](#)
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- civ *Op. Cit.* Scottish Government and CoSLA (2009)
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- cvi Oxera (2015) [Economic impact of visiting and befriending](#). St Vincent de Paul Society
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- cviii *Op. Cit.* Scottish Government (2020)
- cix Homeless Network Scotland (2021) [Fair Way Scotland Gateway to a safe destination, support and advice for people with no recourse to public funds](#)
- cx See more detail in Blood, I, Goldup, M, Birchall, A, Dulson, S & Hands, C (2020) [Housing-led Feasibility Study for Oxfordshire. Crisis](#)
- cxii For more detail on the movement and the project, see OHM's website: [NRPF Project | Oxfordshire Homeless Movement](#)
- cxiii Scottish Government (2018) [Ending Homelessness Together: High Level Action Plan](#)
- cxiiii *Op. Cit.* Scottish Government (2020)
- cxv *Op. Cit.* Ozga, Jo & Henderson, S (2019)
- cxvi An example of an independent sanctuary scheme in London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, coordinated by Standing Together, can be found on page 119
- cxvii A crime prevention technique aiming to enhance the physical security of the protected person or property.
- cxviii There are detailed examples of data-led approaches focusing on: improving identification and uptake of financial support in low income households (page 201); and predictive analytics highlighting households at risk within six months (page 189)
- cxix In its original RRTP ([Glasgow City HSCP Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019-20 - 2023-24.pdf](#)), the Council estimated around 10% of all homelessness applications at any one time come from refugee households. The Scottish Refugee Council reported in 2021 that refugee households made up 18% of homeless households in Glasgow by 2020. See McPhail, G (2021) [A Housing Practitioner's Guide to Integrating Asylum Seekers and Refugees. SRC](#)
- cxix *Op. Cit.* McPhail, G (2021)
- cxx HL1 statistics show 39% reduction in applications in Edinburgh, 15% reduction in Sirling and 2% reduction in Aberdeen, against 1% rise in Dundee and 4% rise in Glasgow, between 2019-20 and 2020-21.
- cxixi HL1 statistics show Glasgow's 'live' homelessness caseload declined by 3% between 2019-20 and 2020-21, in contrast to Dundee (50% rise), Edinburgh (32% increase) and Stirling (21% rise). Aberdeen saw a 5% decrease.
- cxixii Referenced in *Op. Cit.* McPhail, G (2021)
- cxixiii Scotland was the first UK nation to adopt LAC as a model for people learning disabilities, following a review of services in 2000 (Scottish Government (2000) [The same as you? A review of services for people with learning disabilities](#) England and Wales began to implement the approach from 2010 with a much wider remit.
- cxixiv Various evaluations have been undertaken since LAC was first introduced in Derby in order to better assess its impact. A Social Return on Investment Analysis (SROI) was undertaken in 2016, forecasting over a three year period with 10 LACs, the approach would deliver a social value up to £4, for every £1 invested (Marsh, H (2016) [Social Value of Local Area Coordination in Derby. A forecast Social Return on Investment Analysis for Derby City Council. Think Local, Act Personal](#). An Ipsos MORI evaluation of LAC support for care leavers in Derby found LACs developed strong and trusting relationships with young people, supported them to make progress in areas of their life and helped them to be more resilient when facing adverse circumstances (Mollitor, C, Bierman, R, Goujon, C, Zanobetti, L Akhurst, E (2020) [Evaluation of the Derby Local Area Coordination Approach Evaluation report March 2020. DfE](#). An evaluation by Derby City Council from 2018-21 found evidence "LAC is contributing positively to people's lives, supporting them to achieve their version of a good life by helping them to resolve a wide range of problems, increase their confidence and capacity, maintain their independence and increase their resilience to possible crises. Through intentional partnership working and connecting people to their communities, local groups and specialist services, there is also evidence that LAC in Derby is helping to prevent, delay and reduce the need for people's use of formal services across the system" (Derby City Council (2021) [Local Area Co-ordination in Derby. Evaluation report 2018 - 2021](#))
- cxixv *Op. Cit.* Derby City Council (2021)
- cxixvi As reported in an earlier evaluation, *Op. Cit.* Marsh (2016), the outcomes reported by the greatest number of people supported were decreased social isolation, feeling part of the community and having a sense they had someone to rely on.
- cxixvii The Local Area Coordination Network's [website](#) contains a summary of the impact of LAC based on 15 independent academic evaluations carried out on different English and Welsh programmes, as well as copies of these reports

Appendix: list of acronyms

ACEs	Adverse Childhood Experiences
ADP	Alcohol and Drug Partnership
A&E	Accident & Emergency
ASB	antisocial behaviour
CaCHE	Centre for Housing Evidence
CAP	Common Allocation Policy
CHR	Common Housing Register
CLW	Community Link Worker
DHP	Discretionary Housing Payment
DVA	Domestic Violence and/or Abuse
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
ED	Emergency Department
EEA	European Economic Area
HA	Housing Association (England)
HARSAG	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group
HB	Housing Benefit
HfC	Homes for Cathy
H&SCP	Health and Social Care Partnership
HRA	Homelessness Reduction Act
IRIS	Identification and Referral to Improve Safety
FTT	First Tier Tribunal
JCP	Jobcentre Plus
LGBTQ+	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer+
LHA	Local Housing Allowance
MMR	Mid-Market Rent
OT	Occupational Therapist
PSL	Private Sector Leasing
PREVENT1	Local authority statistical return on options activities (to Government)
PRG	Prevention Review Group
PRS	Private Rented Sector
RCT	Randomised Controlled Trial
RRTP	Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan
RSL	Registered Social Landlord (Scotland)
SHN	Scotland's Housing Network
SHORE	Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone
SIMD	Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation
SPOC	Single Point of Contact
SPS	Scottish Prisons Service
SST	Scottish Secure Tenancy
SWF	Scottish Welfare Fund
TRO	Tenancy Relations Officer
UC	Universal Credit
VRU	Violence Reduction Unit

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