

All Party Parliamentary Group on Ending Homelessness



Formal Meeting Minutes – Roundtable on what a new approach to ending homelessness should look like and how we get there

12th February 2025, 10am – 11:30am, Room R, Portcullis House

Attendees

Parliamentarians;

Paula Barker MP, Bob Blackman MP, Emily Darlington MP, Sian Berry MP, Chris Vince MP, the Bishop of Manchester, Lorraine Beavers MP.

Staff;

Damian Bailey (office of Paula Barker MP), Niamh O'Brien (office of Uma Kumaran MP), Alex Toal (office of Rachel Blake MP), Mama Abbasi (office of Rachel Blake MP), Hattie Shoosmith (office of Bob Blackman MP), Eliza Castell (office of Danny Beales MP), Kieran Dalton (office of Danny Beales MP).

Speakers;

Paul Dennett (Deputy Mayor, GMCA), An Expert by Experience and their support worker Christina (Crisis), David Robinson (Assistant Director of Operations (Housing & Support), Riverside Housing), Lisa Naylor (Head of Built for Zero, Crisis), Professor Beth Watts-Cobbe (Professor and Deputy Director, Institute of Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research (I-SPHERE) at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh)

Steering Group;

Alexandra Worrell (Homeless Link), Charlotte Maguire (Local Government Association), Vic Shannon (National Housing Federation), Megan Hector (YMCA), Alex Bax (Pathway), Lisa Doyle (Centrepoint).

Secretariat;

Jasmine Basran (Head of Policy & Campaigns, Crisis), Ben Ridley-Johnson (Senior Policy Officer, Crisis)

Minutes

Welcome and introduction	
Welcome	<p>Paula Barker MP (Co-Chair) welcomed everyone and outlined that the APPG has now reached 45 members.</p> <p>She provided an update on the actions that the APPG officers have taken since the last meeting, including writing to the to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities, and Local Government and the Inter-Ministerial Group outlining the key principles that the Group agreed should underpin the cross-government strategy including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rapidly rehousing people in safe, settled and genuinely affordable homes with appropriate support where needed to end homelessness.• Urgent support to tackle the worst forms of homelessness.• Preventing homelessness before it occurs. <p>She also set out the Group's short-term and long-term asks of the Government including:</p> <p>Short-term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase the supply of genuinely affordable settled housing by boosting funding for social homes and repurposing long-term empty properties.• Ensure the long-term housing plan and homelessness strategy are joined-up so people experiencing homelessness can access these homes and make ending homelessness an outcome of the long-term housing plan.• Roll out Housing First and nationally and promote housing-led approaches based on providing settled homes and support to sustain tenancies to those experiencing homelessness.• Explore better use of data to empower local communities / pilot and scale successful initiatives like Built for Zero.• Sustainably end homelessness for more people and reduce the use of temporary accommodation. <p>Long-term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliver 90,000 social homes per year for the next 15 years to end homelessness• Transition the homelessness system to a housing led approach – at the end of a ten-year homelessness strategy, we want to see reductions in the use of temporary accommodation, and prioritising supporting people into settled housing.• Implement Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans and hold local authorities and wider public bodies to account for service delivery <p>Key point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Government has made a good start, and, whilst we are focusing on long-term solutions to homelessness we should also

	<p>explore urgent short-term interventions that will help us on that path.</p>
<p>Speeches by Panel</p>	
<p>Paul Dennett – Deputy Mayor, GMCA</p>	<p>Paul Dennett spoke about the Housing First pilot in Greater Manchester. He said that from the pilot it is clear that Housing First works and is value for money. It saves the public purse £15,880 per person per year and 80-90% of people have sustained their tenancy over the pilot period.</p> <p>A year on from entering Housing First individuals are also seeing health benefits, such as reductions in anxiety and depression prevalence and increased access to General Practices (up from 60% to 92%).</p> <p>Housing First in Manchester has taught us that support is critical for sustaining tenancies. It is also critical to support people to become more active in the labour market and economy more broadly. It includes drug and alcohol services, mental health services, welfare rights and debt advice services, and skills and employment services.</p> <p>Housing First works and the Government knows this. There is a huge opportunity now to roll this out across other regions.</p> <p>Another thing the Government can do to help reduce homelessness is to increase housing supply and improve the distribution of public capital in housing, such as the Affordable Homes Programme, so that it goes towards truly affordable housing for social rent or in line with Local Housing Allowance rates.</p> <p>We need a national approach to out of borough placements. People from London are being moved around the system out of Greater London to the North East and North. Having a national approach to how people move around the system is really important.</p> <p>Key challenges highlighted included the fact that affordable rent is often not affordable as it is linked to the market rent rather than the benefit system and local incomes; the Home Office accelerated asylum programme is exacerbating the housing and homelessness crisis; and Right to Buy that is at the heart of many of the problems we see today.</p> <p>Capacity, strategic workforce planning, training and developing skilled people to deliver on this agenda is going to be the biggest challenge we face.</p> <p>Key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing First has many benefits both financially and in terms of outcomes for the people it supports and should be rolled out nationally. - The support aspect of Housing First is crucial for sustaining tenancies. - A national approach to increasing housing supply, investing in truly affordable homes that are accessible to people experiencing

	homelessness and alleviating the challenges caused by out of borough placements is also needed.
Expert by Experience	<p>The Expert by Experience spoke about their experience of being supported through Housing First. They spoke about how, before becoming homeless, they had lived in their family's social home for many years but after their family members passed on they became homeless because they did not know they had a right of succession. They said that they had lived on the streets for many years and had struggled with drugs and alcohol but that Housing First is helping them a lot. When living on the street, they said they never felt safe.</p> <p>They spoke about how grateful they were to have got out of the hostel they had been living in for two years. They recalled sleepless nights on the floor and feeling unsafe at which time their health was also affected. They said they were so grateful that Housing First and their support worker, Christina, were able to get them out of there. They said that now they are happy and don't feel scared anymore.</p> <p>When asked what the difference was between just getting a flat vs getting a flat with the support of Christina, they stressed how their support worker empowered them to achieve their goals. They said they helped them with things like accessing technology, which they had previously struggled with.</p> <p>When asked how they got into the Housing First, they said that he had been put in touch with Crisis by another organisation who then told them about Housing First.</p> <p>They spoke about the process of getting their home and their fear of private landlords as they can kick you out at any time. They said that everyone has a right to a home they can call their own and living in their Housing First flat they now feel that they have a home which they can call their castle.</p> <p>They said that we need to work fast to end homelessness for everyone.</p> <p>Paula Barker MP thanked them for attending the APPG and agreed with their message that as a country we need to speed up the delivery of social housing.</p> <p>Key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Temporary accommodation in hostel settings can be traumatic. - The support associated with Housing First is key to its success in their case. - They called for work to rapidly end homelessness for all, because everyone has a right to somewhere they can call home.
David Robinson –	David Robinson gave an introduction to the Sefton Families scheme, launched in 2019 by Riverside and Sefton Council. Inspired by Housing

Assistant Director of Operations (Housing & Support), Riverside Housing

First, it offers families in temporary accommodation with a history of failed tenancies two- or three-bed furnished homes provided by Riverside as well as strengths-based person-centred support to prevent homelessness that is funded by Sefton Council.

It supports 10 families per year, totalling 60 families since its conception. 55 of those families are still in their home, demonstrating that it is effective in ending the revolving door of families moving in and out of temporary accommodation.

Families are identified for the scheme by the Council's housing options team and for every £1 spent it saves £3.36, amounting to £25,000 per family per year.

Riverside utilise their own social housing stock for the Sefton Families project.

David stressed that whilst it is not Housing First, it had been informed by the learning of Housing First, meaning there are no conditions on the support that people receive, and they do not have to leave once the support ends (support is contracted for 12 months but can be flexed according to individual circumstances).

This allows local connections to be built over this period that can then help support families in the future. The stability of being able to stay in the same home beyond the support period is key to how the scheme works so well.

The families move into the property on a protected licence and then after a year they transition to a regular social housing tenancy.

Emily Darlington MP noted that this model may not work in other areas where there is not the housing stock available to keep families in the same home.

Sian Berry MP asked if the tenancy arrangement would affect Sefton Council's statistics as a loss of general needs stock and increase to temporary accommodation. She then made the case that perhaps the families should be given a social housing tenancy from the outset.

Responding to this, **David** said that this was something they were looking into due to the high percentage of families that sustain their tenancies.

Emily Darlington MP noted that the initial temporary accommodation tenancy period might encourage families to engage with the support.

Paula Barker MP closed the section by saying that one of her constituents was supported by one of these tenancies and that it had been life-changing for them.

	<p>Key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Long-term housing alongside a short initial period of support is effective in helping families out of the cycle of temporary accommodation. - Significant cost savings can be generated by focusing on support to sustain tenancies.
<p>Lisa Naylor – Head of Built for Zero, Crisis</p>	<p>Lisa Naylor gave an introduction to Built for Zero, an international methodology that uses information from local communities to build solutions that work for them that has already achieved success in the United States, Canada and Australia.</p> <p>Crisis is 18 months into 5 different programmes over 4 local authority areas that focus on different cohorts. For example, in one area they are looking at those in temporary accommodation, in another they are looking at rough sleeping, and in another they are looking at homelessness resulting from prison releases.</p> <p>The methodology empowers local communities to identify the barriers to ending homelessness in their area. It brings together a range of stakeholders to develop a list of all the people in the area who are experiencing a particular form of homelessness. The list is updated weekly allowing them to track people through the system. The data is used to bring in service improvements and then evaluate if they work on a small cohort of people before deciding to roll it out.</p> <p>The improvements can be relatively small, for example, where there is health and homelessness working together, they could look at timing of meetings, how referrals are given etc, enabling better multi-agency working.</p> <p>They look at what caused people to become homeless and what could have prevented it, what keeps people trapped in homelessness and how people are leaving homelessness and whether it is successful in the long-term.</p> <p>In Calderdale specifically, they are looking at the cohort of people in temporary accommodation. This project has been running for 8 months with the aim of reducing B&B spend by 20%.</p> <p>Since July, they have reduced B&B use by 51%. Extrapolated over the year this could save £1.5 million. This also translated to a 21% reduction in the overall temporary accommodation spend.</p> <p>To achieve this, they looked at what was causing people to go into temporary accommodation, what can be done to prevent this, what happens when people are in temporary accommodation (i.e. are they given support), and then where the council is re-homing people out of temporary accommodation.</p>

	<p>In Calderdale people were typically being re-housed out of temporary accommodation into the private rented sector. Interventions made therefore included shifting staffing levels so that more people were providing support to help people find private tenancies.</p> <p>A key challenge to expanding on this approach in Calderdale is that there are large companies in the private rented sector who approach other councils in London and the South that can pay three times the Local Housing Allowance rate, meaning there is a reduction in affordable housing stock in the area.</p> <p>Key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Small, targeted, changes that are data driven can have big impacts in reducing homelessness. - Competition for affordable private tenancies from out-of-area placements is a key challenge when tackling homelessness in the North.
<p>Professor Beth Watts-Cobbe – Professor and Deputy Director, Institute of Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research (I-SPHERE) at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh</p>	<p>Professor Watts-Cobbe spoke about the adoption of a rapid rehousing response to homelessness in Scotland from 2018. She said that this is a local authority strategy that should form part of a wider ending homelessness strategy in England given the challenges we see around temporary accommodation.</p> <p>All local authorities in Scotland were asked to develop a rapid rehousing transition plan for their area. This means that where homelessness could not be prevented, settled mainstream housing as soon as possible was the outcome that should be sought. It also means that time spent in any form of temporary accommodation should be minimised; transitions within temporary accommodation should be minimised; where temporary accommodation is required, the optimum form of it should be mainstream furnished accommodation in the community; and that for people with complex needs Housing First is the default response.</p> <p>A template framework and guidance for local authorities was created as well as funding for the initial development and the implementation of the plans. This totalled £8 million per year during the implementation phase across Scotland.</p> <p>It is not a statutory duty on local authorities, but the plans are embedded in wider strategic approaches e.g. local housing strategy guidance references the need for rapid rehousing transition plans and housing contribution statements are expected to reflect rapid rehousing transition plan priorities.</p> <p>According to the most recent homelessness monitor report, there has been a paradigm shift in responses to homelessness and there is an ongoing commitment despite local authorities being under extraordinary pressures.</p>

Two-thirds of local authorities report that social housing allocations policy and practices had changed as a result of the plans. This largely includes increased priority being given to homeless households in social housing allocation, at least for a temporary period whilst seeking to clear the very high levels of temporary accommodation use. That is in a context where homeless allocations in Scotland were already over 50%, compared to 20% in England.

Modelling consistently shows that increasing allocations to homeless households is an effective way of reducing homelessness over short-, medium- and long-term time periods.

A key challenge has been limited availability and access to affordable housing. This is caused by a lack of supply and investment but also freezes to local housing allowance rates. In addition, the housing benefit subsidy regime does not incentivise provision in line with the rapid rehousing approach – instead it incentivises support in congregate settings like that described by the Expert by Experience.

Decisions made at a Scottish Government level about how to fund rapid rehousing have been met with some frustration both in terms of sufficiency but also clarity and the need for longer-term awards that allow for planning of services and partnerships and the retention of skilled staff.

The recommendation is that England should adopt a rapid rehousing response, integrate it into local authorities' strategic obligations around housing and homelessness, provide sufficient long-term funding for its implementation, put monitoring in place from the outset, and do it alongside other enablers of a housing-led approach such as improving supply and looking at social security benefits.

Key points:

- A rapid rehousing response to homelessness is effective.
- Increasing allocations to homeless households is an effective way of reducing homelessness over short-, medium- and long-term time periods.
- Local Housing Allowance rate freezes are a key barrier to this approach.
- England should adopt a rapid rehousing response, integrate it into local authorities' strategic obligations around housing and homelessness, provide sufficient long-term funding for its implementation, put monitoring in place from the outset, and do it alongside other enablers of a housing-led approach such as improving supply and looking at social security benefits.

General discussion

Bob Blackman MP asked if there were differences in funding for rapid rehousing homelessness services in Scotland vs England.

Responding, **Professor Beth Watts-Cobbe** said that they had not done the analysis but that it would likely show that there is far more investment of this kind in Scotland because as well as investment in Housing First there is another level of investment through the rapid rehousing approach that caters to all homeless households and not just those complex needs groups.

Emily Darlington MP highlighted analysis of tracking homeless individuals in Milton Keynes to understand why they were coming into temporary accommodation. The three key reasons found were affordability, domestic abuse and family breakdown. Early intervention to prevent these things such as family counselling can help prevent homelessness. With affordability the council can actively negotiate with landlords, pay outstanding rent where arrears arise and secure the tenancy.

Expert by Experience – Raised that is no early intervention for people leaving prison to prevent them from becoming homeless.

Bob Blackman MP - Prisoners being released earlier means there is even less opportunity to prepare them for life after prison.

The Bishop of Manchester a major secondary academy in north Manchester there is a unit that works to identify households at risk of homelessness and prevent it from happening or to provide resources to ensure that it does not affect the children's education such as spaces for children to do homework. This proactive approach does not happen enough in schools.

Lisa Naylor – Calderdale Council is taking a new approach by looking at how much it could cost to house a homeless family in temporary accommodation and then evaluating what would happen if they used just half of that money to prevent homelessness. It is also looking at using some of the savings that it is making through the B&B reduction work for prevention work with an aim to see fewer people becoming homeless in the first place.

Sian Berry MP – Capital Letters in London is able to make good long-term offers to private landlords that then beat out the competition from out of area placements. Expanding this nationally would be a really good thing.

Lisa Naylor – Because Local Housing Allowance is so low in Calderdale the difference is huge compared to London so private landlords can make much more money by taking up out of area placements.

Professor Watts-Cobbe – Endorsed calls for a greater role for schools in preventing homelessness. 'Upstream' pilots in Wales and Scotland give schools the resources they need to effectively assess the risk of homelessness in their student population and provide support where it is needed.

Christina Barnett asked Professor Watts-Cobbe about how much of a barrier "intentional homelessness" is in England for some people to receiving housing assistance and how this was different in Scotland?

Professor Watts-Cobbe noted that over the last 20 years or so Scotland has taken the barriers out of the statutory homelessness system. They don't have priority need and local connection rules have been suspended. A local authority can investigate if someone is intentionally homeless if they wish to, but this does not happen often. The effect of this on homeless households is good as it means they do not have this barrier to housing. Local authorities have not seen the surge in demand from intentionally homeless households that you might expect.

Key points:

- More focus is needed on early intervention to prevent homelessness.
- Schools could be empowered with the resources to play a great role in early "upstream" preventing of homelessness.
- Removal of barriers to homelessness support, such as local connection rules and intentionality is said to be effective in Scotland and has not lead to a surge in demand.