

## **ENDING HOMELESSNESS TOGETHER ACTION PLAN – PRIORITIES GOING FORWARD**

### **Purpose**

1. To support discussion at HPSG on prioritisation of work plan to deliver the Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan with a particular focus on ensuring sufficient progress in the short to medium term in addition to work on longer term strategic change. A high level proposal for reprioritisation is set out which is intended to prompt discussion at the meeting on 12 September.

### **Background**

2. Between the June and September meetings of HPSG, Scottish Government team held a series of meetings with members to review the work programme set out at the start of the year and discuss members' views on whether we still have the right balance of priorities. This also provided opportunity to discuss how the work of member organisations of HPSG align with the work programme and identify elements appropriate to include in a joint work programme which better reflects the breadth of work being undertaken in support of Ending Homelessness Together.

### **Points raised**

3. The discussions raised the following questions:
  - Is there enough emphasis on prevention of homelessness in the short to medium term, particularly through early interventions and supporting tenancy sustainment?
  - What more we can do to support and empower the frontline and help them to tackle social isolation and encourage positive social interactions?
  - How we can ensure our communications are working as effectively as possible in support of the programme, including by telling a clear story of the change that is needed and what this will mean for services and communities?
  - Should we consider a youth strategy or prevention pathway that has strong engagement links with schools, links into work on mediation and conflict resolution and link this with an anti-homelessness/anti-poverty agenda?
  - The importance of engaging with Health, particularly HSCPs but also IJBs, as we seek to deliver on prevention, person-centred approaches and effective responses to crisis situations that prevent repeat homelessness.
4. While all of these areas are broadly included in the Action Plan, and much work is underway to progress these, discussions suggested that there is a case for reviewing current priorities to change level of emphasis on particular aspects.
5. In particular, discussions indicated that **short term prevention; tenancy sustainment** and supporting **better relationships** should all be given greater priority in the programme.

6. It was recognised that priority should be maintained for several areas of current work which are still seen as crucial to the overall delivery of the plan – and which will also support any additional efforts that might be agreed for the “new” priorities above. These include the following areas and a summary of progress so far against each of these current priority areas is set out at Annex A.

## Proposal

7. In light of discussions indicating that HPSG members would welcome greater activity on and prioritisation of short term prevention; tenancy sustainment and better relationships we propose to increase the focus on:-

### Tenancy sustainment

*We will increase the focus on sustaining tenancies ensuring that support is available for those who need it.* (Ending Homelessness Together: High Level Action Plan, p.22)

### Personal Housing Plans

*In 2019 we will explore policy options on how personal housing plans will work alongside the Housing Options approach in order to give people at risk of or experiencing homelessness clarity and control over their housing choices and work with them to build a package of support that will lead to positive future outcomes.* (Ending Homelessness Together: High Level Action Plan, p.16)

### Communications

Boost our combined activity on public facing communications to set out a clear narrative of what the changes to the system are about and why they are necessary.

8. To ensure that this is manageable across the programme we propose that the following areas are given decreased priority – and delivery paused for a period - to create capacity within the SG team and among our partners in local government and the third sector:-

### Prevention Duty

*We will work with public bodies, housing providers and other partners to develop a new duty on local authorities, wider public bodies and delivery partners for the prevention of homelessness.* (Ending Homelessness Together: High Level Action Plan, p.23)

### Analysis of HARSAG recommendations on welfare reform

*In 2019 we will undertake a full analysis of the HARSAG recommendations on changes to UK welfare system policy and delivery.* (Ending Homelessness Together: High Level Action Plan, p.23)

9. If HPSG members agree to the proposed changes, the SG team will look to work in partnership with members to develop new activity seeking to have impact in the short to medium term. We will welcome views from members on specific activities that should be considered but this could include:-

- Work with Housing Options Hubs and the Housing Support Enabling Unit to revisit and refresh the good practice developed on prevention in the run up to the abolition of priority need
- Exploring how the newly announced Homelessness Prevention Fund for RSLs and the new 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Fund can support short-medium term prevention of homelessness and building strong relationships
- Explore tests of change with key partners across the public sector e.g. health, Job Centre Plus and justice for the prevention of homelessness
- Learn from good practice elsewhere including the City of Newcastle who have successfully kept homelessness and rough sleeping very low through early prevention measures
- Set out options for supporting measures to reduce social isolation and prevent loneliness for those living in temporary accommodation and/or rough sleeping as part of the severe weather response
- Recognise that training and support for staff will be crucial in ensuring positive relationships can be built with people in homelessness – explore what can be done to support frontline staff and raising awareness of the importance of building relationships and reducing social isolation.

### **Next steps**

10. We would ask HPSG members to consider whether they are content with the proposed changes to prioritisation in the work programme and also what key pieces of work they and their organisations are currently taking forward and how this aligns with the aims outlined in the Action Plan and the priority areas identified.

11. Ahead of the meeting, can members consider and prepare to discuss:

- Their views on the proposed changes to prioritisation and any further proposals they would like to be considered in the discussion at the meeting;
- What work members can progress to support current and proposed new priority areas?
- What work is underway that will drive improvements now and how can we support this to see improvements in the short term i.e. next 6-12 months?

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Annex A: Progress so far on priorities already identified

**Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans and Housing First**

Progress so far: We have allocated £32.5 million from the Ending Homelessness Together Fund and from the health portfolio for rapid rehousing and Housing First for 2019-2024 so that local authorities and partners can support people into settled accommodation first and then help them with their longer term needs and sustaining their tenancies. Reviews of RRTPs have centred around six identified key areas of the plans including prevention, young people and care leavers. The RRTP sub-group continue to share examples of good practice and monitor the progress of the transition.

**Prevention Pathways**

Progress so far: We have agreed the initial priority groups for pathway development, and a high level approach for the development and implementation of these. The A Way Home Coalition was commissioned by HPSG to take forward work on developing a pathway to prevent homelessness for care leavers. A working group, chaired by Kenny McGhee of CELCIS, was convened and a paper setting out recommendations around what needs to change to prevent homelessness for care leavers is currently in the later stages of drafting. We are also continuing with our commitment on the development and implementation of a pathway to prevent homelessness for women experiencing domestic abuse, and are supporting the work of the A Way Home Coalition on a pathway to prevent homelessness for young people. Discussions have begun around taking forward a pathway to prevent homelessness for veterans of the armed forces and a number of pieces of work are in train to understand how to take forward work for people with no recourse to public funds.

**Unsuitable Accommodation Order**

Progress so far: Following formal consultation, we are going to introduce legislation to extend the Unsuited Accommodation Order (UAO), currently in place for pregnant women and families with children, to all homeless households. This will ensure that all homeless households are provided with high quality accommodation that will help to support them at a vulnerable point in their lives and end the use of bed and breakfast as temporary accommodation – apart from in emergency situations where a safety net is still needed.

**Public Perceptions Programme**

Progress so far: We continue to work with experts to develop a programme of work to challenge the public perception and stigma associated with homelessness. A core focus is to consider how to improve the way the media portrays and discusses people experiencing homelessness, which starts with supporting organisations working with people experiencing homelessness to talk about their work in a consistent way which portrays the people they work with in a positive and empowering way. We are developing a style guide and working with Crisis to take advantage of the next phase of its Frameworks programme and are developing plans to engage directly with journalists and editors. We are working to bring the stories of people with lived experience directly to the attention of journalists. We are also in the early stages of more strategic thinking to consider how to engender culture change across public services.