Preventing homelessness during the next phase of the pandemic
Last Updated: 1 July 2020

Who this is for: Anyone working in or with a local authority homelessness service
What it is: Initial thoughts and considerations for local areas, with a view to preparing/ redesigning services for the next phase of the pandemic and preventing homelessness
What it is not: A replacement or alternative to official (or other) guidance

==**These are intended as early discussion points. Our COVID-19 transition planning toolkit will be updated with a range of practical resources to support this over the coming months with more detailed guidance**==

We advocate working on a test and trial basis with service changes, whilst being housing-led and strength-based. Each category is designed to open up discussion and thoughts around possible future scenarios and solutions.

Prevention Category*	COVID-19 Implications	Service changes/ considerations
Universal *Preventing or minimising homelessness risks across the population at large*	Increased poverty levels, financial hardship and benefit claimants; leading to increased pressures on affordable housing systems	- Increased need for local welfare support and efficacy of local support models - Measures to increase, by all means possible, overall affordable housing supply - Increase financial understanding and capability - Strengthen relationships with DWP and local money/ debt advice centres, and between homelessness/ housing benefit teams - Review and/ or increase types and availability of financial support packages inc. affordable credit/ financial services

	National and global recession	- Increase in the number of people presenting - Current access routes and links with employability support services, local job centre/ DWP and training providers - Develop new/ stronger links with local landlords - Analysis to understand households and groups of people most likely to be affected - Take advantage of knowledge and influence locally from a wide range of "helping" services in communities, supporting people at home
	Increased mental and physical health issues	- Build stronger relationships/ pathways with care and health services, including data sharing arrangements - Further training for officers on addressing mental and physical health needs during homelessness assessments, including trauma informed care and psychologically informed environments - Review current signposting arrangements for local support services and ensure these are up to date - Consider in-house or seconded specialist health roles
	Emergency changes to allocation policies and social lettings down since March (c. 77%), creating backlog of vacant homes	- Work with providers to increase social housing access and supply. Consider creative solutions including repurposing existing provision e.g. convert from market sale or shared ownership to affordable/ social rent, acquisitions or leasing, undeveloped sites etc. - Consider changes to allocations policies to support homelessness prevention e.g. additional priority for people threatened with homelessness

Targeted	Increase in youth homelessness	- Proactive, targeted prevention work with at risk individuals and families - Enable and drive strong links with schools and childrens' social care - Work with a local network of youth organisations and providers to redesign pathways specifically for young people inc. digital apps, online, text services etc. - Review prevention offer eg. mediation and dispute resolution services - Ensure services are flexible and youth-specific
Upstream prevention focused on high risk groups and those who may be specifically more at risk due to COVID-19	Pressures to discharge earlier from hospitals or prisons	- Strengthening and enhancing prison release/ hospital discharge arrangements and joint working protocols with partners e.g. duty to refer, discharge teams, step down arrangements and pathways etc. - Improve communication with probation and voluntary sector organisations - Consider co-location of services and dedicated roles - Are you linked in with your MoJ Regional Homelessness Prevention taskforce?
	Increased incidences of domestic abuse, with traditional routes to access support restricted	- Work with local VAWG partners to increase capacity and manage move-ons - Improve knowledge through closer working with social and family services - Increase public awareness of service - Review prevention and relief offer for DA cases - Consider allocation policy and priority for DA victims - Proactively and sensitively contact at-risk households

	Likely increase in evictions from social/ private rented sector (when ban ends) with potential expansion of pre-action protocols to the private rented sector	- Redeployment or upskilling of staff to cope with new demand for preventative services - Analyse potential increases using current and projected data (e.g. track prevention cases that were open, FOI requests to courts etc.) - Provide good quality, easy to understand information for tenants and landlords. Some landlords will need information, advice and support with their tenants to maintain their tenancies and help prevent evictions - Review current offer of mediation and dispute resolution services. Proactively contact households at risk of eviction (e.g. open prevention cases from before the ban) and start reviewing/ considering "affordable repayment plans" - Review/ expand PRS access schemes in light of LHA change - Increase public awareness of upstream eviction help available - Link in with/ survey local landlord forums to canvas opinion and gain insight to design services to meet local need - Illegal eviction and other "refresher training" for officers - Preempt PAP for the private rented sector, reflecting on lessons and good practice from use in social sector

	Increase in people being given notice to leave Home Office accommodation and an increase in people with no recourse to public funds becoming homeless from the private rented sector (when ban ends) or from other informal accommodation arrangements	- Work with asylum accommodation providers to understand when people will start receiving notice to leave, how many people will need accommodation and whether they will have entitlement to public funds (e.g. whether people have received a positive or negative decision) - Work with local homelessness, migrant and refugee organisations to develop an accommodation pathway for people who don't have recourse to public funds. This will need to be tailored to the needs of different groups e.g. for EEA nationals and people with leave to remain with a condition of NRPF this is likely to be more focused on intensive employment support, whereas for people with irregular immigration status there will need to be a greater focus on access to immigration advice

Crisis	Increased demand on housing option services	- Analyse and estimate demand increases and stress-test different scenarios against current service capacity. Start building the case for more resources now if necessary - Who hasn't presented in the last three months that you would typically expect? Comparing this to the last few years will provide some indication of issues that will emerge as lockdown restrictions are eased - Establish an internal group with the right representatives to develop and implement a plan to prepare you for these changes - Review paperwork and processes to remove administrative burden where possible - Review prevention and relief offer to meet new needs post COVID-19 - Review functioning of duty to refer and joint working relationships with partners to support the service

Preventing homelessness likely to occur within 56 days ("prevention duty" in England & Wales)	More remote/ flexible working	- Consider implications for :
		    - health and safety policy
		    - lone working policy
		    - insurance requirements
		    - digital requirements
		    - transport availability
		    - time management requirements
		- Consult officers and customers about how the last three months have worked. Identify what you want to maintain and learn from this period as a service

	Increased use of non-F2F channels to access services	- Gather feedback from your customers. How have they found the changes? How many prefer this way of interacting with and accessing your service? - Rather than reverting to your previous set-up, consider your service access channels going forward. How can you give customers choice, whilst remaining accessible and providing a great customer experience?
	New ways of working and flexibilities with local partners	- Build on links recently created with voluntary providers and non-commissioned services - Enable and structure services to provide a flexible menu of support for customers in the future - Seek out and utilise the "hidden talents" of partners and maximise knowledge gained - Create environments to share learning. Discuss with them what changes can be developed and maintained moving forward Plan ongoing prevention activities with partners - Ensure data collection from funded services/ third sector meets objectives to help plan forward
	Highlighted issues around digital exclusion for certain groups	- Identify which groups need digital inclusion support - Review accessibility of current digital services - Ensure service access channels and level of service provided do not exclude based on digital skills/ access/ motivation - Link your service into wider schemes and local initiatives around digital inclusion - Seek partner support with this

Emergency	Continuation of "Everybody in" policy	- Ensure routes into emergency accommodation continue to be rapid, accessible, non-discriminatory and streamlined
Support for those at immediate risk of homelessness, especially sleeping rough	**See our [original toolkit](#) to support the emergency response for more detail on this category**	- Increased need for multi-disciplinary, assertive outreach services
Recovery *Prevention of repeat homelessness and rough sleeping*	Large numbers of people supported under "Everybody in" policy, alongside those in existing temporary accommodation **See our [principles and guidance](#) on transition planning for more detail on this category**	- Consider how you will practically prepare people for a tenancy and support their move to the relevant pathway, ensuring continuity of care and packages of support - Mechanisms should be in place to involve people throughout. Choice and control are vital to increase likelihood of sustainment - Temporary facilities should start weekly case management MDT meetings looking at engagement, recovery and move on options for all clients, with a named member of health staff to support move on - Build on networks, flexibilities and opportunities already developed in Everybody In - Ensure support models and commissioning are trauma informed, and will remain in place as long as the person or household needs them. Consider expanding Housing First as a sustainable and preventative solution for repeat homelessness

*For more detail on the prevention categories see CaCHE policy briefing: [Homelessness prevention in the UK](#)

Please [get in touch](#) to discuss the paper or your service/ local area. We are always keen to learn and collaborate