

All Party Parliamentary Group on Ending Homelessness



How to Prevent Care Leavers from Becoming Homeless – Officers Meeting Minutes

26 October 2016, 14.00-15.00, House of Commons, Room 7

Attendees:

David Mackintosh, Chairman
Will Quince MP, APPG Officer
Neil Coyle MP, APPG Treasurer

Parliamentary Assistants:

Ryan Baldry, Office of David Mackintosh MP

Secretariat:

Maeve McGoldrick, Secretariat to APPG
Rachel Greaves Secretariat to APPG

Other:

Tamzin Taylor-Rosser, St Basils
Tom Gardiner, Hyde Housing
Charlotte Lee, Princes Trust
Alice Frank, Catch 22
Chloe Cockett, Who Care's Trust
Kalvinder Kohli, Birmingham Council
Lucy Capron, Children's Society
Charlotte Rainer, Children's Society
Abigail Gill, Centrepont
Ruth O'Sullivan, Centrepont
Chris Francis, Housing Justice
Vicki Cardwell, Revolving Doors
Dr Andy Simmons, Kings College London
Hilary Nightingale, Cardinal Hume Centre
Paul Anderson, Homeless Link
Sara Turner, St Mungos
Nicola Smith, Barnardo's
Claire Mathys, Lib Dem Housing Advisor

Apologies:

David Burrowes MP, APPG Secretary
Dr Paul Monaghan MP, Vice-chair
Michael Tomlinson MP, APPG Officer
Melanie Onn MP
Baroness Lister
Liz McInnes MP
Alison Thewliss MP
Colleen Fletcher MP
Mary Robinson MP
Thangham Debonnaire MP
Amanda Solloway MP

Witnesses:

Natasha Finlayson, became Chief Executive of The Who Cares? Trust
Martin Kelly - Head of Children and Young People's Resources, North Yorkshire County Council
Jo Beck, Youth Homelessness Adviser, St Basils
Cartelea – National Youth Reference Group Consultants
Nicola – National Youth Reference Group Consultants

Welcome and apologies

Evidence from witnesses

Overview

David Mackintosh MP (DM) called for evidence from the witnesses and they each spoke for 5 minutes about their experience working and or being care leavers and its connection with homelessness.

Natasha Finlayson (NF) described her role at Who Cares Trust? And its running of the APPG for Looked After Children and care leavers. They also run a 24 hour help line for young people. NF stressed that relationships are completely central to a care leavers development and future ability to sustain accommodation. She also gave examples of best practice and common themes that result in care leavers becoming homeless.

Martin Kelly (MC) introduced an accommodation pathway for care leavers that is partnership between the local authority, seven district councils and nine housing providers. In addition North Yorkshire has developed a multi-agency No Wrong Door hub which seeks to better engage the hardest to reach, engage and place young people within the care system, therefore better preparing them for key transitions.

Jo Beck (JB) introduced St Basils and the national Youth Homelessness Advisory service to local authorities across England, which is funded by the DCLG and delivers advice and support to Local Authorities. Last year St Basils and Barnardo's developed the Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Framework – a practical tool for reviewing and improving housing and support to YP preparing for and leaving care. Framework is informed by what YP say is important for them, and on what has been proven to work on the ground.

Cartelea (C) has been in and out of care since she was 2. Her experience in general of care was quite daunting, living with many foster families, and mainly white families. As a black child she felt unwanted and also confused as she didn't have a secure home. Her experiences with foster families were mixed, some poor and some exemplary. Despite not always feeling listened to by social services, she feels that social workers put 'love' into their work as opposed to working just for the sake of it. C moved into a hostel at 17 and is now living independently in a flat and has big ambitions for the future and is successfully maintaining her tenancy and a job.

	Nicola (N) went into the care system at 14 due to safeguarding issues. She was moved to 3 different foster families in Birmingham. She stressed that placement choice is incredibly important as at one placement she was too scared to ask for help and was worried about her future and the path she may choose. She then moved to another region and was placed with a foster family she finally felt settled and got the right support and was happy. She then lived with her boyfriend for a while and now lives in supporting accommodation from St Basils. She now feels fully supported and at home and is attending college and studying music which she thoroughly enjoys.
Key discussion points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key themes which result in homelessness • Key themes which can prevent homelessness • The need for a consistent, central person in a care leavers life • Cooperate Parenting
Questions to witness from APPG Officers	
Overview	<p>The APPG officers then put their questions to the witnesses.</p> <p>Questions ranged from funding, two tier local authorities, housing options, personal advisors, universal credit and changes to housing benefit and training schemes such as Money House in Greenwich.</p> <p>All agreed that planning is crucial.</p> <p>Both C and N agreed that they feel as though they have been treated like children and that many decisions about their accommodation and placements had been taken out of their hands.</p> <p>All agreed that basic skills training is integral to a care leaver sustaining a tenancy and that personal advisors often are not equipped to deliver that training or specific housing advice. All agreed that a personal advisor should be the same person throughout their journey.</p> <p>All agreed that care leavers changing on to Universal Credit are at serious risk of transcending into debt which can result in homelessness.</p>
Key discussion points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no requirement to report Intentionally Homeless decisions on Care Leavers • Inconsistency of contact from personal advisor • Joint Commissioning Tool Kit • Staying Put and Staying Close • The Homelessness Reduction Bill
Actions and deadlines	Secretariat to research personal advisor guidelines
Sector interventions and questions	
Overview	Questions from the sector focussed on the people care leavers prefer to engage with, their relationships with local authorities,

	possible exemptions to the Shared Accommodation Rate and the age in which children leave care.
Key discussion points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Centre Plus Care Leavers Marker • Mechanisms to prevent care leavers from becoming homeless • 73 verified rough sleepers on London streets who were care leavers under the age of 25 • Mental health services for care leavers • The Children and Social Work Bill • The difference between residential care and foster care
Actions and deadlines	Secretariat to research number of homeless care leavers which have previously lived in residential care.
AOB	
Overview	The group discussed a few key facts, more ways to prevent care leavers from becoming homeless and next steps.
Key discussion points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2015 605 care leavers aged 18-20 were accepted as statutorily homeless in England
Actions and deadlines	Secretariat to send around minutes to witnesses and Chair