



The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA)

The HRA represents the most fundamental change to our English homelessness legislation in forty years. It transforms the help councils are required to provide to people experiencing homelessness or threatened with homelessness. Crisis was involved from the initial conception to the enactment of the legislation through our [No One Turned Away campaign](#).

The most notable changes in the Act are the requirements to provide support to people regardless of their priority need, intentionality and local connection. Under the old system, single homeless people who went to their councils for help in England were often turned away because they were not considered to have a 'priority need'. The Act now requires councils to try and prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place (the *prevention duty*) and respond to those who are already homeless (the *relief duty*).

In a nutshell: what will the Homelessness Reduction Act do?

1. Improve advice and information available about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness
2. Extend the period someone is 'threatened with homelessness' from 28 days to 56 days
3. Introduce new duties to prevent and relieve homelessness for all eligible people; regardless of priority need, intentionality and local connection
4. Introduce assessments and personalised housing plans, setting out the actions local councils and individuals will take to keep or secure accommodation
5. Encourage public bodies to work together to prevent and relieve homelessness through a 'duty to refer'

What happens next?

The majority of the provisions within the Act came into effect on the **3rd April 2018**. The 'duty to refer' comes into force on the **1st October 2018**.

The Government is giving councils £72.7m over the next two years to make these changes and start delivering the new duties. They have committed to undergo a review within two years to understand how the duties are working in practice and whether the allocated funding is adequate.

Crisis' ongoing work to help implement the HRA

Crisis recognises that ensuring the Act is fully effective requires service transformation and new ways of working at a time when local councils are under real pressure. To ensure the new duties have a real impact, we secured funding from the Oak Foundation to support and monitor the successful implementation of the HRA. This will involve:

- Working alongside five local councils to help implement the HRA
- Working more broadly with councils and stakeholders to share our learnings and expertise
- Challenging cases where legal duties are being flouted or wilfully misinterpreted
- Researching and monitoring the impact of the HRA on 6 local councils, including the level of funding provided (three of which have been selected from the five we are supporting with implementation)

This work will provide an excellent opportunity to trial the practical application of the new obligations under the HRA, and how to make them work in practice. It also provides an opportunity to gather evidence to inform the government's review of the legislation in two years.

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) made £20 million available to local councils in 2016 to test many of the changes required ahead of the HRA implementation. Crisis is involved in a number of these trailblazers which were

designed to trial innovative prevention approaches and the duty to refer. We hope to share the learnings from these projects before October.

If you would like further information and resources about the Homelessness Reduction Act please visit our [Housing Resource Centre](#) or contact our Housing Team (housing@crisis.org.uk).