

All Party Parliamentary Group for Ending Homelessness



Youth homelessness – Officers Meeting Minutes

30 April 2018, 14.00-16.00, House of Commons, Committee Room 21

Attendees:

Will Quince MP, APPG Co-Chair
Ivan Lewis MP, APPG Vice-Chair
Richard Benyon MP
Lord Best
Sandy Martin MP
Lord Shipley

Parliamentary Assistants:

Dan Ellis, Office of Will Quince
Laura Hutchinson, Office of Neil Coyle

Secretariat:

Leah Miller, Secretariat to APPG

Other:

Helen Denyer, St Mungo's
Daniel Dumoulin, Depaul UK
Amy Fleming, St Mungo's
Aine Gallagher, Southwark Council
Anna Geatrell, Caritas Social Action Network
Abigail Gill, Centrepont
Hannah Gousy, Crisis
Ella Hancock, Crisis
Jennifer Harris, Homeless Link
Emma Horne, The Cardinal Hume Centre
Martine Martin, Crisis
Hilary Nightingale, Cardinal Hume Centre
Paul Noblet, Centrepont
Signe Norberg, Southwark Council
Anna Perkins, Porchlight
Andrew Romage McBrighton
Tim Sigsworth, Albert Kennedy Trust
Heather Spurr, Shelter
Stacy Warrombi
Yasmin Washbrook, St Basils Youth Voice

Apologies:

Neil Coyle MP;
Alistair Jack MP
Mark Prisk MP;
Alison Thewliss MP;
Tom Tugendhat;
David Davies;
Paul Beresford MP,
Kerry McCarthy MP,
Caroline Lucas MP,
Caroline Spelman MP;
Baroness Hamwee;
Margaret Hodge MP;
Eleanor Laing MP;
Clive Lewis MP;
The Earl of Listowel;
David Drew MP;

Witnesses:

Hannah Webster, Research and Databank
Officer, Centrepont

Jean Templeton, CEO, St Basils

Jodie Ward, St Basils Youth Voice

Sarah Gregory, Programme Manager, Depaul
UK

Lucy Bowyer, Supported Housing Manager,
The Albert Kennedy Trust

Councillor Stephanie Cryan, Deputy Leader
and Cabinet Member for Housing, Southwark
Council

Welcome and apologies

Introductions

	<p>Co-Chair of the APPG for Ending Homelessness Will Quince opened the session by thanking attendees and witnesses for coming.</p> <p>He went on to note that the APPG was formed in 2016 with the aim of placing homelessness at the top of the political agenda and developing the policy solutions that would end homelessness.</p> <p>In its first year, the group focused on preventing homelessness, looking specifically at three cohorts – care leavers, people leaving prison, and survivors of domestic violence. At the end of the year, a report had been published which set out a series of recommendations on preventing homelessness.</p> <p>He explained that the meeting was the third of the APPG on Ending Homelessness’ inquiry sessions for its year second inquiry into rapid response.</p> <p>The session on would focus on youth homelessness.</p> <p>The group would be hearing evidence from Hannah Webster, Research and Databank Officer, Centrepont; Jean Templeton, CEO, St Basils; Jodie Ward, St Basils Youth Voice; Sarah Gregory, Programme Manager Depaul UK; Lucy Bowyer, Supported Housing Manager, The Albert Kennedy Trust; Councillor Stephanie Cryan, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing, Southwark Council</p>
Hannah Webster	<p>Hannah Webster (HW) opened by speaking about the Centrepont Databank. Highlighting gaps in Government homelessness statistics, which only record those considered as statutory homeless. The Databank builds on Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government data to better understand the scale of youth homelessness in the UK by recording all young people who approach their local council for help.</p> <p>HW explained that the Databank is compiled from FOI requests to local authorities in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and</p>

	<p>Wales. It explores how many young people approach their local authorities for housing assistance, what support they receive and their reason for seeking help.</p> <p>However, there are difficulties compiling an accurate picture of the scale of youth homelessness across the UK as currently, not all councils record this kind of data as they are not required to do so.</p> <p>HW argued that the Homelessness Reduction Act should go some way towards improving youth homelessness data as it will require local councils to perform assessments on all young people who present at risk of homelessness. It is expected that the change will result in a twofold increase in the number of homeless young people recorded in official statistics, she said. It should also help us understand the unique challenges facing young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness by recording the reasons for them seeking housing support and the outcomes.</p>
Jean Templeton	<p>Jean Templeton (JT) went through the Positive Pathway Framework which was developed with the advice of local authorities, social landlords, homelessness agencies and young people. It is based on national data and research, policy direction, what works well and learning from visits to local authorities and other agencies.</p> <p>She explained that step one of the framework focuses on ensuring young people at risk of homelessness and their families receive timely, accurate information and advice about housing options. The aim is to empower young people and their families to plan transitions to independent living without support from specialist services. It considers housing options, as well as financial and employment circumstances.</p> <p>Through the second stage of the pathway, early intervention is targeted to reach households where young people are most likely to be at risk of homelessness by linking all local services working with young people and families at risk.</p> <p>Stage 3 of the Framework, the Pathway “Hub”, provides wraparound support for young people at the point of crisis. Where safe, young people are supported to stay in the family home. However, where emergency accommodation is needed this is delivered in a way that supports young people’s learning or employment.</p> <p>Stage 4 of the Framework focuses on ensuring that where a young person cannot return home, there is good quality accommodation and support available to them in the form of supported housing or Housing First.</p> <p>However, JT noted that young people then need to move-on from this accommodation. Stage 5 looks at ensuring there is a</p>

	<p>range of safe, decent, affordable housing options for young people both shared and self-contained, in the private, social and third sectors. This should include integrated education, training and employment support for young people to ensure they can access work as a longer-term way out of homelessness.</p> <p>Moving on, JT highlighted that St Basils and Barnardo's have also developed a care leavers framework designed to ensure care leavers don't end up in the homeless system.</p> <p>A Youth Justice accommodation pathway has also been developed with the aim of ensuring young people do not become homeless after exiting the justice system.</p> <p>With both approaches the emphasis is on preparing young people for housing before they exit public institutions and that accommodation plan and appropriate move-on support is put in place.</p> <p>She explained that the Framework enables joint working across services in touch with young people to ensure gaps in provision and support are identified and addressed.</p>
Jodie Ward	<p>Jodie Ward (JW) then spoke about her experience of homelessness.</p> <p>She told attendees that as a teenager she had moved between hostel accommodations, sofa-surfed and slept on the streets. This had had a severe impact on her mental health and left her feeling low.</p> <p>She had contacted St Basils who had found her emergency accommodation and helped her off the streets. The charity had also equipped her with the necessary skills to succeed in life, she continued. This included practical support, such as budgetary advice, which would help prevent her from experiencing homelessness in the future. St Basils had also helped her access education and study for a diploma in healthcare to support her ambition to become a nurse, she told attendees.</p> <p>The charity had helped her into a flat of her own, which had given her the safe haven she had always dreamed of. Because of the support St Basils had given her, she was now looking forward to either pursuing a career as a nurse or helping other young people off the streets.</p>

Sarah Gregory

Sarah Gregory spoke about services Depaul UK run in Sheffield, which help young people aged between 17-24 and young parents aged 16 to 21 out of homelessness.

The services offered young people a safe place to stay, providing a step into stable housing and helping them get their lives back on track, she said.

This included a dispersed accommodation service through which young people had been helped to live independently in the community, with floating support. This included support managing accommodation, budgeting, accessing training, education and employment and improving wellbeing. Support was generally offered for up to a year.

The charity also ran a transitional landlord service for young parents through which properties are provided in partnership with Sheffield City Council. The tenancies are then transferred to the client once support from Depaul is no longer needed. This helps young parents form community links and support networks locally, she added. It also means young people are provided with a fully functional home from day one. They are able to invest in a home and don't have to keep moving between places, she continued.

However, issues around the quality and availability of housing had led to challenges finding suitable properties for the scheme. In addition, there was evidence of "tolerance fatigue" among some people living in the communities young people were placed in. Expanding on this, she explained that the expectation that young people accommodated through the scheme would be troublesome neighbours could lead to unreasonable expectations.

However, both the dispersed accommodation service and transitional landlord schemes had seen encouraging results. In particular, she suggested that the model could work well for care leavers or LGBT young people who might struggle to live in groups.

Lucy Bowyer	<p>Lucy Bowyer discussed the Albert Kennedy Trust's work, which supported 16-25 year old LGBT people into accommodation. The charity provided services in London, Manchester and Newcastle, as well as a national online service.</p> <p>Continuing, she said that LGBT people constituted 24% of young people facing homelessness in the UK.</p> <p>However, the recording of this is sketchy as it wasn't mandatory at local authority level, she added. The main causes of housing insecurity among young LGBT people were familial rejection, abuse or ejection from the home.</p> <p>Often the impact of this on education and employment was much greater for young LGBT people. Research by Depaul UK had also found that a high proportion of LGBT young men were at risk of sexual abuse, she noted. Meanwhile, 70% had experienced mental health problems and many were trapped in poor quality/abusive accommodation.</p> <p>LB went on to discuss AKT's Purple Door programme in London. Through the programme the charity had run a 6-bedroom property since 2013.</p> <p>The programme helped young people with low-medium support needs, looking for education, training or employment or already in education, training or employment.</p> <p>Often young LGBT people found themselves locked out of the private rented sector as they lacked financial backing or support from their families. LGBT people, especially transgendered young people, could also face difficulties securing employment. Often the young people AKT helped were working in insecure jobs on zero-hours contracts.</p> <p>A lack of available, affordable accommodation made it difficult for young LGBT people to access secure housing. This had been exacerbated by the Shared Accommodation Rate, especially in the case of trans and BME LGBT men who could struggle to find suitable shared accommodation.</p> <p>The majority wouldn't be found statutory homelessness, she continued, meaning there was a large group of young people who wouldn't be eligible for help. Many had experienced rough sleeping.</p> <p>AKT offered time-limited support, which could include linking young people to employment, training or education options, helping them learn how to manage tenancies or attending viewings with them.</p> <p>The Rainbow Starter Pack also provided young people with everything they needed to enter the private rented sector.</p> <p>Many young LGBT people had low-medium support needs with money being the main barrier to accessing accommodation, and</p>
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	<p>as such, could be supported through a rapid rehousing approach.</p> <p>The Rainbow Starter Pack supported young people with costs associated with rent, deposit, moving costs and buying white goods, which meant they could get settled more quickly.</p> <p>Support with subsistence costs also meant that young people could remain in education, training or employment whilst maintaining their accommodation. The charity had spent £12,000 on Starter Packs which had enabled young people to stay in the Private Rented Sector.</p>
<p>Cllr Stephanie Cryan</p>	<p>Cllr Stephanie Cryan (SC) explained that as an early adopter of the Homelessness Reduction Act, Southwark Council had adopted the new duties in October 2016.</p> <p>The local authority had seen an increasing number of people presenting as homeless and 40% of these were young homeless people.</p> <p>The main cause of homelessness among this group was eviction from family and friends' homes, which was often due to overcrowding.</p> <p>The second biggest cause of homelessness was a disparity between housing costs and benefits, SC added.</p> <p>Many providers were refusing people on benefits at all, she continued.</p> <p>Highlighting the disparity between housing benefit and renting costs, she noted that it could cost £408 a week to rent a one-bedroom house in Southwark.</p> <p>Another problem was restrictions on borrowing, which meant local authorities had been unable to build the homes needed. Local authorities needed to be able to borrow more so they could build affordable housing.</p> <p>There was also a problem with too many people being trapped in temporary accommodation for too long.</p> <p>Since implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act, SC said that the council was now able to guarantee that emergency accommodation would be available to people presenting as homeless.</p> <p>There had also been a worrying rise in cases of domestic abuse, so the council ensured there were people trained to respond to their needs. In addition, the council now carried out a lot of multi-agency work with children's' services.</p>

	<p>A young person's hub had been set up, which enabled access to education, training and mediation.</p> <p>There were now no care leavers sleeping rough in Southwark, she told attendees, adding that work with children's services had helped achieve that.</p> <p>The council was also working in collaboration with probation services to prevent young people exiting the youth justice system from becoming homeless.</p> <p>However, despite good will locally, financial pressures meant that the sustainability of this work was under threat. As such, political will to ensure the resources were in place to end youth homelessness was essential.</p> <p>Concluding, SC said she was concerned that a postcode lottery would develop, whereby not all local authorities were able to implement the HRA properly.</p>
Questions	
	<p>Moving on to questions, Co-Chair Will Quince asked what the main causes of youth homelessness were.</p> <p>Responding, SC pointed to evictions from living with family and friends.</p> <p>Adding to this JT, said a problem was a failure to offer a clear plan for progression for young people and address safeguarding issues. Young people needed a housing offer underpinned by services designed to support education, training and employment.</p> <p>HW highlighted that figures from the databank showed that 54% of young people approached their council for housing support due to parental breakdown, whilst 20% were due to evictions from the private rented sector.</p> <p>Questioned how to better understand the scale of youth homelessness, the Homelessness Reduction Act was pointed to as a step in the right direction. It provided an opportunity to better understand who young homeless people are and the unique issues facing them.</p> <p>SC highlighted that Southwark Council was developing predictive analytics, which looked at targeting people before they became homeless.</p> <p>Following on from this, SG argued that by joining up services better youth homelessness could be better prevented. For example, she noted that case of a young person Depaul UK had worked with who had repeatedly gone missing from home. If children's services, missing persons and housing options teams had worked better together, they may have been able to prevent her homelessness.</p>

Asked about how best to support young people to access to skills and employment, JW explained that she had had a key worker at St Basils who had coordinated communications with services to help her into training, employment and housing, which had helped with stress.

Adding to this JT said that the St Basils Live and Work Scheme offered tenancies at deflated rents, lower than Housing Benefit level, so young people could work and rent.

They had found that the scheme saved £14 for every £1 spent. Whilst this involved an upfront investment, it would result in savings later on. She argued that we needed to rethink the way we invest so young people don't become benefit dependent. Investing to support them to work would result in savings in the long run.

Sandy Martin MP noted that Housing Benefit rates in his constituency of Ipswich don't cover the cost of rents . He questioned how people could exit homelessness and find employment when this was the case.

Responding SC argued that young people needed a decent wage, stating that minimum wage for young people was too low. She called for London Living Wage to be offered as a minimum to people across the UK.

JT said that charities provided transitional accommodation, but that this was expensive. Young people could become trapped in this and this could in turn disincentivise work. She argued that proposed changes to supported housing in the current Government consultation would take that disincentive away, but stressed the importance of ensuring they did not make it more difficult for charities to provide the intensive support necessary during transitional periods.

Beyond this, it was important to consider what the wider offer for young people is, she continued. This meant looking at housing supply and the cost of housing to ensure young people could transition into work.

LB highlighted the work of the London Youth Gateway, which supported young people across London and aimed to ensure they received the correct service to address their specific needs. There were many smaller organisations offering innovative approaches to tackling youth homelessness, she went on, but they currently don't have the resources to expand these.

Lord Best questioned how big housing associations could be encouraged to enter into partnerships so more young people could be offered permanent accommodation.

In reply, LB said some Housing Associations are looking for solutions, pointing to Clarion and Places for People as an example.

Adding to this, SC said that planning law and viability had an impact on this as well. Housing of all different types was needed, but all too often the private rented sector took priority over affordable housing.

Lord Shipley questioned what local authorities should do to ensure they were properly organised to carry out the work needed to fulfil the duties in the Homelessness Reduction Act.

Stressing that the HRA represented a new way of working for local authorities, SC noted that Southwark had had an 18-month run in, as it had adopted the principles of the HRA in October 2016. The Act had only come into force in April 2018 and would take time for local authorities to fully adopt. The successful adoption of the Act also required a central political drive, she added.

Stating that the HRA was a brilliant piece of legislation, JT said LAs needed to ensure the new duties were implemented in the spirit of the Act. This meant a focus on prevention and relief, rather than processes, she elaborated.

However, local authorities needed to be resourced, supported and held to account to do this properly.

WQ questioned how Jodie thought she could have been helped more quickly to exit homelessness.

In reply, JW noted that she had been forced to quit her job in order to be eligible for help. The level of benefits and cost of accommodation had also meant she was restricted in terms of the kind of courses she could take. In addition, because of her age, she was working for a lower wage despite having the same living expenses as older people.

Questioned how a culture of collaboration could be fostered between different services working end youth homelessness, SC said it was important to ensure good sign-posting between services.

JT said that spirit and will to collaborate was there, but that currently procurement and pressure of resources hindered this as it put services at competition with each other.

Sandy Martin, questioned whether the HRA would ensure people were no longer considered intentionally homeless.

In response, WQ explained that the extension of the definition of threatened with homelessness to 56 days from 28 days should help resolve issues around intentionality, as should the new prevention duty.

AOB	
Overview	WQ thanked the witnesses and all other attendees. The APPGEH's recommendations on youth homelessness would be published in the wider APPG report. If anyone wanted to submit written evidence, he encouraged them to get in touch with the APPG Secretariat. The report would be launched in July and invitations sent out soon.
Actions and deadlines	Secretariat to send around minutes.