

# Local Housing Authority Checklist: Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategies

Version 1: July 2019

This checklist has been developed using the statutory code of guidance and other best practice guidance, most notably Crisis' **Plan to End Homelessness in Great Britain**. It is intended to be both ambitious and comprehensive, going further than the legal requirement towards a strategy that aims to end homelessness in local areas. We recognise not everything in the checklist will be practical or feasible for every local authority. Please **contact our Best Practice Team** if you want to discuss this checklist (feedback welcome) or your local area's strategy.

## The law on local homelessness strategies

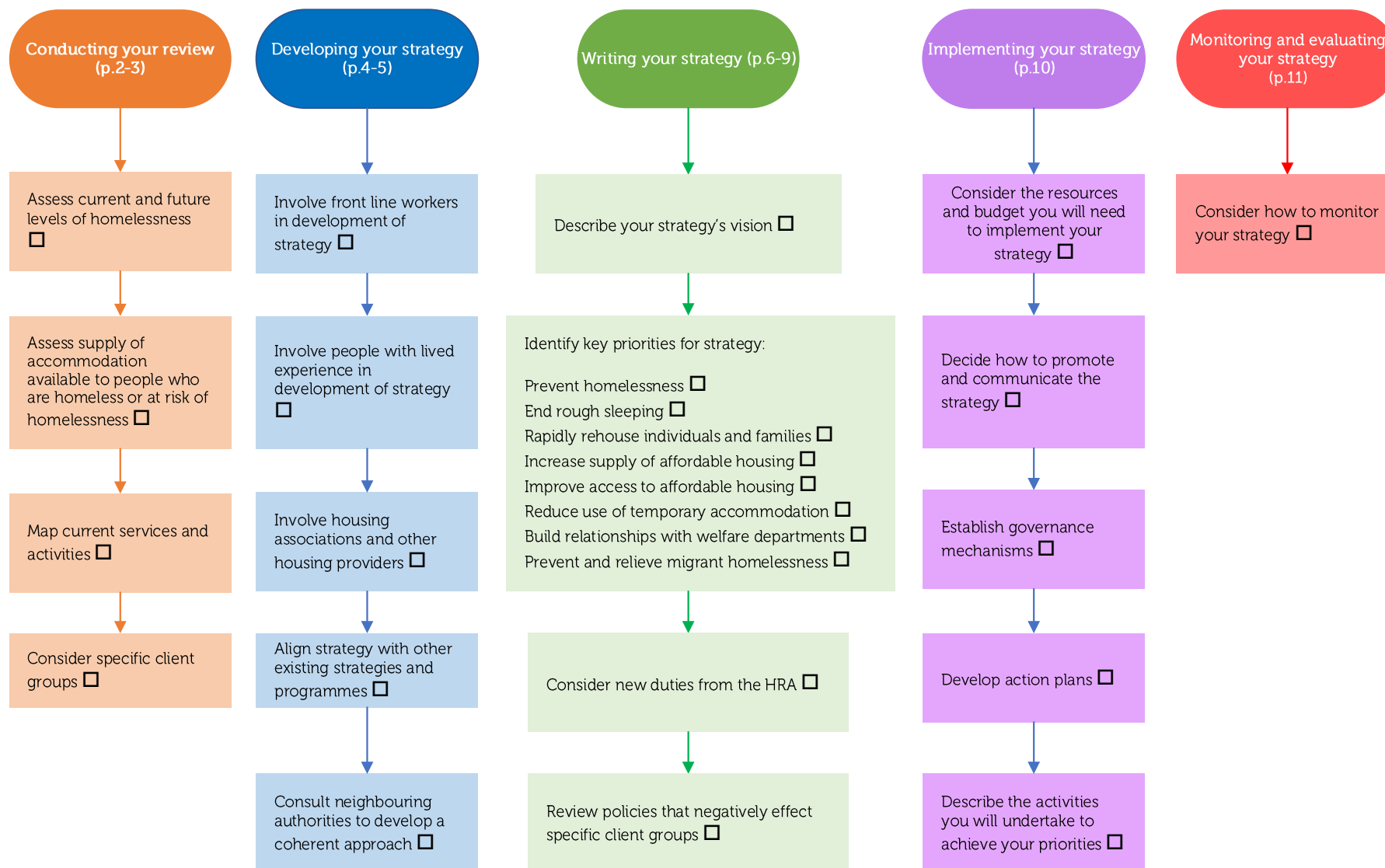
The **legal requirements** of the 'Duty to formulate a homelessness strategy' were introduced by the Homelessness Act 2002.

## Commitment in the government's Rough Sleeping Strategy (August 2018)

- MHCLG will work with the Local Government Association and local authorities so that by winter 2019:
- all local authorities update their strategies and rebadge them as homelessness and rough sleeping strategies;
- strategies are made available online and submitted to MHCLG; and
- local authorities report progress in delivering these strategies and publish annual action plans.

## Navigating the checklist

The checklist is structured around the stages of strategy development and implementation. It can be read as one or you can read each section as appropriate



## Conducting your review

It is important that the review provides the evidence to support the claims and priorities within your strategy

### Things to consider

Assessing current and future levels of homelessness	<p>You could include the following as a basis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. homelessness casework records and other local sources of data;</li> <li>b. trends in homelessness approaches and in underlying causes;</li> <li>c. characteristics on housing need in your area- strategic housing market assessment data, levels of overcrowding, conditions of properties</li> <li>d. cohorts and levels of people experiencing affordability issues – looking at housing benefit caseloads and levels of shortfalls, number of applications for DHP</li> <li>e. which cohorts may be more likely to become homeless or be threatened with homelessness;</li> <li>f. the profile of households who have experienced homelessness in your district;</li> <li>g. equality monitoring data, including that relating to homelessness applications and outcomes;</li> <li>h. the range of factors that may affect future levels of homelessness;</li> <li>i. the personal and structural factors that may contribute to people becoming homeless; and,</li> <li>j. any planned legislation or local policy changes that are likely to impact on levels of homelessness for particular groups in the district.</li> </ul>
Supply of accommodation available to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness	<p>Landlords, accommodation providers and housing developers across all sectors may contribute to the review. You should review the existing supply of accommodation and identify where there are gaps, or where existing resources do not match the most pressing needs. This might include reviewing supply and demand for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. social and affordable housing held by your authority and private registered providers;</li> <li>b. temporary accommodation provided on an interim basis, or under the section 193(2) main housing duty;</li> <li>c. private rented accommodation, including shared housing options for young single people;</li> <li>d. supported accommodation available for cohorts of people in need of accommodation with support;</li> <li>e. low cost home ownership schemes; and,</li> <li>f. CORE data returns for your areas to look at profile of new lettings (including the proportion given to homeless households)</li> </ul>
Mapping current services and activities	<p>You should consider mapping support services, activities and client journeys in your district to assist in identifying areas, both geographic and thematic, in which services are duplicated and/or where gaps in service provision can be identified. This should include the activities of all relevant agencies and organisations (public, private and voluntary), as well as the resources available to them, which may contribute to the delivery of services. Having mapped all the current activities, you should consider whether these are appropriate and adequate to meet the aims of your strategy, and whether any realignment of resources or additional provision is needed.</p>

	Is there data on outcomes and caseload of support from commissioned services in your area? Have any evaluations of service delivery been conducted that can illustrate effective practice or learning?
<b>Specific client groups</b>	How have you considered the needs of all groups of people in your district who are homeless or likely to become homeless, including Gypsies and Travellers? Consider client groups such as: victims of domestic abuse, young people, people exiting hospital, care or asylum accommodation; ex-offenders, veterans, and people with mental health problems.

## Developing your strategy

Housing authorities are encouraged to take the opportunity to identify and involve all relevant partners in developing a strategy that involves them in the earlier identification and intervention to prevent and respond to homelessness. This should not be limited to the public authorities subject to the Duty to Refer

### Things to consider

Have you consulted neighbouring authorities to develop a coherent approach?	Aim to develop a strategy which can leverage opportunities from neighbouring authorities and reduce duplication of effort, whilst utilising the benefits of cross-boundary co-operation. A county-wide approach will be particularly important if you are a non-unitary authority. You may wish to collaborate to produce a joint homelessness strategy covering a sub-regional area with regional protocols e.g. allocations, local connection etc. London boroughs should also have regard to the London Housing Strategy.
How will you align your strategy with other existing strategies and programmes? Is your strategy developed and owned with partners (internal and external) responsible for its delivery?	<p>A good homelessness strategy will link with other strategies and programmes that aim to address the wide range of factors that could contribute to homelessness in your local area. It will be important to consider how these strategies and programmes, which could encompass aspects of local housing, health (e.g. health &amp; wellbeing strategy, JSNA), justice, welfare or economic policy for example, can help achieve the objectives of the homelessness strategy and vice-versa.</p> <p>Corporate and partnership involvement in identifying strategic objectives will help to ensure all relevant departments and agencies are committed to supporting their delivery (a cross-department corporate commitment is vital). Where you need to secure commitments from other organisations or internal services, reference and link to their strategies and objectives to show how your strategy will help meet their aims. Consider what public bodies and stakeholders you will need to get on board to facilitate the effective delivery of the Duty to Refer. Consider using the referrals you are receiving under the Duty to Refer and surveying people using the Housing Needs service to identify the agencies you need to involve.</p> <p>Given the clear links between Universal Credit and homelessness, an explicit commitment to joint working and shared objectives should be sought from the local DWP Partnership Manager. The Newcastle City Council Trailblazer between the City Council, Crisis and the DWP is a good example of co-located services and shared objectives.</p>
Have you got housing associations and other affordable housing providers on board?	<p>Consult local housing associations and liaison groups. Aim to include a pledge/commitment from local housing associations (or your own landlord services function in stock holding authorities) to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>work with local authorities to support those at risk of rough sleeping; and</li> <li>provide a specific commitment to lettings for the next 12 months (to be refreshed annually) based on the annual published homelessness and rough sleeper figures from your review</li> <li>review how allocation arrangements for your own stock, and nominations, to private registered providers contribute to preventing or relieving homelessness</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ review how exclusions are operating and whether they are contributing to homelessness so that a more supportive approach could be taken with applicants with former tenant arrears or previous ASB convictions.</li> </ul> <p>The <b>Homes for Cathy commitments</b> that Crisis created with housing associations would be a good starting point for engaging those in your local area.</p>
Have you involved people with lived experience in the development of your strategy? Have you involved frontline officers?	<p>When involving people with lived experience of homelessness in your strategy development, it is important this is done in an inclusive and non-tokenistic way with sufficient resources. This could include a light touch approach such as conducting a workshop to ensure the views of people experiencing homelessness are included in the strategy; or a more involved process of designing a peer led research and engagement project to inform service design and delivery in your area. It could also involve working with local organisations or peer led groups who can help meaningfully engage with the process and provide support to those with lived experience. Involving those with lived experience at as early a stage as possible typically leads to more effective and informative outcomes.</p> <p>To avoid tokenistic approaches, it is important to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Timescale and resources required to deliver effective engagement</li> <li>▪ Intended purpose of any lived experience outputs</li> <li>▪ Whether the outputs will meaningfully feed into the strategy development</li> </ul> <p>Some examples of this in action are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Homeless Link and Expert Link have produced a <b>guide</b> to co-production and commissioning to improve homelessness services</li> <li>▪ <b>Expert Citizens</b> in Stoke who are funded through the National Lottery Communities Fund as part of the Fulfilling lives programme</li> </ul>

## Writing your strategy

We encourage you to follow the best evidence available when developing your strategy and the key principles required to end homelessness (demonstrated in our plan) which focus on embedding prevention and a housing-led approach. Everyone can and should be housed; nobody should have to qualify for it or prove they are 'housing-ready'. This requires person-specific support and a rapid-rehousing approach that moves us away from expensive and unsuitable temporary accommodation.

Things to consider	
Describe your strategy's vision	Outline your vision at the outset e.g. this strategy aims to prevent and end homelessness for all. Ensure your aims and objectives are consistent with the identified needs of your local area. Encourage key stakeholders to publicly endorse the vision and commitments within your strategy.
Identify key priorities for your strategy	<p>Using the evidence from your review, identify the priorities to end homelessness in your local area. A comprehensive plan to end homelessness will need to encompass:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ preventing homelessness;</li> <li>▪ rough sleeping;</li> <li>▪ rapid rehousing;</li> <li>▪ increasing supply of affordable housing;</li> <li>▪ improving access to affordable housing;</li> <li>▪ reducing the use of temporary accommodation;</li> <li>▪ welfare; and</li> <li>▪ migrant homelessness</li> </ul> <p><b>Plan to end homelessness defining homelessness ended chapter</b></p>
Prevention	<p>Elements to include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. advice and information - available to residents in your district, or who may return to your district, which assists them in having appropriate information or access to services that will help to prevent them becoming homeless.</li> <li>b. early identification - how you will identify people at risk of homelessness at an earlier stage, and the interventions that could be put in place to prevent them from being threatened with or becoming homeless.</li> <li>c. pre-crisis intervention - activity to intervene proactively where a household may be at risk of homelessness in the future e.g. joint working arrangements with environmental health services, children's early help services, court duty advice service etc.</li> <li>d. preventing recurring homelessness - an analysis of local data should identify applicants most at risk of repeat homelessness to inform decisions about allocation of resources, particularly for housing-related support to help sustain settled accommodation; and,</li> </ol>

	<p>e. partnership arrangements - how partners will be involved in the above activities, and what practical arrangements are needed to ensure the continued commitment to joint working e.g. pre-eviction protocols, hospital and prison discharge protocols. Practical ways to do this could include introducing homelessness champions within other services, embedding workers, secondments, joint training and co-location.</p> <p><b>Plan to end homelessness prevention chapter</b></p> <p><b>Prevention: it's everybody's business</b></p>
Ending rough sleeping	<p>In districts where there is evidence that people are sleeping rough, the homelessness strategy should include objectives to work toward eliminating rough sleeping. Although strategies are not required to detail the amount of housing and support required for the actual rough sleeping population; a housing-led approach to rough sleeping will be driven by key performance targets for the provision and accessibility of affordable permanent housing stock for every rough sleeper and relevant support services. Authorities will wish to consider whether existing arrangements are working, or whether 'Housing First' or other service models might be more effective (or could be expanded if already in place).</p> <p>You should also check your strategy is aligned and commensurate to the government's Rough Sleeping Strategy (August 2018) to maximise central funding and support.</p> <p><b>Plan to end homelessness ending rough sleeping chapter</b></p> <p><b>Ending Rough Sleeping: What Works? An international evidence review (2017)</b></p>
Rapid rehousing	<p>Rapid rehousing is not the current strategic response in this country with thousands living in unsuitable temporary accommodation, hostels and others forms of emergency accommodation. These people should be offered mainstream housing and relevant support once their homelessness is ended. Your strategy could include key performance targets for delivering new affordable permanent housing (linked to the numbers of people experiencing homelessness from your review) as well as the support required to help people maintain their home. You could develop targets and strategies to house the numbers of people in temporary and emergency accommodation and those sleeping rough (see above). Assessments could help determine which people need a Housing First approach and those who need a Critical Time Intervention (specific transition service for people leaving institutions) rapid rehousing approach, to leave homelessness for good. A move to this approach will take time and funding but will have a large impact if made a core tenet of your strategy.</p> <p><b>Plan to end homelessness rapid rehousing chapter</b></p> <p><b>Scotland rapid rehousing plan</b></p>
Increasing supply of affordable housing and improving access	<p>Identify how you will work with providers to set out and agree expectations on how the social housing sector will work together to end homelessness. This could include a review of whether allocations policies are preventing homeless people from getting access to social</p>



	<p>housing; and the role social housing allocations should play in facilitating move-on from any supported accommodation that forms part of your wider homelessness and strategy response.</p> <p>Include within the strategy what actions are required to ensure sufficient supply of accommodation to meet the estimated need from the review (linked to your authority's housing strategy). Consider developing an annual lettings plan to match anticipated supply against applicant demand, taking into account the need to prevent homelessness and to provide settled accommodation to people owed the main housing duty. Linked to the rapid rehousing approach, how can you negotiate accessing the required units with social housing providers? What proportion of homes you have identified can be sourced from the private rented sector?</p> <p>Consider reviewing your private rented access scheme(s) to ensure they meet a broad range of needs, including for single people at risk of homelessness (and shared accommodation solutions for those under 35). Working in close partnership with local landlords can identify and develop opportunities to expand the provision of private rented accommodation that is available to people threatened with or homeless. There may be opportunities to provide grant funding to landlords to improve poor quality accommodation or to bring empty properties back in to use for homeless households.</p> <p>We are currently updating our Help to Rent toolkit, please <a href="#">email the best practice team</a> for more information</p> <p>Depending on the scale of need and the condition of the private rented sector, the establishment of social lettings agencies should be considered. Their remit could also include letting to social housing and a 'clearing house' approach to ensuring the most appropriate match between people and properties. <a href="#">Social lettings agency guide</a></p>
Reducing the use of temporary accommodation	<p>Having reviewed the need for and use of temporary accommodation, you could identify what improvements will be made to procurement plans and to reduce the need sustainably (see rapid rehousing). If you use bed and breakfast to accommodate families in emergencies, a plan to reduce or eliminate its use could be developed. The provision of support to households placed in temporary accommodation is essential to ensure they continue to enjoy a reasonable quality of life and access the range of services they need. Consider what arrangements need to be in place to ensure that households placed in temporary accommodation, within your district or outside, are able to access relevant support services.</p>
Welfare	<p>Identify how you can work with Jobcentre Plus to ensure welfare support is contributing to your aims to end homelessness.</p> <p>The Duty to Refer for Jobcentres mean Jobcentres should be building links with local authorities. Discuss options with the Jobcentre for this to work in practice as partnership working to prevent or respond to homelessness, rather than a simple referral process.</p> <p>Consider how to share knowledge to support Jobcentre staff to recognise homelessness and those at risk, and identify support needs that would be relevant to help with the Duty to Refer. It may be useful to consider how to set up escalation routes with Jobcentres where issues with benefit payment are putting people at risk of homelessness. <a href="#">Review plan to end homelessness welfare chapter</a> for an overview of issues that Jobcentres can support with.</p>

<p>Migrant homelessness</p>	<p>Consider how you will work with migrants who are not eligible for statutory homelessness services to prevent/relieve their homelessness – some migrants will still be owed a duty by social services so identify how you will work with social services to help them meet this duty. The <b>NRPF Network</b> provide information and good practice to support local authorities to meet their statutory duties to migrants with care needs who do not have recourse to public funds.</p> <p>For those migrants not owed any statutory duties, consider how you will work with other partner organisations locally to prevent and relieve their homelessness.</p> <p>Identify how you can work with any asylum accommodation providers and voluntary sector organisations supporting asylum seekers and refugees to prevent homelessness for people leaving asylum accommodation (there is a good practice example of how this can work effectively in Crisis’s report, <b>Preventing homelessness: It’s everybody’s business</b>). <b>See the chapter on ending migrant homelessness in Crisis’ plan for more information.</b></p>
<p>Have you considered the new duties from the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA)?</p>	<p>Has your strategy considered the additional duties introduced by the HRA and the principles/ ethos behind the legislation? This should include a focus on the culture change warranted by the HRA and the support required for officers to help achieve this. Many local authorities are using interventions such as motivational interviewing training, introducing psychologically informed environments and recruiting people with lived experience of homelessness to help with this. It will be useful to set out how your authority has responded to date and how you plan to make the best of the opportunities from the HRA over the lifetime of your strategy.</p>
<p>Have you committed to reviewing policies that impact negatively on client groups you are trying to help?</p>	<p>Are there existing policies, both within your local authority and externally, that contribute to people becoming homeless and/or impact negatively on people who are already experiencing homelessness. Demonstrate how you will influence changing these policies and how you will work with key stakeholders to gain their commitment to revise any offending policies e.g. allocations, landlord tenancy etc.</p>

## Implementing your strategy

It is vital the implementation plan for your strategy is jointly owned by all parties responsible for its delivery and is backed by the appropriate resources

Things to consider	
Describe the activities you will undertake to achieve your priorities	Once you have identified your key priorities, outline the activities you will take to successfully achieve them. Make sure the activities can be reported against and linked directly to a clear roadmap and timeline
Develop action plans	Developing effective action plans will help ensure the objectives set in your strategy are achieved. Action plans should include targets, milestones and clear arrangements for monitoring, evaluation and review
Establish governance mechanisms	It will be necessary to establish strong governance mechanisms to facilitate the delivery of your strategy. Ensure key stakeholders are members and that any terms of reference reflect that stakeholders should be responsible for their commitments within the strategy. Consider both the 'strategic' and 'operational' governance for implementation – this could include a dedicated network or forum with representation from the full range of partnership bodies.
How will you promote and communicate the strategy?	Aim to proactively promote your strategy and homelessness prevention services using a wide range of channels.
Resources to deliver your strategy	Consider exploring how budgets and resources from a wide range of sources can be used to provide support for people in your district. Due to the cross-cutting nature of homelessness there will be opportunities, for example, to work with organisations specialising in primary care, substance dependency, mental health or employment and training. In two-tier authority areas it will be necessary to engage the upper tier authority in identifying resources available to meet support needs across all cohorts that are at high risk of homelessness. Where appropriate, accommodation and support services might be jointly commissioned, with children's social care, health, criminal justice agencies and other partners, in order to share and maximise resources and ensure a more holistic service response. Resources should be clearly linked to targets within the strategy and your action/ implementation plan.

## Monitoring and reviewing your strategy

Your strategy is not a static document and will require an ongoing monitoring and review process to ensure it continues to effectively meet the needs of your client groups, staff and key stakeholders

### Things to consider

Consider how the aims of your strategy will be monitored

Describe and commit to an ongoing review process of your strategy to consider any changes in your local area. It will inform progress against how you are addressing and reducing homelessness in your local area as part of your strategy. Some ways of doing this include:

- Make use of a regular homelessness forum with focused working groups where necessary for specific projects. Be prepared to openly share the available data on prevention and homelessness cases that you have with the local forum and encourage people who have used the service to attend the forum and provide feedback on their experiences. The more constructive and productive you make the forum, the better attended it will be.
- Use data on current and future homelessness levels to measure progress including specific groups affected, levels of TA and type of intervention used to assist people in your area. Do these trends point to particular issues or the need to redesign any of your services
- Data from other services in your area. Other agencies may be better placed to answer certain questions e.g. improving support for clients who don't tend to seek services from the local authority; and provide local intelligence to monitor emerging homelessness trends.
- Designing a common outcomes framework with the goals you intend to achieve over the course of the strategy and indicators to record these. The Centre for Homelessness Impact has designed some **guiding principles** and a framework to inform how policy makers and commissioners can think about ending homelessness in their area.

See chapter on **homelessness data** in Crisis' plan for more detail.

## Useful links:

### Reports and guides

- [Plan to End Homelessness in Great Britain](#)
- [Plan to end homelessness defining homelessness ended chapter](#)
- [Plan to end homelessness: homelessness data chapter](#)
- [Plan to end homelessness prevention chapter](#)
- [Plan to end homelessness ending rough sleeping chapter](#)
- [Plan to end homelessness rapid rehousing chapter](#)
- [Plan to end homelessness welfare chapter](#)
- [Plan to end homelessness ending migrant homelessness chapter](#)
- [Homeless Link and Expert Link guide to co-production and commissioning](#)
- [Prevention: it's everybody's business](#)
- [Ending Rough Sleeping: What Works? An international evidence review \(2017\)](#)
- [HRA code of guidance](#)

### Legal requirements

- [Legal requirements of the 'Duty to formulate a homelessness strategy'](#)
- [Scotland's transition to Rapid Rehousing](#)

### Other

- The [Homes for Cathy commitments](#)
- [Expert Citizens](#) in Stoke who are funded through the National Lottery Communities Fund as part of the Fulfilling lives programme
- The Centre for Homelessness Impact has designed some [guiding principles](#) and a framework to inform how policy makers and commissioners can think about ending homelessness in their area
- The [NRPF Network](#)