



National Practitioner Support Service

# HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY TOOLKIT

**PART 3:  
APPENDICES**

Version 4: November 2017

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## Introduction

This toolkit has been produced in order to support local authority colleagues to develop preventing homelessness strategies that are fit for purpose; strategies that seek to deliver improved and improving services to anyone in the local area that is homeless or threatened with homelessness, regardless of whether they may be owed the main statutory homelessness duty or not.

Every local authority in England should, by law, have an up to date preventing homelessness strategy that sets out its plans to prevent and tackle homelessness<sup>1</sup>. Local authorities' homelessness strategies should have a lifetime of no longer than 5 years, and local authorities should keep their homelessness strategy under review modify it from time to time in order to respond to new policy direction and comply with legal duties<sup>2</sup>. This is particularly important in light of recent legislative change<sup>3</sup>.

The first versions of this toolkit were produced to take account of the welfare reforms introduced by successive governments from 2010. It was also developed in the context of the Localism Act provisions that came into force in 2011<sup>4</sup>, and to support local authorities in light of the introduction of s148 and s149 of the Localism Act 2011<sup>5</sup>, which came into force on 9th November 2012. The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012 also came into force on 9th November 2012 and the "Supplementary Guidance on the Homelessness Changes in the Localism Act 2011<sup>6</sup> and the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012" was published the day before<sup>7</sup>.

Version 4 of this toolkit has been updated to take account of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017<sup>8</sup>, the most significant change in the legislation governing homelessness for 20 years. The toolkit also has regard to the new Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities (currently in draft form)

The toolkit considers the 10 "Local Authority Challenges" set out in the government report "Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness"<sup>9</sup> and how local preventing homelessness strategies can contribute to local authorities achieving 'Gold Standard' housing options services.

The toolkit has been split into three parts. This part covers broad strategic considerations, legal imperatives and provides advice on homelessness reviews,

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<sup>1</sup> s.1 Homelessness Act 2002 - <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/7/section/1>

<sup>2</sup> s.3(8) Homelessness Act 2002 - <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/7/section/3>

<sup>3</sup> Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, Localism Act 2011, Welfare Reform Act 2012, Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012, Deregulation Act 2015

<sup>4</sup> s.145, s.146, s.147, s.150, s.153 Localism Act 2011 - <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents>

<sup>5</sup> S.148, s.149 Localism Act 2011 - <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents>

<sup>6</sup> Supplementary Guidance 2012 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-changes-in-the-localism-act-2011-supplementary-guidance>

<sup>7</sup> Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012 - <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/2601/contents/made>

<sup>9</sup> The second Ministerial Working Group report on homelessness, "Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness", August 2012 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-every-contact-count-a-joint-approach-to-preventing-homelessness>

consultation and partnership working. It provides practical advice on how to go about developing a homelessness strategy.

The second part focuses on practical operational suggestions to support local authorities to develop 'Gold Standard' services and align their strategies and plans with the 10 'local authority challenges' set by government.

Part three provides a factsheet summarising the overall content of the toolkit, and includes some good practice examples.

Local authorities are encouraged to ensure robust preventing homelessness strategies are in place, and that they are delivered in partnership.

*Please note that this toolkit represents the views of practitioners. It does not represent legal advice or opinion, nor does it represent statutory guidance or government. Local authorities are encouraged to seek specific advice to satisfy themselves on any issues or questions raised.*

## Appendix 1:

### Developing Preventing Homelessness Strategies

This factsheet condenses the NPSS “*Developing Homelessness Strategies Toolkit*” into a concise set of key principles that local authorities should consider when seeking to review, produce or modify local Preventing Homelessness Strategies.

#### Background

- *Every* local authority in England should, by law, have an up to date Preventing Homelessness Strategy that sets out its plans to prevent and tackle homelessness. There are no exceptions to this stand alone legal requirement<sup>10</sup>.
- Preventing Homelessness Strategies should seek to deliver improved and improving services to *anyone* in the local area, who is genuinely homeless or threatened with homelessness, regardless of whether they may be owed the main statutory homelessness duty or not
- Preventing Homelessness Strategies should be developed and delivered in partnership across a range of statutory and voluntary sector partners, and focus on early intervention and prevention
- When developing new preventing homelessness strategies, local authorities should always have regard to the national agenda and to specific legislative changes. Local authorities will need to take into account the additional duties introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 whenever they conduct a review of homelessness and start to formulate a new strategy.

#### Links to other strategies and plans

- The Preventing Homelessness Strategy must have regard to the local Tenancy Strategy, the local Allocations Policy, and in the case of a London authority, the current London Housing Strategy<sup>11</sup> The additional duties to prevent and relieve homelessness within the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 will require consideration within the local authority’s allocation scheme.
- The Preventing Homelessness Strategy should consider how it can reflect the national agenda on homelessness, and how it links into other local strategies and plans, including the local approach to the power to end the main homeless duty into the private rented sector without requiring applicant consent

<sup>10</sup> s.1 Homelessness Act 2002 - <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/7/section/1>

<sup>11</sup> s.153 Localism Act 2011 - <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/section/153/enacted>

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## Homelessness Reviews

- Reviews of homelessness should be robust and meaningful, considering all available information and inviting key partners to contribute – including the local private rented sector
- Needs assessments and gap analysis should be undertaken
- The review should consider how local services could be adapted or reconfigured to meet the “10 Local Authority Challenges” set by government<sup>12</sup>
- Peer reviews using the Diagnostic Peer Review Toolkit should contribute to the review of homelessness and support the development of robust improvement plans<sup>13</sup>
- The review should consider trends and seek to predict emerging pressures
- Equality and diversity considerations should form part of the review of homelessness

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## Consultation

- It is a legal requirement to consult before modifying an existing homelessness strategy or introducing a new homelessness strategy<sup>14</sup>
- Consultation should be inclusive of partners & stakeholders, including PRS landlords, and take on board the views of service users, elected members and of front line officers within the local authority
- Health & Wellbeing Boards should be involved in the consultation
- Consultation should be undertaken at the earliest practicable stage, over a 12 week minimum period, with clear plans and processes communicated to each party involved at every stage
- Participation in the consultation should not be onerous and feedback should be provided to participants at the end of the process
- The review of homelessness and the consultation outcomes should feed directly into the Preventing Homelessness Strategy

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## The strategy document

- Include commitment from lead member to early intervention & prevention
- Focus on the action plan – ensure the document is ‘live’
- Exercise caution when seeking to incorporate the local Preventing Homelessness Strategy into over-arching strategic documents
- Actions should be SMART

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<sup>12</sup> As set out in “*Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness*”, August 2012 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-every-contact-count-a-joint-approach-to-preventing-homelessness>

<sup>13</sup> The NPSS Diagnostic Peer Review Toolkit has been developed to support local authorities to identify key strengths & weaknesses and develop effective improvement plans – [www.practitionersupport.org](http://www.practitionersupport.org)

<sup>14</sup> s.3(8) Homelessness Act 2002 - <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/7/section/3>

- Consider the most appropriate life of the strategy – maximum 5 years but can be shorter
- Identify short, medium and long term aims and priorities
- Focus on all client groups; statutory and non-statutory homeless

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## Preventing Homelessness Strategy and the “Gold Standard”

Local authority Preventing Homelessness Strategies should reflect a local commitment to developing services that meet the 10 local authority challenges<sup>15</sup>:

1. adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services
2. actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs
3. offer a Housing Options prevention service, including written advice, to all clients
4. adopt a No Second Night Out model or an effective local alternative
5. have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support
6. develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both clients and landlords
7. actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions
8. have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs
9. not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation
10. not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and then for no longer than 6 weeks

Additional considerations for local authorities to consider when assessing Preventing Homelessness Strategies against the challenge set out in point 8 above:

- Clear commitment within the strategy to early intervention and prevention
- Focus on keeping people in their existing accommodation (wherever appropriate to do so)
- Responses to welfare reform
- Reviewing local services to ensure they are able to meet emerging needs and that they are operating effectively
- Tackling local housing supply issues across tenure types
- Commitment to continuous improvement

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<sup>15</sup> As set out in “*Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness*”, August 2012 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-every-contact-count-a-joint-approach-to-preventing-homelessness>

- Tackling under-occupation and overcrowding
- Review and improve services available to specific groups, for example, people fleeing domestic violence
- Joint work across a range of partnerships, including developing tackling worklessness as part of the housing options agenda
- Delegation of responsibility for delivery of aspects of the action plan so that lead responsibility for achieving aims do not all rest with the local authority
- Joint work with Health & Wellbeing Boards
- Plans to monitor, review and where necessary modify local changes to policy and strategy – such as changes to allocations policies, tenancy strategies and approach to Private Rented Sector Offers
- Commitment to identifying and developing best practice and innovation in service delivery
- Clear focus on exit strategies and developing long lasting services and interventions

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### Monitoring & review

- Clear monitoring process should be in place and undertaken by a partnership of agencies, and on a regular basis
- Framework for performance monitoring and target setting should be developed, including key performance targets for lead officers and/or partners to progress elements of the strategy
- There should be a focus on value for money delivered through efficient, but effective, local service delivery models
- Clear review process involving a minimum of 1 annual review each year

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### *Benefits of Preventing Homelessness Strategies*

Homelessness has a detrimental effect on individuals, families and communities and can undermine social cohesion. Homelessness can often be linked to alcohol and drug abuse, poor physical & mental health, crime and anti-social behaviour, poor educational attainment, debt, unemployment and the breakdown of support networks. Tackling the effects of homelessness can be costly to the public purse when compared to the costs associated with proactively seeking to prevent homelessness in the first place

In the current climate, it is vital that all local authorities in England are setting out a strategic vision and associated delivery plan to address the needs of their communities, so that they are striving to prevent and tackle homelessness proactively wherever practicably possible.

## Appendix 2:

### Preventing Homelessness Strategies – Good Practice Examples

#### **Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council**

- Homelessness Strategy 2014-2018 -  
<https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Docs/PDF/Council/Strategies-Plans-and-Policies/Housing/Appendix-1-Homelessness-Strategy.pdf>
- Homelessness Review 2012-2013 -  
<https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Docs/PDF/Council/Strategies-Plans-and-Policies/Housing/Homeless-Strategy---final-review.pdf>

#### **Royal Borough of Greenwich**

- Homelessness Review and Strategy 2014 -2019 -  
[http://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/info/200117/homeless/1539/homelessness\\_strategy](http://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/info/200117/homeless/1539/homelessness_strategy)

#### **Hambleton District Council**

- Homelessness Strategy 2015-2020 -  
[https://www.hambleton.gov.uk/info/20157/homeless/333/homelessness\\_strategy\\_2015-2020](https://www.hambleton.gov.uk/info/20157/homeless/333/homelessness_strategy_2015-2020)

#### **City of York Council**

- A City Partnership to Prevent Homelessness -  
[https://www.york.gov.uk/info/20094/homelessness/833/homelessness\\_strategy](https://www.york.gov.uk/info/20094/homelessness/833/homelessness_strategy)
- Homelessness Review 2016/17 -  
[https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/11323/homeless\\_review\\_201617](https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/11323/homeless_review_201617)

#### **Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (Stockport Homes)**

- Preventing Homelessness Strategy -  
[https://assets.contentful.com/ii3xdrqc6nfw/4d1BjHefNCYikcsqmeEAyA/f67dfc7a262c3b64722bcc0f588d6b/Homeless\\_Strategy\\_2016\\_-\\_2021.pdf](https://assets.contentful.com/ii3xdrqc6nfw/4d1BjHefNCYikcsqmeEAyA/f67dfc7a262c3b64722bcc0f588d6b/Homeless_Strategy_2016_-_2021.pdf)

#### **Winchester City Council**

- Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2014-2019 -  
<http://www.winchester.gov.uk/housing/housing-strategies-policies>

#### **Oxford City Council**

- Homelessness Strategy -  
[https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/download/254/homelessness\\_strategy](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/download/254/homelessness_strategy)  
(includes homelessness review, executive summary and homelessness strategy evidence base)