

JSNA Chapter – Homelessness

Topic information	
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Executive summary

Introduction

The causes of homelessness are complex. Reasons people become homeless involve societal structures (such as the economy, access to jobs and low cost housing), changing circumstances (such as relationship breakdown or leaving an institution) as well as personal factors (such as mental health issues, age, and substance dependency).

Crisis' Homeless Monitor 2017¹ states: "the causation of homelessness is complex, with no single 'trigger' that is either 'necessary' or 'sufficient' for it to occur". This shows that combinations of modifiable and fixed risk factors often can interconnect in various and unpredictable ways and lead to a heightened risk of homelessness for an individual or family.

Like most other areas in the country (particularly cities) homelessness in Nottingham has increased over recent years. In 2016-17 there was an average of 19 approaches to the local authority (Housing Aid service) per day from new households requiring assistance as homeless or threatened with homelessness. This is one household asking for advice and support every 25 minutes.

Under comprehensive strategic leadership Nottingham has maintained provision of a range of preventative services as well as responsive solutions to try to help people who do become homeless at the same time as further developing and delivering a system which helps to stop people from

becoming at risk of homelessness in the first place. However, this has been challenging in an environment of increased pressures but reduced resources.

In April 2017 a significant piece of homelessness legislation was passed by parliament. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 will come into force in April 2018 and bring with it the requirement for local authorities to respond to people at risk of homelessness much sooner. It also places a duty on all other public bodies to refer people for support when they identify a household at risk of homelessness. A holistic assessment and support plan will then be developed that will involve a cross-sector response from a range of organisations. There is therefore going to be the need for further integration and more partnership working than ever before.

Unmet needs and gaps

Generally, there are no longer enough services for the amount of people who are now in need of them. When there was investment in prevention, there were lower levels of homelessness. There needs to be reinvestment in prevention to prevent even more people at risk of homelessness. However, whilst we transition back to an early intervention approach, we must ensure that there are appropriate services and accommodation solutions for people who are already at homelessness and who are unable to engage or move on from the current system. This includes rough sleepers, people with multiple and complex needs, people with mental health issues, people who are in hospital with no fixed abode and people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF).

The Homelessness Reduction Act will introduce new duties to assess and produce a personalised housing plan for any eligible household who approaches for assistance with housing and is at risk of homelessness within 8 weeks. There will be new monitoring requirements associated with the additional responsibilities which will result in detailed analysis about the reasons for homelessness, allowing the local authority to highlight trends and profiles for the better targeting of support.

Recommendations for consideration by commissioners

There is a need for further cross-sector integration of assessment and support provision to prevent homelessness as well as a review of provision of all supported accommodation to ensure that a mixed economy is available and people are not falling through threshold gaps because their support needs don't fit into a defined or prescribed category.

ⁱ https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/236823/homelessness_monitor_england_2017.pdf