

Ministerial Working Group on Preventing and Tackling Homelessness

5-6pm Tuesday 20 November 2012
Large Ministerial Room, House of Commons

Attendees

Mark Prisk MP, Minister for Housing, DCLG (Chairman)
Lord David Freud, Minister for Welfare Reform (DWP)
Jeremy Wright MP, Minister for Prisons and Probation (MoJ)
Anna Soubry MP, Minister for Public Health (DH)

Officials

Heather McNaughton, MoD
Shirley Trundle, DfE
Anthony Billingshurst, DWP
Sarah Smith, MoJ
Katie Hewett, DCLG

Stephen Hall, DWP
Peter Cordingley, HO
Martin Gibbs, DH
Roger Wilshaw, DCLG
Anita Edwards, DCLG

Apologies

Jeremy Browne MP, Minister for Crime Prevention (HO)
Mark Francois MP, Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans (MoD)
Edward Timpson MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families (DfE)
Matthew Hancock MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Skills (BIS)

Agenda item one: Working Group achievements to date and policy update

- 1.1 The chair welcomed members to the first meeting of the Ministerial Working Group since the reshuffle. He explained that the Group was established by his predecessor Grant Shapps MP in 2010 to coordinate cross-government work to tackle and prevent homelessness. Significant progress has been made since then, including publishing two reports, *No Second Night Out* (July 2011) and *Making Every Contact Count* (August 2012). He was keen to maintain the momentum and take forward the work set in train by the Group's predecessors.
- 1.2 With policy lead for this agenda, DCLG were taking forward a number of policies, including :
 - the national roll out of *No Second Night Out* (building on the Mayor of London's pilot to prevent entrenched rough sleeping);
 - the £20 million Homelessness Transition Fund supporting critical front line voluntary sector services;
 - supporting voluntary sector partners to develop StreetLink which will be launched shortly (a mobile website, app and national telephone line to enable members of the public concerned about a rough sleeper in their area provide details so they can be found, connected to local services and helped off the streets);

- Commencing the Localism Act clauses (9 November) allowing local authorities to end the main homelessness duty with an offer of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector. The clauses are accompanied by a Suitability Order which ensures that this accommodation is good quality and suitable.

Agenda item two: Statistics stock take

- 1.3 The Chair briefed the Group on the latest Rough Sleeping and Statutory Homelessness statistics. He explained that the Department had introduced a new methodology for the Rough Sleeping statistics in 2010 to give a more accurate national picture. The statistics now give a snap shot of the number of rough sleepers on a single night.

Action: DCLG to share a breakdown of the Rough Sleeping statistics with the Group

Action: DCLG to consider how best to capture data on the number of nights spent sleeping rough

Agenda item three: Progress on delivery of commitments in Vision to End Rough Sleeping and Making Every Contact Count

- 1.4 The Chair thanked Departments for their engagement with the two Working Group reports and asked Members to update the Group on their progress in delivering the commitments. Good progress was being made on this and in other areas including:

- DWP's work to allow early access to the Work Programme for homeless people and maintaining the housing element of the Universal Credit for prisoners serving sentences of six months or less;
- MoJ's recent announcement on the additional rehabilitation support on offer to prevent re-offending – including the provision of mentors to meet newly released offenders at the prison gates and the expectation that they will help them with housing and employment needs. Plans will be set out by the MoJ shortly;
- DH's work to improve the hospital discharge process for homeless groups and the duty to tackle health inequalities.

Action: All Departments to maintain the momentum on the delivery of the commitments

Action: MoJ and DWP to consider how the direct payment of the Universal Credit will work for ex-prisoners

Agenda item four: Future challenges and focus of the Working Group

- 1.5 The Chair explained that as the Group had set the agenda on both tackling rough sleeping and preventing homelessness (via their two reports), he believed that there was now scope to add value by taking a thematic approach to future meetings. The Group agreed to invite external speakers to future meetings to present on the issues faced by specific groups. This would

help gain a shared understanding, uncover potential issues and if appropriate enable the group to coordinate the necessary cross-government work to resolve them.

- 1.6 The Group agreed that they would like future meetings look in detail at homeless young people, ex-offenders, migrants and families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation.

Action: Secretariat to produce a forward look for future meetings and invite relevant external experts to present on specific 'deep dive' issues.

Action: DCLG to circulate existing research on the crisis points at which people tip into homelessness.

**Secretariat
November 2012**