

DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED HOUSING STRATEGIES

INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to have this opportunity to present aspects of the UK's housing strategy. We believe that one person without a home is one too many. The UK has both a strong safety net and a clear legislative framework that ensures the provision of accommodation and help with housing costs where most needed. The Government is also currently implementing reforms to the UK housing market, outlined in the Housing White Paper, which contains measures to increase the supply of homes, improving affordability and ensuring the housing market works for all parts of our community.

This document outlines our approach to social housing allocations, housing for disabled people, safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse, and homelessness reduction, as some of the many measures undertaken by the UK Government that contribute to ensuring access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services.

WHITE PAPER

Housing in the UK is increasingly unaffordable – particularly for ordinary working people. Tackling this lack of affordability means bringing more properties onto the market, and fundamentally, this means building many more houses in the places that people want to live. This will slow the rise in housing costs relative to the rise in wages, and help ordinary working people gain better access to this most basic of necessities.

To this end, the Government launched our Housing White Paper in February 2017, which sets out an ambitious package of long-term reforms to the housing market in the UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fixing-our-broken-housing-market>

The Paper takes 'end to end' action across the whole housing system, with measures to:

- Release more land for homes where people want to live;
- Build the homes we need faster;
- Get more people building homes; and,
- Support people who need help now.

The Housing White Paper sets out a long term, comprehensive plan that continues to guide our housing strategy. Supporting documentation, including details of public consultations, can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/housing-white-paper>

SOCIAL HOUSING

Social Housing in the UK refers to homes let at below-market rates to those who are most in need or struggling to afford adequate housing. Local authorities and housing associations provide the majority of social housing in the UK.

The allocation of social housing by local authorities, which includes nominations to housing association tenancies, is governed by a statutory framework (Part 6 of the *Housing Act 1996*): <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/contents>. Local authorities are required to have and to publish an allocation scheme for determining priorities and for defining the procedures to be followed in allocating housing accommodation.

Regulations made by central government determine which foreign nationals are eligible to be allocated social housing by a local authority. For example, EU nationals are eligible for local authority housing if they have a relevant EU right to reside, which generally means if they are working lawfully in the UK or have a permanent right of residence (following 5 years lawful residence). Non-EU nationals' eligibility is linked to their immigration status and to Home Office immigration policy on migrants' access to public funds. They are eligible for social housing if they have been granted some form of humanitarian leave (usually former asylum seekers), or have settled status.

Subject to the eligibility regulations, local authorities have the power to set their own criteria determining who qualifies to go on their waiting list. The government issued statutory guidance in 2013 strongly encouraging local authorities to use their qualification powers to apply a residency test to social housing (requiring applicants to have lived in the local authority district for at least 2 years):

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/269035/13_1219_circular_for_pdf.pdf

By law, certain categories of people must be given "reasonable preference" for an allocation of social housing. Reasonable preference gives overall priority to those who:

- are homeless or owed certain homelessness duties
- need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability
- live in overcrowded or unsatisfactory housing
- need to move to avoid hardship to themselves or others

The Government issued statutory guidance to local councils in June 2012 that they must have regard to in carrying out their allocation functions:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5918/2171391.pdf

Data and information

DCLG collect data and information on social housing through a number of vehicles. Data on social housing lettings is collected through CORE and the latest data – 2015/16 – are published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/social-housing-lettings-in-england-april-2015-to-march-2016>

Information on social tenants is collected through the annual English Housing Survey. The latest report is here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2015-to-2016-social-rented-sector>

Information on the local authority housing waiting list is collected through the Local Authority Housing Statistical return. See table C here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/local-authority-housing-statistics-data-returns-for-2015-to-2016>

ADEQUATE HOUSING FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

The UK Government is committed to providing accessible housing to enable disabled people to live safely, independently and comfortably in their homes. Our national planning policy asks local authorities to plan for the housing needs of all members of the community including people with disabilities:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf.

A robust policy framework helps support the delivery of a wide range of accessible housing capable of meeting 'identified need'. This framework links national planning policy, planning policy guidance and building regulations, combining the benefits of the flexibility offered by the planning system, and clear standards set out in building regulations (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-and-use-of-buildings-approved-document-m>), with compliance checked by building control bodies.

New legislation, the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017, will lead to the production of Government guidance for local planning authorities on how to better plan to meet the housing needs of disabled people – see <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/20/contents>.

Our programme of supported housing helps many people. Since 2011, we have delivered 27,000 units of specialist and general housing for disabled and other vulnerable people. Our 'Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme' has committed £400 million for new homes to be built specifically for disabled and vulnerable people. We have committed around £200 million for new supported housing through our 'Care and Support Specialised Housing Fund'.

The Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is a means tested grant to help disabled and other eligible people make adaptations to better access, and move around, their homes and/or gardens (<https://www.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grants>). Local housing authorities in England are under a statutory duty to provide adaptations to disabled people who qualify for the grant. It has a maximum limit of £30,000 per applicant. Children and young people aged 17 and under are exempt from the means test, as are people in receipt of some types of means-tested

benefits. The grant funds around 40,000 adaptations annually. DFG funding for England for 2017-18 is £431 million. Funding will rise to £468 million next year, and to over £500 million by 2020.

SAFE ACCOMMODATION FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

Domestic abuse is a life shattering and absolutely abhorrent crime. Tackling it is a key priority for the UK Government.

We are fully committed to ensuring that no victim of domestic abuse is turned away from the support they need. This commitment was made clear in our Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, which was published on 8 March 2016. Since 2014, we have invested over £33.5 million in services to support victims of domestic abuse, including refuges.

2016/18 - £20 million Fund <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-support-for-more-than-19000-victims-of-domestic-abuse> – 76 projects across the country will receive a share of the £20 million fund to support victims of domestic abuse, creating more than 2,200 bed spaces and giving support to over 19,000 victims.

2015/16 - £3.5 million Fund <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/35-million-awarded-to-make-sure-domestic-abuse-victims-get-help> – 46 bids from across the country providing 710 bed spaces and giving support to over 3,798 victims.

2014/16 - £10 million Fund <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/10-million-support-for-women-facing-the-threat-of-domestic-violence> – to strengthen accommodation based specialist support abuse service provision, 148 areas benefitted from this funding.

2017/18 - £326,955 Funding to:

- ‘Routes to Support’ (formerly UK Refuges Online) – supports a UK wide secure database of violence against women and girls services and refuge vacancies and staffing to provide support to victims who need to access refuges.
- ‘No Women Turned Away’ project – provides additional caseworker support to women facing difficulties in accessing a refuge space.

Alongside the £20 million fund, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-20-million-fund-now-open-to-help-victims-of-domestic-abuse> we have also published ‘Priorities for Domestic Abuse Services’, developed with partners from the domestic abuse sector, which sets out for the first time what local areas need to do to ensure their response to domestic abuse is as collaborative, robust and effective as it can be.

THE HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION ACT

The final section of this report turns to efforts to prevent homelessness in the UK. The Government supported the Homelessness Reduction Bill which was introduced to the House of Commons in summer 2016 by Bob Blackman MP, and progressed through Parliament with cross party support. The Act received Royal Assent on Thursday 27th April 2017.

Link: [The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#)

The Act is designed to significantly reform England's homelessness legislation by placing duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas. It also requires local authorities to provide new homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who are protected under existing legislation. The new duties include:

i) All households will be provided with free information and advice on preventing and relieving homelessness and the rights of homeless people. The information will be tailored to the needs of vulnerable groups, for example care leavers and victims of domestic abuse.

ii) An enhanced prevention duty extends the period during which a household is threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days, meaning that local authorities are required to work with people to prevent homelessness at an earlier stage.

iii) A new duty for those who are already homeless will mean that local housing authorities will support households for 56 days to relieve their homelessness by helping to secure accommodation.

Link: [Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities](#)

A consultation on the Homelessness Code of Guidance was launched on 9th October 2017. This is intended to support local authorities' restructuring of services ahead of the commencement of the Act. The statutory guidance sets out the steps that local authorities should take into account when providing support to people who are threatened with homelessness or who are currently homeless.

We have recently launched a consultation on the Homelessness Code of Guidance which will support local authorities' work to prepare for the implementation of the Act.

Statistics

Link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homelessness-statistics>

This collection brings together all documents relating to homelessness and rough sleeping statistics. This collection contains statistics on statutory homelessness, rough sleeping and homelessness prevention and relief.

Link: <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports>

These reports present information about people seen sleeping rough by outreach teams in London. Information in the report is derived from the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN), a multi-agency database recording information about rough sleepers and the wider street population in London. CHAIN is commissioned and funded by the Greater London Authority (GLA) and managed by St Mungo's.

Funding

- We have allocated over £550 million until 2020 to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping, as well as supporting the Homelessness Reduction Act, including:
 - Protecting £315 million of funding to local authorities and £149 million of central government funding for homelessness programmes;

- £100 million to deliver at least 2,000 low-cost move-on accommodation places, for people leaving hostels and refuges to make a sustainable recovery

We are supporting 84 projects through our £50 million Homelessness Prevention Programme, to deliver an end-to-end approach to homelessness prevention. This includes:

- £20 million to establish a network of 28 ambitious Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer areas;
- A £20 million rough sleeping grant fund for 48 projects providing targeted prevention and early intervention for those at imminent risk of sleeping rough; and
- £10 million for 8 Social Impact Bond projects to provide personalised support for long-term rough sleepers.

These 84 projects are working across 205 district and unitary local authorities in England to ensure that more people have tailored support to avoid becoming homeless in the first place, and receive the rapid support they need to make a sustainable recovery from homelessness.

CONCLUSION

This document has described action the UK is taking to increase the supply of homes, improving affordability for low-income households; to provide adequate housing to vulnerable and disabled persons; and to reduce homelessness. The UK hopes these examples will be helpful to the Special Rapporteur in the preparation of her report.

The Special Rapporteur may wish to be aware that the United Kingdom recently submitted its interim report to the Committee for the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) on 31 August 2017. The United Nations accepted the United Kingdom's submission, and the full interim report is now available on the United Nations website: http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=1073&Lang=en

The Government has also recently published its result of the Race Disparity Audit, on the [Ethnicity facts and figures](#) website. The Audit gives unprecedented insight into how people from different ethnic backgrounds are treated in society, including their access to healthcare, education, employment and in the criminal justice system and uncovers a complex picture of the outcomes of people from different backgrounds. Britain has come a long way in spreading equality and opportunity, but this audit provides Government with a call to action to do more to tackle inequalities.

This Government wants to build a country that works for everyone. Publication of this audit, as well as the information detailed in this submission above, are important steps in tackling the injustices that hold people back in life. We will continue to listen to the public and others to make sure the right action is being taken to tackle persistent disparities.

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