Safeguarding: Homelessness & Housing



Safeguarding Champions

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What do we mean by homelessness?

- A person is considered legally homeless if they do not have accommodation available to them in the UK or abroad, or if it is not reasonable for them to continue occupying their current accommodation. This includes situations where staying in the home would expose them or their household to violence, domestic abuse, or other risks.
- Legal homelessness does not require someone to be sleeping rough; it also covers people in temporary, insecure, or unsuitable housing such as hostels, B&Bs, squats, or sofa surfing, and those who cannot access their accommodation due to eviction or lockouts.
- A person is also considered threatened with homelessness if they are likely to become homeless within 56 days, e.g. after receiving a notice to leave their home. Local authorities have a duty to prevent homelessness and provide advice and support to those at risk, regardless of the cause of the threat.
- It covers people living in sheds, garages, hostels, temporary accommodation or overcrowded and concealed housing.

Contributing Factors

The links between homelessness and housing are complex and can include;

Lack of affordable housing – giving low-income families limited choices

Rising costs of housing - outpacing wages

Unemployment/ low pay / insecure work

Debt

Relationship breakdowns

Leaving care

Leaving prison

Mental or physical health issues

Escaping Domestic Violence

Eviction

Leaving the Armed Forces

There are many factors that can contribute to someone / families becoming homeless and each case needs to be treated individually

Legislation

1996

Housing Act 1996. Part 7

- **sets out LA's duties to prevent and relieve homelessness.**

2002

Homelessness Act 2002

- **extended priority need categories to include; 16-17 year olds, care leavers aged 18-20yrs, those at risk due having been in care, prison leavers, armed forces, fleeing violence.**

2017

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

- **Encourages partnership working and collaboration to address the causes and prevent escalation of issues.**
- **Further extended the need to intervene early and offer the 56 day relief duty to help secure accommodation.**

2021

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

- **Granted eligible victims of Domestic Abuse priority need for housing**
- **Expanded the definitions of DA to include; emotional, controlling and coercive behaviour.**

Recent changes

Recent changes include:

- **Domestic Abuse Act 2021**: priority need for all eligible survivors of domestic abuse.
- **Temporary Permission to Stay (TPS) route**: victims of human trafficking or modern slavery with limited leave can access homelessness assistance and social housing. (S65. Nationality and Borders Act 2022)
- **Homelessness Reduction Act 2017**: earlier intervention and support for all eligible applicants.

These reforms aim to ensure that more people at risk of homelessness receive support and protection, reflecting a shift from reactive to preventative approaches in UK homelessness policy.

Duties of the Local Authority

Local authorities are legally required to:

- Assess whether someone is homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 d ays.
- Take reasonable steps to prevent and relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants, known as the prevention and relief duties.
- Provide suitable accommodation for those with **priority need (**Families with children / pregnant / Vulnerable – Mental or physical health / DA**)**.
- Support vulnerable groups, including domestic abuse survivors, care leavers, and those with health and social vulnerabilities.

What's needed?

Safeguarding practices in the housing sector are essential for preventing harm and protecting residents. They include;

- Identifying and addressing risks such as; unfit living conditions, domestic abuse, anti-social behaviour, and other potential threats.
- Collaboration between housing, social care, and safeguarding services
- Local authorities working together to prevent homelessness and ensuring all housing needs are considered when individuals approach them.
- Housing providers spotting and responding to safeguarding risks, particularly for vulnerable residents such as adults with care needs, children and the those facing social exclusion. They are encouraged to embed safeguarding best practices across their operations to create safer communities.

The NHS Safeguarding framework emphasizes the importance of safeguarding in the housing sector, ensuring the safety, wellbeing and dignity of vulnerable tenants.

Statistics - National

Homelessness in England (2025)

In recent data, there were 382,618 people homeless. This includes 175,025 children. (Up 8% since 2024) and comprises of;

- 350,480 homeless and living in temporary accommodation arranged by a council.
- In addition, 7,146 homeless and living in temporary accommodation arranged themselves.
- 4,667 people sleeping rough on any given night
- Approx. 16,294 people staying in hostels without a priority need.
- 4,031 people living in temporary accommodation provided by social services.

Statistics - Local

Homelessness affects every part of the country.

The West Midlands (1 in 198 people) has the highest rate of homelessness outside of London, followed by the **South East (1 in 235)** and East of England (1 in 267).

In the South East;

- *Estimated no. of people homeless and living in TA arranged by the LA* – 39,780 **(Hart – 59)**
- *Estimated no. of people homeless and living in TA arranged by them or homeless at home* – 400 **(Hart – 0)**
- *No. of people sleeping on the streets on a given night* – 795 **(Hart – 1)**
- *Est. total no. people (adults and children) homeless (change since 2024)* - 40,975 (an increase of +9%) / **(Hart – 60)**

How can we help?

If you come across someone that appears homeless in the street;

- Safety first – assess the situation and if there is an imminent danger or they are under 18yrs, call 999.
- Have a conversation – approach them with kindness and respect, listen carefully without making assumptions or judging.
- Offer resources – let them know about local support services.
- Be honest – let them know about your limitations / capacity to help
- Food and drinks – rather than giving money, offer to buy them food, drink toiletries etc

Support charities;

- giving donations to help them support homeless clients.
- Volunteer your time.
- Food donations

Support

NATIONAL

- Homeless UK
- Streetlink
- Trussell Trust
- Shelter – 0808 800 4444 (Mon – Fri / 8am - 6pm)
- Citizens Advice Bureau – 0800 144 8848
- Nightstop
- Runaway Helpline - 116 000 (24hrs)
- National Domestic Violence Helpline – 0808 200 0247 (24hrs)
- Veterans UK – 0808 191 4218
- Veterans Aid - 0800 012 6867
- Stoll - 0207 385 2110
- Mind - 0300 123 3393
- Samaritans - 116 123
- Centrepoint

LOCALLY / HAMPSHIRE

- Hart District Council
- Two Saints
- Emmaus Hampshire
- The Society of St James
- Step by Step
- Fleet Phoenix

Further reading

- Adult Safeguarding and Homelessness (LGA)
- Homelessness Code of Guidance for LA's (Gov.uk)
- Homelessness Legislation (Crisis)
- Statutory homelessness (England): The legal framework and performance (House of Commons)
- Safeguarding Adults (Homeless Link)
- National plan to end homelessness (Gov.uk)
- How to help homeless people
- Homelessness in England (Shelter)

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ALWAYS HAVE A WILLING HAND TO HELP SOMEONE, YOU MIGHT BE THE ONLY ONE THAT DOES.

– ROY T. BENNETT