



Joint Housing, Communities and Local Government and Health Select Committee inquiry: Long term funding of adult social care - Homeless Link response

Introduction

1. Homeless Link is the national membership body for frontline homelessness agencies and the wider housing with health, care and support sector. We represent over 700 organisations providing supported housing and homelessness services across England. We work to improve services through research, information, training and guidance, and to promote policy change that will ensure everyone has a place to call home and the support to keep it. We also coordinate the Supported Housing Alliance, which draws on the unique expertise and breadth of our membership to champion the vital contribution supported housing makes to some of the most vulnerable groups in society, and ensure their voice is influential in shaping policy and practice across the sector.
2. We are a member of the Making Every Adult Matter Coalition (MEAM), alongside Clinks and Mind, formed to improve policy and services for people facing multiple needs. Together the charities represent over 1,300 frontline organisations that have an interest in the criminal justice, substance misuse, homelessness and mental health sectors. We support 37 partnerships across the country to develop effective, coordinated approaches to multiple needs that can increase wellbeing, reduce costs to public services and improve people's lives. 25 of these areas are using the [MEAM Approach](#) – a non-prescriptive framework to help local areas design and deliver better coordinated services – while twelve are part of the Big Lottery Fund's [Fulfilling Lives programme](#), which we are pleased to support.
3. Homeless Link welcomes the opportunity to respond to this inquiry on the long term funding of adult social care. While we recognise the current focus on securing sustainable funding for older people's care and support, we have a number of concerns regarding access to social care for people who are homeless or living in supported accommodation we wish to raise through the joint Committee inquiry.
4. Our key concerns are:
 - The potential for the Care Act to increase access to care assessments for people experiencing homelessness has not yet been realised.
 - Budgetary pressures on social care and wider support services for people with multiple needs are resulting in high levels of unmet need.
 - Fragmentation of services makes it difficult for people with multiple needs and the professionals supporting them to navigate the system and secure the necessary care and support.
 - Funding for social care for people with multiple needs must not be lost in the broader discussion about sustainable long-term funding.

Response

5. Social care services have a significant role to play in both preventing homelessness and responding to the needs of people who are homeless or in supported accommodation. When the Care Act was introduced in 2014 there was some optimism that the removal of references to 'eligible' and 'ineligible' groups could open up routes to assessment for people who were

previously excluded. This was particularly welcome given the very high levels of poor physical and mental health among people who are homeless.¹ The new national eligibility criteria could also minimise the local variation around thresholds for support.² However we know from members that they are struggling to access assessments for the individuals they are supporting. The reasons for this are not solely funding-related, but financial pressures do have an impact on the perceived gatekeeping of resources, limited proactive engagement with socially excluded groups, high levels of staff turnover and the extent of services offered.³

6. The pressures on social care funding are also replicated in other key areas of support for people with multiple and complex needs. The removal of the ring-fence from the Supporting People budget in 2009 has led to a reduction of at least 45% in recent years.⁴ Drug and alcohol services have seen a 15% cut in four years.⁵ Members report an increasing level of mental health need in their services as community mental health teams struggle with high caseloads, meaning that thresholds to access support are extremely high. In 73% of cases where homeless accommodation projects turn someone away, one of the reasons cited is that their needs are too high to be safely supported in the service.⁶ This shows there is a significant gap in support for people who are most in need of it.
7. The high costs of these unmet needs to the health and social care system are often cited and better integration across the health, housing and social care sectors is often a key solution.⁷ The Making Every Adult Matter work has demonstrated the positive impact a more coordinated approach can have on supporting people with multiple and complex needs.⁸ However frontline homelessness practitioners talk about a fragmentation of services that makes it even more difficult to navigate the adult social care system.⁹ This fragmentation and difficulty accessing social care support is evident at a number of key points in a person's contact with the health and social care system, including hospital discharge¹⁰ and palliative care for people who are homeless.¹¹

For more information, please contact:

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¹ Homeless Link (2014) [The unhealthy state of homelessness](#)

² Cornes et al. (2015) [The Care Act, Personalisation and the New Eligibility Regulations](#)

³ Mason et al. (2017) [Multiple Exclusion Homelessness and adult social care in England: Exploring the challenges through a researcher-practitioner partnership](#)

⁴ National Audit Office (2014) [The Impact of Funding Reductions on Local Authorities](#)

⁵ The Independent (2017) [Drug and alcohol treatment funding slashed across England by 16% in four years](#)

⁶ Homeless Link (2017) [Single Homelessness Support in England: Annual Review 2016](#)

⁷ Local Government Association (2017) [The Impact of Homelessness on Health: A Guide for Local Authorities](#)

⁸ Barclay, J (April 2016) [Changing systems, changing lives](#)

⁹ Mason et al. (2017) [Multiple Exclusion Homelessness and adult social care in England: Exploring the challenges through a researcher-practitioner partnership](#)

¹⁰ Healthwatch England (2015) [Safely Home?](#)

¹¹ Care Quality Commission (2017) [A Second Class Ending](#)