



Homeless Reduction Act 2017 – Update


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Summary of the main changes


- Focus on prevention – earlier and proactive (casework)
- New duty to prevent and relieve (up to, and longer in some cases, than 56 days)
- Threatened with homeless – extended to 56 days
- Duty to assess and produce Personal Housing Plans
- 'Deliberate and unreasonable refusal to cooperate'
- New duties blind to priority need and intentionality
- Prevention stage is blind to Local Connection
- New rights to review
- Care Leavers – very specific new duty related to choice





How the Act is intended to work

- 1 **STAGE 1**
the application and assessment of the test of eligibility and whether the applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days
- 2 **STAGE 2**
The prevention stage – to take reasonable steps to help the applicant from losing accommodation. If fails there;
- 3 **STAGE 3**
The relief of homelessness stage – to take reasonable steps to help the applicant find somewhere else to live. If fails then
- 4 **STAGE 4**
The final main duty owed for those in priority need and not intentionally homeless



Funding the additional burdens



- £72m allocated by Government over 3 years – initially was £48m over 2 years, then increased to £67m
- After this it is expected that savings through preventing homelessness will make the Act self funding
- Estimated it could cost London boroughs £161m to implement the new duties (AHAS)
- Exec member for London Councils states because of new legislation, estimated increase of £77m in temp accommodation in London alone
- Estimated it could cost Kent authorities almost £8m which includes staffing costs, PHS accommodation and the new review burdens
- Kent received £2,601,711 in total – Medway received the highest at most £506,000 and Tunbridge Wells received the lowest with just over £04,000
- Dartford received £139,072



Why the HRACT is better



- A Council is required to take a homeless application for earlier (56 day risk of homelessness). This increases the chances of that early help being successful.
- If someone is homeless or threatened with homelessness there is a duty to provide real help – 'the reasonable steps' – real help that is 'blind' to whether they are or may be owed a main duty
- The right to real help must be set out in a personal plan that has been developed to reflect that applicant's needs and circumstances
- A family or individual can only be intentional homeless if the duty to help them find somewhere to live fails
- The extra rights are balanced by understanding that although the response to homelessness would best be long term social housing this is not realistic given the housing pressures
- Therefore any suitable accommodation secured of any tenure with a reasonable prospect of being available for 9 months or more ends the Council's duties
- Non cooperation with the help provided has a consequence as does refusing suitable accommodation made to resolve homelessness



Anecdotal



- A huge rise in number of applications. Dartford saw a 256% increase from March to July
- Massive pressure on staff – bigger case loads, open for longer
- Some authorities have seen temporary accommodation double
- Very admin heavy – clients and staff struggling with the paperwork
- Some staff struggling with the new directive
- Not enough money!
- Better working relationships being established.



What about Partnership working? New duty for named public authorities to refer



- Duty from October 2018 that if a named public authority is dealing with a person who may be homeless or at risk of homelessness they must seek their consent to refer the case to an authority of the person's choice
- Included police, hospitals, GPs, probation, schools, colleges, Adult social Care, Children Services
- Did not include Housing Associations



What about Partnership working? New duty for named public authorities to refer



- From Monday 1 October, as part of the Homelessness Reduction Act, public bodies will be bound by the Duty to Refer. This is an obligation to refer anyone to a local authority if they are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- Housing associations are not bound by this duty, but a large number of the NHF members told us they were keen to support the implementation of the Act regardless.
- NHF therefore worked with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to develop a housing association offer on the Duty to Refer – known as the Commitment to Refer.
- Because the Duty to Refer comes into effect on Monday 1 October, the Commitment to Refer did too. NHF have therefore produced guidance that provides members with the tools to implement the Commitment to Refer.
- This guidance also details the other ways your organisation can play a part in ending homelessness.



Questions?