

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The significant changes to
statutory homelessness
duties for local authorities

Introduction

- Homelessness legislation is contained in the Housing Act 1996 – the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) amends Part 7 of this legislation but does not replace it.
- The HRA places significantly increased statutory duties on local housing authorities to prevent and relieve homelessness.
- The changes came into effect on 1 April 2018

- The Government has issued comprehensive new Code of Guidance notes on service delivery of the new duties. The new Code of Guidance for LAs has now been issued, advising HST's on how to implement the changes.
- The HRA transforms the help councils are expected to provide to all eligible people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. It aims to ensure provision of support to people who aren't presently entitled to help under the current system. i.e. LC cases

Key Points

- Changes LAs duty to offer prevention services earlier, from 28 days – 56 days
- Provide every applicant with a comprehensive PHP
- Enhanced Homeless Prevention duties – early intervention, additional services offering options for those threatened with homelessness. HST have been using enhanced Prevention tools for the past 3-4 years, including Rent in Advance, Deposit and Bond Schemes.
- There is also a Goodwill budget available
- New Relief duty – Provide assistance when Preventions fail.

Requirements Placed Upon Applicants

- All applicants will complete a PHP with a HSO at every stage of their journey through the HST system.
- Both the applicant and the HSO complete the PHP working together to agree what housing aspirations/plans/proposals they have to Prevent Homelessness or secure alternative accommodation.
- The applicant must show that they have completed the agreed PHP 'tasks' and HSO's will provide details of their completed tasks/future plans.
- Failure to engage with an HSO can lead to the case being closed without resolution.

Key Points

A duty to refer: A new duty on other public services to refer to LAs if they are working with people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness – services affected by this requirement were notified in October 2018.

Increased duties in relation to homeless case Reviews and Appeals: Clients have increased rights to seek reviews of the Council's decisions at every stage of presentation.

Continued TA protection for families:

Councils were required under existing law to accommodate PN households for 28 days post S184 I.T Decision - under the new relief duty TA is extended from 28 – 56 days.

This potentially doubles pressures on TA – predictions from MHCLG stated that LAs would require additional provision of TA. HST are working with local landlords to secure additional accommodation.

- **Increased workload for the Housing Solutions Team.**
- The number of homeless applications and need for in depth casework has increased substantially.
- HST introduced HRA working guidelines in March 2018. The average allocation of cases has increased to 20+ per day on average since the introduction of the new system. Footfall into the service has increased by 59%
- The HST now offer detailed face to face interviews and assess each applicant as to their housing needs and produce a written Personal Housing Plan for **every** person that uses the housing services

- Quarterly reporting to MHCLG
- The new reporting procedures (H-CLIC) cover all households who approach an LHA for assistance
- Prevention and relief duties are under a statutory reporting duty rather than (as previously) focusing primarily on households to whom an LHA owes a full homelessness duty.

Funding the Changes

DCLG funding to HC –
2017/2018 £48,264,
2018/2019 £44,210,
2019 /2020 £62,898,
A total of £155,372.