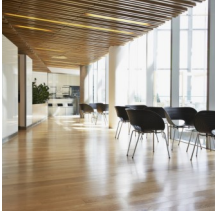


HAST NEWSLETTER

Homelessness Advice and Support Team Update

AUGUST 2024

Top stories in this newsletter



HCLIC Updates



Section 208 -
Out of Area
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National Audit Office
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Minister Profiles



Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP
Deputy Prime Minister

Strategic Oversight of Department's Business and Policy, including:

- Housing and planning
- Local government and English devolution
- Regional and local growth
- Communities and faith
- Democracy and elections
- Public appointments
- Tackling homelessness and rough sleeping, including;
- Chair, Inter-Ministerial Group on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping
- Cross-governmental coordination of policy to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping



Rushanara Ali MP
Minister for Building and Homelessness

- Homelessness and rough sleeping
- Housing quality
- Supported housing and domestic abuse
- Grenfell Community, Tower and Memorial
- Grenfell Inquiry
- Building safety, regulations, Building Safety Regulator and remediation
- Planning casework

Ministerial portfolios have now been announced. It is positive to see that homelessness is a feature in both the Deputy Prime Minister and Parliamentary Under-secretary responsibilities.

MHCLG Name / Email Changes

In line with the department's decision to revert to its previous title of Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government please note that HAST advisers' email addresses have reverted to the previous format,

adviserfirstname.lastname@communities@gov.uk

HAST@communities.gov.uk

We would ask that you please update your records accordingly to ensure you are contacting the correct address going forward.

Spending Review



The government has announced that there will be a Budget in October 2024 where the departmental budgets for 2025-2026 will be set. This will determine how much MHCLG has to deliver services and is unlikely to be clarity for local authorities on individual budgets. We are working to get that information to you as soon as possible to assist with budget setting for next year. We understand the impact of delayed funding security has on service delivery and understand some areas are looking at prioritisation

exercises. Do continue to discuss your positions across the adviser teams if you have particular concerns, however they are unable to facilitate any advanced reassurance.

Further to the Budget in October the Chancellor has also announced her intention to launch a multi-year Spending Review to conclude in Spring 2025. The government will use the Spending Review to change the way public services are delivered by embedding a mission-led approach, driving forward public service reform and making the best use of technology to better deliver services. The Spending Review will set spending plans for a minimum of three years of the five-year forecast period.

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HCLIC Updates: January - March 2024



MHCLG recently published statistics on Statutory Homelessness in England, January – March 2024. This is the latest update in the quarterly statistical series about statutory homelessness duties and temporary accommodation, as collected by the Homelessness-Case Level Information Collection (H-CLIC).

The main headlines between January – March 2024:

94,560 households had initial assessments, up 10.8% from January to March 2023. Our quarterly publication now includes the households who withdrew an application before assessment (3,330) and those that were not eligible or no longer eligible (710) in total number of initial assessments. Some of the increase in assessments compared to the same quarter last year is these new categories now being included in our total figures. Without these, there has been a 6.1% increase in overall assessments compared to the same quarter last year.

From these initial assessments, 86,520 were assessed as owed a duty to prevent or relieve homelessness.

38,440 households were assessed as being threatened with homelessness, and therefore owed a prevention duty which is down 0.6% from the same quarter last year. This includes 6,630 households threatened with homelessness due to service of a Section 21 notice to end an Assured Shorthold Tenancy – an increase of 1.2% from the same quarter last year.

48,080 households were initially assessed as homeless and therefore owed a relief duty, up 11.4% from the same quarter last year. Households with children owed a relief duty increased 6.9% from the same quarter last year to 12,370 households in January to March 2024.

17,120 households were accepted as owed a main homelessness duty, up 19.8% from January to March 2023. This reflects the increase in households with children owed a relief duty this quarter (6.9%) and last quarter (11.9%) compared to previous year.

On 31 March 2024, 117,450 households were in temporary accommodation, which is an increase of 12.3% from 31 March 2023. Households with children increased by 14.7% to 74,530, and single households increased by 8.5% to 42,920. Compared to the previous quarter, the number of households in temporary accommodation had increased by 4.3%.

The release and data tables can be found here:

- We have also published a dashboard with a summary of local authority performance on statutory homelessness measures, available at the [link](#)
- If you do use our statistics, please take the time to fill in our [survey](#), it should take less than 5minutes.

If you have any questions, please contact homelessnessstats@levellingup.gov.uk

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Prison Capacity & Changes to Standard Determinate Sentences



A Statutory Instrument has been laid in Parliament in order to make legislative changes to the percentage of time certain prisoners serving a Standard Determinate Sentence must spend in custody from 50% to 40%.

This will be applied retrospectively, meaning that prisoners with eligible sentences will have their sentences recalculated to a 40% release point, and they will be released on commencement if they are already passed the 40% point.

From commencement, all newly sentenced prisoners with an SDS that fits the eligibility criteria will have their release date set at the 40% mark.

This applies across the men and women's estate as well as offenders serving 'Section 250' sentences imposed on under 18s. Given the volume of prisoners who will have passed the 40% point and the need to have their pre-release plans amended at pace, these prisoners will be released in two tranches.

Tranche one will be those serving sentences of less than five years, and those passed the 40% point will be released on September 10th; tranche two will be those serving five years or more and those past the 40% point will be released on October 22nd.

While the majority of pre-release processes remain the same as for BAU releases, these will now be done in a truncated time period. Probation staff have already started the release planning for those who must be released on September 10th and will be in contact with LA homelessness and housing options teams for any of those due to be released who have been identified as at risk of homelessness.

As you may be aware HMPPS delivers a Community Accommodation Service (CAS) offering a three-tier structure of support for people on probation who require public protection measures or are at risk of being homeless. All three CAS tiers provide a bridge back into the community, appropriate to the risk of harm presented and probation practitioners can refer into this under business as usual arrangements.

Teams within your local authorities will have established processes with prison and probation staff in supporting pre-release plans and managing Duty to Refers for those leaving prison. It is likely that contact and referrals will increase in the run up to September 10th. We would encourage LA's to reach out to their prison and probation partners if not already in contact and for any queries on the best contacts, details can be found on the Probation Finder function on gov.uk: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/probation-finder>

If there are gaps in information or engagement from HPTs do let your HAST adviser know as we are happy to support you to work with colleagues in probation during this period.

Section 208 - Out of Area Placement



We do understand that the pressure that local authorities are facing and that this includes an increasing number of placements being outside of their respective boundaries. We have received reports that notifications are **not** being made to the receiving authority and that this is causing pressure on services and, potentially, putting those placed at risk.

Therefore, we would like to remind you that it is important that the relevant notice is provided to the receiving local authority **for all placements made**, in accordance with the Homelessness Code of Guidance, which states:

*"17.66 - Where a housing authority places an applicant in accommodation outside the district under any part of the Act, section 208(2) requires them to notify the authority in whose district the accommodation is situated of the placement. The notification requirement applies to **all** out of district placements and not just those arranged under interim accommodation duties or the section 193(2) main housing duty. The notification must include:*

- a. the name of the applicant;*
- b. the number and description of other persons who normally reside with the applicant as a member of his or her family or might reasonably be expected to do so;*
- c. the address of the accommodation;*
- d. the date on which the accommodation was made available;*
- e. which function the housing authority is discharging in securing the accommodation; and,*
- f. the notice must be given in writing within 14 days of the accommodation being made available to the applicant."*

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eVisa Introduction



UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) are developing a digital immigration system. Throughout 2024, UKVI are replacing physical immigration documents like Biometric Residence Permits (BRPs) and Cards (BRCs), and older paper documents, with an online record of immigration status called an eVisa. From 06 August, any person with a biometric residence permit (BRP) expiring on 31 December 2024 can now create a UKVI account and access their eVisa, without needing an invitation from UKVI to do so. See www.gov.uk/eVisa for more information. You are invited to attend an engagement event to hear how the UK Government is continuing its transition to eVisas and what action people need to take to create a UKVI account to access their eVisa. We are also keen to explore how your organisation can help inform people what they need to do and the level of support available. What you'll learn at this event:

- The public phase of the eVisa roll out: Understand the timeline and actions people can take.
- The advantages of eVisa: Explore the benefits of a digital immigration status.
- What this means for people applying for a Visa now and in the future
- Checking someone's immigration status
- UKVI account maintenance: Understand the importance of keeping your account up to date.
- Support resources: Discover where to find help and support.
- Raising awareness: Learn how your organisation can help facilitate this transition.

Please register to attend using the links below. Although events are regionally targeted, you may sign up for any of the below sessions. You only need to attend one .

[21 August 14:00 – 15:00 – North Local Authorities/SMPs](#)

[11th September 11:00 - 12:00 - Home Office eVisa Engagement Event for LA's/VCE \(Voluntary Community Engagement\)](#)

[13th September 11:00 - 12:00 - Home Office eVisa Engagement Event for LA's/VCE \(Voluntary Community Engagement\)](#)

National Audit Office



The National Audit Office published the report *The Effectiveness of Government in Tackling Homelessness* on 23rd July.

The National Audit Office (NAO) scrutinises public spending for Parliament and is independent of government and the civil service. Its public audit perspective helps Parliament hold government to account and improve public services.

The last NAO report on homelessness in 2017 – around six months before HRA 2017 came into force – found that, despite rising levels of homelessness, the then Department for Communities and Local Government did not have a published strategy, took a light-touch approach to working with local authorities, and was only beginning to put in place the measures that would allow it to maximise the effectiveness of resources deployed.

NAO returned to this topic now that the HRA 2017 changes have had time to take effect and focuses particularly on strategy, quality of data, and engagement with local authorities. The 2024 report assesses value for money in terms of whether the department is working with government departments and local authorities in a way that maximises government's ability to tackle homelessness. Specifically, it looks to establish whether the department: has a good understanding of the nature of homelessness; is delivering appropriate system leadership; and supports local authorities well.

The report made a number of recommendations including that -

DLUHC (now MHCLG) should lead on:

- Adopting a genuinely **cross-departmental approach to tackling homelessness**, which might involve establishing a dedicated **joint unit** to oversee the implementation of the approach; and producing a **long-term strategy**, and associated **public targets**, with regard to statutory homelessness.

DLUHC (now MHCLG) should:

- Explore how it can provide local authorities with greater **predictability of funding for homelessness**, within a spending review period;
- Consider how it can support local authorities to **focus more on homelessness prevention**;
- Consider how the **quality of B&B accommodation could be improved**;
- Establish a way for local authorities to more easily understand **innovative practice and potential solutions in homelessness** services from other authorities; and

consider how it might enhance its analysis function to improve its understanding of, and publish data on, **repeat homelessness** and **out-of-area temporary accommodation placements**.

As part of the next spending review, and to support a cross-cutting approach to tackling homelessness, we recommend that HM Treasury should:

- Review and seek to **simplify cross-departmental funding for homelessness**; and

consider ways to **incentivise government departments to support homelessness prevention**, to deliver better outcomes and improved value for money.

You can read the full report [here](#).

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Housing Loss Prevention Advice Service



Housing Loss Prevention Advice Service (HLPAS). HLPAS provides free legal advice and representation to tenants and homeowners who have received written notice seeking possession. A housing expert will work with the individual to identify what may be causing someone to seek possession of their home including, underlying issues, such as debt and access to welfare benefits, and recommend potential solutions.

More information about HLPAS can be found [here](#). HLPAS can complement local authorities' homelessness prevention activity, and we therefore encourage you, if you are not already doing so, to signpost to HLPAS on any relevant webpages and refer homelessness applicants to the Service where appropriate.

Please do get in touch with Civil.LegalAidPolicy@justice.gov.uk if you have any queries or have any feedback about HLPAS.

NICE Guidelines



We wanted to share with you some short films produced by The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) the Centre for Homelessness Impact (CHI) intended for professionals working in health and social care to raise awareness of the NICE guidelines on '[Integrated health and social care for people experiencing homelessness](#)'.

Although there are some great examples of this NICE guideline being implemented in effective and innovative ways, there is also limited awareness of it among some health and care professionals.

Each film is aimed at a different audience and can be accessed with the links below:

Front line workers and clinicians e.g. in [A&E, GPs' surgeries](#)

Front line professionals in [adult social care](#)

Commissioners of [health and housing services](#)

Senior strategic [leaders in health and care](#)

Please help improve services for people experiencing homelessness and support the implementation of this important NICE guideline by sharing these films via your professional, regional and local networks.

Best Practice



HAST are receiving a lots of requests for examples of good practice in accessing the private rented sector in the current market. The HCLIC stats show that access is still possible with 12560 people moving into the section between January and March 2024.

We are keen to hear from authorities who have recently seen an increase in outcomes or how have changed their approach to accessing the private rented sector for prevention, relief or move on functions.

Please send us any scheme updates that are working well and whether you would be happy to share your experiences with other areas.

Each newsletter we will feedback some of the examples and invite future topics for inclusion.

Please use the HAST@communities.gov.uk email for submissions.