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OFFICE OF THE
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Supporting People

Guide to Accommodation
and Support Options for
Homeless Households



supporting**people**

supporting independence

homelessness
directorate



Supporting People

Guide to Accommodation and Support Options for Homeless Households

September 2003

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CHAPTER 1

Supporting People and Homelessness

Who is the guide intended for?

- 1.1 This guide is intended for *Supporting People* teams and members of Commissioning Bodies. It is also relevant to: organisations that provide services to this client group, and those considering doing so; and officers in housing, homelessness, health and Social Services departments, including those with responsibility for developing the local authority homelessness strategy.

The purpose of this guide

- 1.2 The guide is intended as an overview and introduction to the range of potential provision that can be provided to meet the accommodation and support needs of what is a very diverse group.
- 1.3 The guide is divided into six Chapters:
 - **Chapter 1:** discusses statutory and non-statutory homelessness and provides an overview of support services for homeless households which are likely to be fundable under the *Supporting People* programme;
 - **Chapter 2:** covers floating support services which could be provided for homeless households and potentially homeless households;
 - **Chapter 3:** focuses on short and medium stay housing with support, including direct access schemes, nightshelters, hostels, transitional housing and supported lodgings;
 - **Chapter 4:** discusses the provision of specialised services for particular groups, such as young people, including floating support and short or medium stay supported housing services, and the provision of long-stay supported housing services for the minority of homeless people who may be unable to live independently even in the long term;
 - **Chapter 5:** discusses recognising and supporting diversity;
 - **Chapter 6:** discusses opportunities to improve service delivery.

Other accommodation and support guides

- 1.4 This guide is one of a series of accommodation and support guides that are being developed. Those most relevant to issues of homelessness are:
- *Supporting People* guide to accommodation and support options for households experiencing domestic violence.
 - *Supporting People* guide to accommodation and support options for people with mental health problems.
 - *Supporting People* guide to accommodation and support options for people who misuse substances.
 - *Supporting People* guide to accommodation and support options for former offenders and people at risk of offending.
- 1.5 ODPM has recently published a number of documents about homelessness and its prevention which are also very relevant:

More than a Roof: A report into tackling homelessness DTLR¹ (2002) and the response by the Secretary of State

Guidance on good practice in developing homelessness strategies:
Homelessness Strategies: A good practice handbook DTLR¹ (2002)

The code of guidance that local housing authorities must take account of when implementing the homelessness legislation:
Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities ODPM (2002)

To access these documents on the ODPM website:
<http://www.odpm.gov.uk/homelessness>
then take path to reach document >About homelessness >Publications

Defining homelessness

- 1.6 Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, often referred to simply as “the homelessness legislation” requires local housing authorities to assist individuals and families who are homeless and apply for help. Part 7 is amended by the Homelessness Act 2002².
- 1.7 Under the legislation, certain categories of household, for example, families with children and households that include someone who is vulnerable, have a priority need for accommodation. Housing authorities must ensure that suitable accommodation is available for people who have priority need, if they are homeless through no fault of their own. This is known as the “main homelessness duty”. The housing authority can provide accommodation in their own stock or arrange for it to be provided by another landlord, for example, a housing association or a landlord in the private rented sector. Accommodation must be made available in the short term until the applicant can find a settled home, or until some other circumstance brings the duty to an end.

¹ Now the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)

² see also *Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities*, ODPM, 2002,
www.odpm.gov.uk/homelessness
>About homelessness >Publications

- 1.8 The priority need categories include families with children, young people aged 16 or 17 and care leavers aged 18 to 20. They also include households which include someone who is vulnerable as a result of old age, learning disability, mental health problems or physical disability; applicants who are vulnerable as a result of having been in care, in custody or in the armed forces, and those who are vulnerable as a result of leaving their home because of violence. Applicants who are homeless as a result of an emergency also have a priority need. (See Appendix 1 for further information on the priority need categories).
- 1.9 Housing authorities must give proper consideration to all applications for housing assistance, and make inquiries to see whether they owe the applicant any duty under Part 7. This assessment process is important in enabling housing authorities to identify the assistance which an applicant may need either to prevent them from becoming homeless or to help them to find another home. In each case, they will need to decide whether they are eligible for assistance, actually homeless, have a priority need, and whether the homelessness was intentional.
- 1.10 Broadly speaking, somebody is statutorily homeless if they do not have accommodation that they have a legal right to occupy, which is accessible and physically available to them (and their household) and which it would be reasonable for them to continue to live in. It would not be reasonable for someone to continue to live in their home, for example, if that was likely to lead to violence against them (or a member of their family).
- 1.11 People make themselves homeless intentionally where homelessness is the consequence of a deliberate action or omission by them (unless this was made in good faith in ignorance of a relevant fact).
- 1.12 If people are homeless but do not have priority need or if they have brought homelessness on themselves, the housing authority must provide them with advice and assistance to help them find accommodation for themselves – but they do not have to ensure that accommodation becomes available for them. The housing authority must ensure that this includes a proper assessment of their housing needs and information about where they are likely to find suitable accommodation.
- 1.13 Where people have priority need but have brought homelessness on themselves, the housing authority must also ensure they have suitable accommodation available for a period that will give them a reasonable chance of finding accommodation for themselves. Sometimes, this may be for only 28 days.
- 1.14 In addition non-statutorily homeless households may be assisted by local housing authorities or by Housing Associations (HAs) and/or voluntary organisations which provide accommodation, including supported accommodation.

Overview of the housing related support needs of homeless households

- 1.15 Since the late 1980s there has been a growing recognition that single homeless people are likely to face difficulties such as physical and mental health problems, drug or alcohol dependency, long term unemployment, an incomplete or poor education, a history of offending or many years of institutional living. Emerging research suggests that these may also be relevant factors for homeless families. In addition, homelessness can be preceded or

caused by traumatic events. Many women and their children, for example, become homeless as the result of domestic violence. Equally, the experience of homelessness itself can also be damaging, involving many risks to well being and difficulty in accessing services³. When homeless or potentially homeless households have support needs, the prevention of future homelessness may fail if these are not met⁴. As the Government's report⁵ into tackling homelessness makes clear, in order to tackle homelessness more effectively, we need to look at the problems people face, such as drug and alcohol addiction, as much as their housing.

- 1.16 Homeless households have diverse needs. Some households can find their way out of homelessness without any assistance. Others will only need advice and information in order to locate a new home and sustain a new life in the community. Some, however, will need greater assistance including housing related support and within that group there will be households who require quite intensive support from a range of services. These services are discussed in Chapters 2 & 3. A minority of homeless people may not be able to live independently, even in the long term and will need long stay supported housing services; these services are covered in Chapter 4.
- 1.17 The types of housing related support that homeless households may need include:
- **support in establishing and maintaining a suitable home** – help, advice and support in finding and maintaining suitable accommodation, including preventing the occurrence and reoccurrence of homelessness;
 - **support with daily living skills** – help, advice and training in day to day living, including tasks such as budgeting and cooking;
 - **support in accessing benefits, health and community care services** – homeless households may need information, advice and help in claiming benefits or accessing community care or health services;
 - **help in establishing and maintaining social networks and social support** – homelessness can involve the loss of relationships and alienation from community life. Rebuilding these social networks can be very important in helping households avoid entering or re-entering homelessness.
- 1.18 Homeless households may also need help in accessing education, training and employment such as finding training or employment opportunities for homeless people (or those at risk of homelessness). This may also include help that falls outside the remit of *Supporting People* funding such as helping homeless families place children in local schools.

³ Pleace, N. and Quilgars, D. (1996) *Health and Homelessness in London: A Review* London: The Kings Fund. Pleace, N. et al. (2000) *Access to General Practice for People Sleeping Rough* York: Centre for Housing Policy. Randall, G and Drugscope (2002) *Drugs services for homeless people* London: ODPM Homelessness Directorate and Griffiths, S (2002) *Addressing the health needs of rough sleepers* London: ODPM Homelessness Directorate.

⁴ Franklin, B.J. 'More than Community Care: Supporting the Transition from Homelessness to Home' in Hutson, S. and Clapham, D. (1999) *Homelessness: Public Policies and Private Troubles* London: Cassell, and Pleace, N. (1995) *Housing Single Vulnerable Homeless People* York: Centre for Housing Policy <http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/chp/hsvp.htm>

⁵ *More than a roof: A report into tackling homelessness*, DTLR, March 2002
www.odpm.gov.uk/homelessness
>About homelessness >Publications

Overview of housing related support services for homeless households

1.19 The range of housing related support services which are likely to be appropriate for homeless households are:

- Resettlement
- Preventative Services
- Long-stay supported housing.

RESETTLEMENT

1.20 The majority of providers of housing related services for homeless households adopt a resettlement model. The resettlement model assumes those homeless households who require support are likely to experience three broad sets of problems:

- lack of suitable accommodation;
- in some cases, a lack of the daily living skills required for independent living;
- in some cases, exclusion from social and economic life.

1.21 Resettlement therefore has three broad roles:

- to help homeless households secure suitable accommodation;
- to enable the development of daily living skills where those skills are underdeveloped or lacking in a homeless household;
- to support and enable the development of personal and social skills that will allow reintegration into social and economic life, where required.

1.22 The services provided as part of resettlement tend to include⁶:

- **Help with finding appropriate accommodation and moving.** A worker may pursue the most appropriate accommodation available on behalf of a household, visit offered accommodation with households and may also help with the move itself.
- **Practical assistance in setting up and maintaining a home.** Services that provide decorating, repair or gardening services are not expected to be fundable by the *Supporting People* grant, but help in arranging the services a household needs or

⁶ This broad classification of services that can be offered draws on a range of research, particularly: Dant, T. and Deacon, A. (1989) *Hostels to Homes? Rehousing Single Homeless People* Aldershot: Avebury; Franklin, B.J. 'More than Community Care: Supporting the Transition from Homelessness to Home' in Hutson, S. and Clapham, D. (1999) *Homelessness: Public Policies and Private Troubles* London: Cassell, and Pleace, N. (1995) *Housing Single Vulnerable Homeless People* York: Centre for Housing Policy <http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/chp/hsvp.htm> . For further information on resettlement see the National Homeless Alliance/National Resettlement Project (1998) *Resettlement Handbook* <http://www.homeless.org.uk/>

helping them to access assistance from local volunteers or voluntary sector groups, is likely to be fundable.

- **Training and support in daily living skills.** Including how to manage finances, to prepare and cook food, to shop and to clean.
- **Help with accessing health, care and other services.** This can be a prerequisite for those homeless households or individuals who need care or support from other services, if they are to sustain successful independent lives in the community. This may be particularly pertinent where a homeless household has relocated to a new area where they may find it difficult to access services such as GPs and school places. This could also include maintaining contact with agencies already helping the household such as drug treatment, mental health or social services.
- **Help with accessing benefits.** Homeless households may need help in accessing all the benefits to which they are entitled if resettlement or the prevention of homelessness is going to be successful.
- **Promoting self-advocacy.** Working to enable formerly homeless people to self-advocate, allowing them to claim benefits or services, make applications and deal with appeals or complaints on their own.
- **Support in developing social skills and social networks.** Services can help establish new social networks, helping people access opportunities for socialisation and work on developing friendships, peer support, befriending and other relationships. Such support can help prevent isolation and increase the likelihood of successful resettlement.
- **Emotional support and facilitating access to counselling services.** Some services can provide direct emotional support to homeless people, within the context of an overall objective to promote eventual independence.

1.23 Support providers resettle homeless people through various types of service delivery:

- **stand alone or floating support services** delivered to homeless people living in any housing setting and in any tenure (see Chapter 2);
- **short and medium stay supported housing services**, which are designed to resettle homeless households into independent housing, including direct access services, hostel services, transitional housing and supported lodgings services (see Chapter 3);
- **specialised services**, these include services with a resettlement role aimed at particular groups, such as young people (see Chapter 4);
- **integrated services** employing combinations of floating support and supported housing services, sometimes combined with specialised services.

1.24 Some local authorities such as Manchester City Council, and the London Borough of Camden, and some Housing Associations (HAs) such as St Mungo's and Bournemouth Churches Housing Association have established integrated services, most commonly short stay supported housing in combination with stand alone (floating) resettlement services.

PREVENTATIVE SERVICES

- 1.25 Housing related support services for homeless households aim to prevent homelessness occurring or recurring. These services include:
- Floating support services for households in general needs or private sector housing who are at risk of becoming homeless. Floating support services are discussed in Chapter 2 of this guide.
 - Short and medium stay supported housing can prevent homelessness among clients who are at risk, such as vulnerable young people or people with a mental health problem and help their transition to independent living. Provision for households with particular needs such as mental health support needs or those escaping domestic violence are covered in other guides in this series. Short and medium stay supported housing for homeless households is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

LONG STAY SUPPORTED HOUSING

- 1.26 Some long-stay supported housing is designed to provide ongoing support to those homeless households who are unable to live independently in the community. These services are intended for groups like frail older homeless people or some homeless people who have multiple needs and for whom independent living is not a realistic or desirable option. These services aim to maximise independence but are intended as permanent housing. Long stay supported housing is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

Links between the Supporting People programme and homelessness strategies

- 1.27 Local housing authorities have a duty under the Homelessness Act 2002 to carry out a review of homelessness and to develop and publish a homelessness strategy by 30 July 2003. Homelessness strategies are part of the Government's approach to reducing existing homelessness and preventing future homelessness. Good practice guidance has been published about developing a homelessness strategy.⁷
- 1.28 Housing related support services can make an important contribution to preventing the occurrence and recurrence of homelessness, so close co-operation between local housing authorities and members of the *Supporting People* team will be important in developing and delivering an effective strategy.
- 1.29 There are other services that can make an important contribution to the delivery of an effective Homelessness Strategy, but which will not be fundable by the *Supporting People* programme. These services include:
- **Rent deposit and bond schemes** to help homeless and potentially homeless households access privately rented accommodation. Where a local authority provides these schemes they will often liaise with and vet private sector landlords and may work with floating support service providers.

⁷ *Homelessness Strategies: a good practice handbook* (2002), available online at: www.odpm.gov.uk/homelessness
>About homelessness >Publications

- **Housing Advice Services** that provide information and advice, as well as acting as a referral point for *Supporting People* and other housing services.
 - **Daycentres** which provide housing advice, welfare rights services, training and education and can act as a referral point to housing related support services, statutory services, and other housing services. They may also offer services such as subsidised or free food and access to health services.
 - **Furniture schemes** provide homeless people and other low income households with furniture and other goods.
 - **Employment, education and training services aimed at homeless or vulnerable people.** Foyers⁸ and similar services can help address both the accommodation and the educational, training or employment needs of young homeless or potentially homeless people as can the Connexions⁹ programme. Other specialist services, for example training and employment schemes for older homeless people, can also help homeless people towards a more settled lifestyle.
 - **Integrated services** provide a combination of housing related support linked to services such as housing advice, daycentres or employment and education services.
- 1.30 Further related services that can assist in the process of resettlement are discussed in *Homelessness Strategies: A good practice handbook*.
- 1.31 The ODPM Homelessness Directorate is providing funding to all local housing authorities to help them to:
- tackle homelessness more effectively through the implementation of the Homelessness Act 2002 and Priority Need for Accommodation Order 2002;
 - keep levels of rough sleeping as close to zero as possible; and
 - end the use of bed and breakfast (B&B) hotels for homeless families.
- 1.32 Additional funding is being provided to those authorities with high levels of rough sleeping or B&B use as follows:
- the rough sleepers team is working closely with 20 local housing authorities who have significant rough sleeping problems as they develop and implement strategies to prevent people ending up on the streets, to help people off the streets, and to rebuild the lives of former rough sleepers through education, employment and training;
 - the Bed and Breakfast Unit (BBU) is working closely with 68 authorities to ensure they meet and sustain a reduction in the use of B&B accommodation for families with children in line with the Government's target to end the use of B&B accommodation for families with children by March 2004 except in an emergency, and then for no longer than six weeks. Together with a further 32 areas, where B&B use is being closely monitored, these 100 authorities currently account for 90% of all families with children placed in B&B accommodation.

⁸ <http://www.foyer.net/>

⁹ <http://www.connexions.gov.uk/>

- 1.33 In all areas, housing related support services will need to be integrated with the services funded by these programmes.
- 1.34 To play an effective role in reducing and preventing homelessness, housing related support services should:
- be person centred and involve users in planning services;
 - demonstrate equity, fairness and recognise and support diversity;
 - demonstrate flexibility;
 - work in partnership;
 - demonstrate Best Value.
- 1.35 Homeless households are likely to have needs for additional services which fall outside the scope of the *Supporting People* programme funding, making joint working with commissioners/planners and providers of the following services essential:
- health services;
 - drugs/alcohol services including Drug Action Teams;
 - Social Services;
 - the Probation Service including Youth Offending Teams;
 - voluntary sector service providers;
 - charitable sector service providers;
 - education and training services;
 - the Employment Service (Job Centre Plus);
 - the Benefits Agency;
 - grant making charities and trusts;
 - crime and disorder reduction partnerships;
 - local strategic partnerships.
- 1.36 Social services authorities are required to assist in carrying out homelessness reviews and in formulating local homelessness strategies. In addition, the Code of Guidance recommends that housing departments work with a wide range of statutory and voluntary partners, including those listed above, in carrying out their homelessness review and developing their homelessness strategy¹⁰.

¹⁰ www.odpm.gov.uk/homelessness
>About homelessness >Publications

¹¹ as above.

Providing housing related support services for homeless households in rural areas

- 1.37 There are wide variations between different areas in the scale and nature of homelessness problems. Rural areas, like large cities and small towns, all have their own specific homelessness problems and appropriate solutions. While levels of homelessness tend to be higher in urban areas, around one in five homeless households accepted by the local authority for housing are to be found in rural areas.
- 1.38 Local authority housing departments in rural areas may find that they are the only service for homeless households in an area. There may also be a restricted supply of housing that might be used for resettlement. Communications may be relatively poor, meaning that operating costs in rural areas can be higher than in urban areas because of the time staff spend travelling. Some types of service, for example, floating support, transitional housing services and supported lodgings, may be more effective models for rural areas because they can be operated on a cross-tenure basis and on a smaller scale.
- 1.39 Rural housing authorities, like all other housing authorities, are required to develop a homelessness strategy by 30 July 2003. The Homelessness Directorate's good practice handbook on homelessness strategies refers authorities to additional guidance on homelessness in rural areas produced by the Countryside Agency and the Chartered Institute of Housing and highlights some of the key issues faced in rural areas, for example:
- ensuring access to services for people in remote areas or where transport links are weak;
 - providing solutions in the person's own area wherever possible so that they can maintain links with family, friends and the community;
 - considering joint commissioning with neighbouring authorities where demand is not sufficient to justify separate provision;
 - working across local authority boundaries, for example where strategic plans are needed to decide whether to concentrate joint services in certain areas, or to set up smaller scale, scattered provision to allow people to stay in their home areas.
- 1.40 The Countryside Agency report, *Homeless in the Countryside: What Works?* is available online at:
<http://www.countryside.gov.uk/publications/publicationDownload.asp?pubFileID=296>

CHAPTER 2

Floating Support Services

Introduction

- 2.1 The *Supporting People* programme will make it possible to fund floating support services to clients living in any tenure. If delivered from an accommodation-based service, rather than a community-based service; support can be funded to help homeless people find accommodation and provide support to enable them to live independently. These services can also provide support to help prevent those at risk of homelessness from becoming homeless.
- 2.2 This Chapter of the guidance describes floating support services and the differing roles they can play. It covers current coverage, their role within a *Supporting People* strategy, funding and referral routes plus an overview of the suitability of floating support services for different groups of homeless household.

TERMINOLOGY

- 2.3 Several terms are currently used to describe floating support services, including resettlement, tenancy sustainment and stand alone support services. While there are differences between services, they tend to perform a similar function in a similar way. The term floating support service is used throughout the guidance as an all-encompassing term for services using support workers who travel to clients' accommodation in order to provide support.

Floating support services

- 2.4 Floating support services are generally characterised by:
 - support being provided for a limited period;
 - the level of support being reduced as independence increases;
 - low intensity support.
- 2.5 Low intensity support is defined as:

... 'services whose main purpose is to provide general, non-specialist support with daily living skills, practical tasks or emotional support which promotes or maintains a person's ability to live independently in their own home'¹².

¹² Quilgars, D.(2000) *Low Intensity Support Services: A Systematic Review of Effectiveness* Bristol: Policy Press (p.16).

- 2.6 When support is first provided, contact between the floating support worker and a household can be quite frequent. This can also be the case if a family, couple or individual experiences a crisis later on during resettlement. However, the norm for floating support services is for quite low levels of contact between the person or persons using the service and workers.
- 2.7 Floating support services vary in purpose and in the user groups with whom they work. Some of the subtypes of floating support services include:
- services that engage with households while they are in short stay or temporary accommodation, helping the household to find accommodation and then providing them with support that will enable them to develop the skills and resources to live independently;
 - services that engage with households after they have been re-housed to enable them to develop the skills and resources to live independently ;
 - services for households at risk of homelessness or who have been homeless in the past;
 - services working with specific sub-groups of homeless people, such as young people or people with mental health problems.
- 2.8 The services that can be provided include:
- help with finding appropriate housing and moving;
 - practical assistance in setting up and maintaining a home;
 - training and support in daily living skills;
 - help with accessing health and community care services;
 - help with accessing benefits;
 - liaison on behalf of a homeless household;
 - promoting and enabling self-advocacy by homeless households;
 - support in developing social skills and social networks;
 - emotional support and advice.
- 2.9 Floating support services are generally eligible for *Supporting People* funding where the assistance they provide aims to help people achieve or maintain independent living in their accommodation.
- 2.10 Floating support services can have a high degree of interdependence with other services. Successful resettlement and prevention can depend on a wide range of factors, including access to acceptable housing in a suitable area and service inputs from health, social services and a range of other agencies where required. Some floating support services concentrate almost all their activity on arranging access to other services for the homeless households with whom they work.

- 2.11 Floating support services often establish service agreements, detailing their role and responsibilities and the role and responsibilities of the homeless person or household with whom they are working.
- 2.12 Floating support services have their origins in the resettlement services developed for former rough sleepers and lone homeless people with a history of institutional living¹³. More recently, an increased recognition and understanding of the wide and varied needs of homeless households has shown that they quite often have a need for floating support services. These needs are complicated by the relationships within a household and the presence of children¹⁴.
- 2.13 Floating support services can complement general housing management services when they:
- reduce problems related to rent arrears;
 - reduce abandonment;
 - reduce eviction;
 - prevent neighbour disputes, by helping to ensure that potentially disruptive people get the support they need.
- 2.14 Floating support services often have lower operating costs than supported housing services as they do not have the capital costs associated with the conversion of a building nor new build or maintenance costs.
- 2.15 As support is not tied to a specific tenure, floating support can potentially increase the choice of housing suitable for formerly homeless people. In rural areas, services can work with the private rented sector, which is often the main provider of suitable housing, and their scale can be tailored to suit the level of need.
- 2.16 Some of the lessons from early research into floating support services include¹⁵:
- overemphasis on practical support can be inappropriate;
 - boredom and isolation can cause failures in resettlement;
 - the needs of homeless households were diverse;
 - suitable housing and access to other services are both required if resettlement and prevention are to be successful.

¹³ See Dant, T. and Deacon, A. (1989) *Hostels to Homes? Rehousing Single Homeless People* Aldershot: Avebury

¹⁴ See Jones, A.; Pleace, N. and Quilgars, D. (2002) *Firm Foundations: An Evaluation of the Shelter Homeless to Home Service* London: Shelter <http://www.shelter.org.uk/>

¹⁵ See Dant, T. and Deacon, A. (1989) *Hostels to Homes? The Rehousing of Single Homeless People* Aldershot: Avebury; Vincent, J.; Deacon, A.; Walker, R. (1993) *Security, Variety and Glorious Uncertainty: The Experiences of ex-Alvaston Resettlement Unit Residents* Loughborough: CRISP; Pleace, N. (1995) *Housing Vulnerable Single Homeless People* York: Centre for Housing Policy; Dane, K. (1998) *Making it last: A Report on Research into Tenancy Outcomes for Rough Sleepers* London: Housing Services Agency.

- 2.17 Floating support services consequently need to demonstrate:
- flexibility in service delivery to suit diverse needs and wide ranging levels of need;
 - effective liaison and joint working to assemble packages of appropriate services in cooperation with other agencies.
- 2.18 Interdependence on other services can create operational problems for floating support services. Resettlement and prevention of homelessness can be difficult if other services and agencies are not able to provide all the services required for a holistic package of support. Particular difficulties may be encountered if:
- housing is in poor repair and poor condition;
 - basic facilities are not present in the housing (e.g. furniture, cooker, fridge);
 - the housing is in an area with severe social problems;
 - required community care services are not being received;
 - required health services are not being received;
 - opportunities to form new social networks are not available;
 - opportunities to develop work-related skills are not available;
 - sufficient income for the household or person cannot be secured.
- 2.19 If other service providers cannot respond to the support needs of homeless households (or those at risk of homelessness), it can create problems that a floating support service cannot, in itself, overcome. Such situations may arise if:
- local statutory services do not see homelessness as a particular issue;
 - there are ‘gaps’ in housing related support service provision for homeless people, meaning a floating support service is relatively isolated;
 - areas used for rehousing are experiencing severe social and economic problems.
- 2.20 An expectation that support will no longer be required after a fixed period may not be appropriate for all users of floating support services. There is a justified concern to ensure that unwanted and unnecessary dependency on a resettlement service does not develop¹⁶. However, this must be balanced against the varying needs of homeless households.

¹⁶ See Randall, G. and Brown, S. (1995) *Outreach and Resettlement Work with People Sleeping Rough* London: DoE.

CURRENT SERVICE COVERAGE AND POTENTIAL ROLE

2.21 Local housing authorities, HAs and the voluntary sector provide floating support services. Floating support services can be free standing, linked to short or medium stay supported housing or function as the final stage within an integrated service. Services are quite widespread, particularly in urban areas, but they tend to be associated with localities with a recognised homelessness problem or a high rate of homelessness acceptances by the local housing authority. There is scope, however, to develop these services in rural locations, in smaller towns and cities and for traditionally under-served groups such as homeless families. As noted in paragraph 1.38, floating support may be an effective model in rural areas as it can operate on a cross tenure and smaller scale basis.

SUITABILITY FOR DIFFERENT CLIENT GROUPS

2.22 Floating support services may not be suitable for:

- households or individuals with multiple needs, who may find it difficult to live independently, even with support;
- households or individuals that might be particularly vulnerable if living alone and who might be more suited to living in a hostel, shared housing or other supported housing.

REAP Resettlement Agency

REAP is a voluntary sector cross-tenure service, providing support to formerly homeless people across all housing tenures. The support can move with the individual, should they change address or tenure.

REAP works with former rough sleepers, non-statutorily homeless single people, people with chaotic lifestyles and individuals with multiple needs. The homeless people using the service can present with mental health problems, general health problems and drug and alcohol dependency. The project also works with people with mild learning disabilities.

Collectively, the three resettlement services employ the full-time equivalent of 24 resettlement workers. The service begins by advising homeless people on their accommodation options and then assists them in securing appropriate accommodation.

A standard package of services is offered, including:

- help with the move;
- assistance in setting up a new home;
- ongoing support to sustain the tenancy;
- help developing social and work-related skills.

The services aim to bring formerly homeless people to the point at which they can either manage independently or when alternative support networks have been set up that will ensure that they will be able to sustain their tenancy.

CHAPTER 3

Short and Medium Stay Housing with Support

Introduction

- 3.1 This Chapter describes short and medium stay supported housing services with a preventative and resettlement role. There is an overview of the sector and a brief description of each of the following service types and the suitability of these for different groups of homeless household:
- direct access services, including night shelters;
 - hostels;
 - transitional housing-based services;
 - supported lodgings.
- 3.2 Short and medium stay supported housing services targeted at specific groups of homeless people, such as services for young homeless people, are discussed in Chapter 4.

Overview of the sector

- 3.3 Supported housing for homeless and potentially homeless single people used to be dominated by large hostels which were targeted at single homeless men and offered few services beyond the provision of a meal and a bed. This picture has changed considerably over the last 15 years.
- 3.4 Many of the larger hostels for homeless people have closed. Newer schemes tend to be smaller in scale and have a greater emphasis on resettlement. Provision has also become more specialised, being targeted at specific groups within the homeless population.
- 3.5 Two broad types of services are covered in this guide¹⁷:
- services providing emergency accommodation, including nightshelters and direct access hostels;

¹⁷ There have been a number of attempts to define the different service models in use in the sector. Services tend to differ from one another in terms of: design; whether the service is direct access; typical duration of stay offered to residents and level of services offered to residents, see for example Garside, P.; Grimshaw, R. and Ward, F. (1990) *No Place like Home: The Hostels Experience* London: DoE and Van Doorn, A. (2001) *Developing a Typology of Emergency Accommodation for Single Homeless People* London: Homeless Link <http://www.homeless.org.uk/>

- referral-based services providing short or medium stay accommodation as preparation for resettlement and independent living, including hostels, transitional housing and supported lodgings.
- 3.6 Most short and medium stay supported housing is located in shared or grouped accommodation. Residents and staff are based within the same building, or on the same site, sometimes on a 24-hour basis. Services quite often operate in converted buildings or parts of buildings, as well as purpose-built accommodation.
- 3.7 The sector is very diverse with many agencies, including local housing authorities, Housing Associations, local church groups and charities and the voluntary sector providing short and medium stay supported housing for homeless people.
- 3.8 There is a range of guidance available on the sector, including:
- Homeless Link (2001) *A Good Practice Companion for Emergency Accommodation for Homeless People* London: Homeless Link <http://www.homeless.org.uk/>
 - ODPM *Monitoring and Review of Supporting People Services: an overview* <http://www.spkweb.org.uk/>
 - Resource Information Service produces an online directory of hostels covering Bradford, Birmingham, Nottingham and London ¹⁸ and an annually printed *London Hostels Directory*.¹⁹

Direct access services

- 3.9 Direct access schemes mostly allocate beds on a first-come, first-served basis by accepting people who turn up at the door although they may also take referrals. For security and operational reasons they will not take every household or individual, though the intention is that they should accept practically everyone who seeks their assistance and has a genuine need for help. Such direct access services are generally eligible for *Supporting People* funding.
- 3.10 The nature of accommodation and support offered by a direct access service can vary considerably. At the most basic level, services offer dormitory accommodation in a converted space with relatively few facilities and a low level of staff support. Some services however, now offer individual or twin rooms and access to a range of facilities. Some services may be open at night and in some cases there may be no, or limited access during the day. The size of services varies considerably, some being quite small, with perhaps 20-30 spaces, while there are still some purpose built examples of 50-80 spaces or more.
- 3.11 Lower end services will quite often be called ‘night shelters’ or ‘shelters’. These are quite often one-off projects developed by small charities and church groups, although some have been developed with the help of local government or national charitable bodies. Some have been established for many years. Winter shelters are a related form of provision that is restricted to operation during the winter months and tend to offer fewer services than year-round schemes.

¹⁸ <http://www.ris.org.uk/>

¹⁹ Tel: 020 7494 2408 email: ris@ris.org.uk

- 3.12 Originally, lower end services offered only food and shelter and delivery of these basic services remains central to their role. Most offer shared living space in dormitories. There may be facilities for bathing, laundry and basic leisure facilities and perhaps a TV. Lower end services that cater for both genders will usually attempt to provide wholly or largely separate facilities for women. This will usually mean a women-only sleeping area and bathroom, though some have communal space that is only for female use.
- 3.13 Traditionally, lower end services tended not to offer resettlement services to their residents and in some instances this may remain the case due to low staffing levels. However, such services can increasingly help their residents pursue resettlement through developing links with other support services, including other homelessness services such as daycentres or advice and information services. They may also act as an assessment and referral point. These lower end services may also be able to help their residents access health, community care and social housing services.
- 3.14 Higher end direct access services, also known as direct access hostels or direct access supported housing provide a higher standard of accommodation and quite often a higher level of services. They tend to be run by Housing Associations or local housing authorities. Residents may have their own rooms and they may not be required to leave the scheme during the day. There may also be more facilities onsite, such as kitchen areas for resident use. Three basic models exist²⁰:
- the ‘domestic’ model is a near-house-sized hostel, in which residents have their own rooms but share facilities;
 - the ‘cluster’ model, which groups the accommodation, so that each group of four or five individuals has its own kitchen, bathroom and possibly lounge area, to create a set of ‘home-like’ environments within a larger hostel;
 - traditional designs with bedrooms in one area and shared communal facilities in another.
- 3.15 Most higher end services operate a keyworker system, with each resident being given a worker who will help them with the process of resettlement. The level of interdependence with other services may be less than it is for lower end direct access services.
- 3.16 Higher end services tend to operate licence agreements and may impose a fixed duration of stay. The licence agreement usually requires each resident to work with the service to achieve resettlement. Some lower end schemes operate similar arrangements.
- 3.17 Direct access services play a fundamentally important role in alleviating homelessness. They provide a place to sleep, a source of food and access to basic hygiene facilities for people who would often otherwise be on the streets. The importance of this role should not be underestimated.
- 3.18 Direct access services can offer a tolerant and non-judgmental environment with minimal barriers to access for homeless people. They often have few rules beyond ensuring safety for residents and staff and often aim to work sensitively with residents in guiding them toward

²⁰ Garside, P; Grimshaw, R. and Ward, F. (1990) *No Place Like Home: The Hostels Experience* London: DoE.

resettlement. These direct access services can serve as the first step away from homelessness for some of the most marginalised homeless people, who may find it difficult to deal with the formality and rules of other supported housing services.

- 3.19 However, direct access services can also be potentially difficult places in which to live. Services with low staffing and shared sleeping areas do not always offer wholly safe and secure environments. Privacy is also a fundamental need that can be difficult to achieve in these settings. Noise can also be a problem within a setting in which individuals are under extreme stress and may be experiencing a wide range of personal issues. The largely white, male resident group of some services can be a disincentive for some other people to use them.
- 3.20 Research suggests that homeless women and people from black and minority ethnic communities, are under-represented among users of direct access services²¹. For homeless couples, there is an issue with unacceptably low privacy in some direct access services although an increasing use of private rooms may help ease this situation. There is also a consensus that many direct access services are unsuitable environments for vulnerable homeless young people. Chapters 4 and 5 describe services that may be more appropriate for specific groups such as young people, people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and women.
- 3.21 Research evidence suggests that effective management can counteract many potential problems around harassment, intimidation or violence. Good management of communal space and good relations between staff and residents are fundamental to overcoming potential difficulties²². However, some people are likely to be unwilling to use direct access services and will need more appropriate alternatives.
- 3.22 Almost every recent study of direct access accommodation has pointed to the problem of ‘silting up’ with those who are ready to move on being unable to do so for lack of suitable accommodation. Silting up can be caused by:
- difficulties in accessing suitable general needs housing;
 - difficulties in accessing the other services needed for resettlement;
 - a lack of support for resettlement within some direct access provision.
- 3.23 The particular merits of each direct access service rests on its capacity to offer, or help arrange, effective resettlement. This will be related to:
- the level of staffing resources that the service is able to put into the resettlement of each resident;

²¹ See Garside *et al* (1990) *No Place like Home: The Hostels Experience* London: DoE; Neale, J. (1996) *Supported Hostels for Homeless People: A Review* York: Centre for Housing Policy; Jones, A. (1999) *Out of Sight, Out of Mind? The Experiences of Homeless Women* London: Crisis and Van Doorn, A. (2001) *Review of Research into Emergency Accommodation for Single Homeless People* London: National Homeless Alliance.

²² See Garside *et al* (1990) *No Place like Home: The Hostels Experience* London: DoE and Van Doorn, A. (2001) *Review of Research into Emergency Accommodation for Single Homeless People* London: National Homeless Alliance.

- the quality of joint working with other housing related support and homelessness services that can assist in the resettlement of their residents;
- the quality of joint working with statutory agencies and social landlords;
- locality issues such as the nature of local housing markets, the accessibility of suitable general needs housing and the extent to which other homelessness services that can support resettlement are present or absent.

3.24 Although direct access services provide an important service in reducing street homelessness, they should also be expected to demonstrate that they are actively working for the resettlement of their residents. This can be through:

- the direct provision of resettlement services;
- acting as an information, advice and referral point for social housing, homelessness and other housing related support services that can help with resettlement or the prevention of homelessness;
- through effective joint working with other services like floating support services for homeless people;
- through a combination of these approaches.

3.25 Some direct access services offer a strictly enforced length of stay to their residents. Such policies are designed to prevent homeless people from being attracted to a particular town or city and to prevent the service from silting up. A balance must be struck between these objectives and the need to provide a service that will enable and support a route out of homelessness. If too great a restriction is placed on the length of stay, services may not be able to engage with their residents long enough for effective resettlement to take place. Direct access services thus need to be flexible and review length of stay on an individual basis. Some providers, for example, the Salvation Army Housing Association²³ employ a policy whereby duration of stay is linked to individual or household needs, which are regularly reviewed.

CURRENT SERVICE COVERAGE AND POTENTIAL ROLE

3.26 Direct access services are quite widespread in England. Many towns have at least one direct access service and many of the larger cities and conurbations have several. There are many such services in London. There may also be scope to develop new services where they do not exist and to review the scale of existing services. Where services exist, it may be possible for them to develop resettlement services, to act as advice, information and referral points for other services and to pursue successful joint working with other agencies in reducing homelessness.

REFERRAL ROUTES

3.27 Direct access services primarily work on a self-referral, first-come, first-served basis although most services will also take referrals from other agencies. They may also operate formal or informal arrangements with agencies such as the Police.

²³ <http://www.saha.org.uk/>

SUITABILITY FOR DIFFERENT CLIENT GROUPS

3.28 Direct access services are not generally suitable for:

- homeless couples;
- anyone who might feel threatened, or be threatened, by a largely white, male resident group in particular, women or people who are black or have an ethnic minority background;
- anyone with high support or care needs;
- potentially vulnerable individuals, such as frail older homeless people or vulnerable young homeless people.

3.29 Care should be taken to provide services with appropriate environments for these groups, who may require targeted direct access or hostel services (see next Chapter) and/or other provision as set out in this guide.

Bradford Cyrenians Direct Access Hostel

The Bradford Cyrenians Direct Access hostel is part of an integrated service for homeless people. The charity began operating in the city in 1972. The hostel is open on a 24-hour basis for 365 days a year, providing food, bathrooms and laundry facilities. There is an on site worker at the hostel at all times. The hostel provides accommodation for up to ten men in five shared bedrooms. During 2000, 156 homeless men stayed in the hostel and its average occupancy rate was between 95 and 100 per cent.

Re-housing meetings are held each week with residents by a worker, in which plans for resettlement are worked on. There is no fixed length of stay. The hostel works as a referral point to a range of services including:

- supported shared housing for former direct access hostel residents who may not be able to live independently;
- move-on housing designed to resettle former direct access hostel residents;
- referrals directly from the hostel to RSL and council properties and the private rented sector.

Hostel Services

- 3.30 Hostels take referrals from other agencies and assess the suitability of their service for a homeless person before offering them a place. They tend to be run by local housing authorities or Housing Associations. Modern hostels tend to follow a ‘cluster’ model, in which each group of four or five individuals have their own kitchen, bathroom and possibly lounge area, to create a set of ‘home-like’ environments within a larger hostel. Schemes range in size, but they tend to be relatively small and to offer quite high staff to resident ratios.
- 3.31 Hostels follow a resettlement model. They are intended to provide short or medium length stays during which time a homeless or potentially homeless household can be helped towards independent living and resettlement into general needs housing.
- 3.32 The kinds of support offered in a hostel can also be provided through floating support services to people in general needs housing. However hostel services still have a clear role by:
- providing supported short or medium stay accommodation for homeless or potentially homeless households who are not yet ready to live in general needs housing;
 - offering supported temporary housing while households are waiting for general needs housing;
 - providing services for groups who may have specific needs such as young people; women; people with a black or minority ethnic background; homeless offenders; homeless ex-services personnel; mothers with young children; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.
- 3.33 Homeless households have often had traumatic experiences and often face a range of difficulties related to poor physical or mental health, or problems such as drug or alcohol dependency. A hostel can provide the space, time and the services which an individual, family or other household needs in order to recover themselves and prepare for more independent living²⁴.
- 3.34 A stay in a hostel is seen as a process with a beginning and an end. In some instances, it is expected that the resettlement process will be completed within a set period. However, as is the case with direct access services, an arbitrary leaving date may not suit a household or individual’s needs. Consequently, some providers set leaving dates for residents based on their progress towards being able to live independently.
- 3.35 In some hostels, resettlement may be a highly structured process, in others it will be much more ad hoc. Some hostels will treat residence in the scheme as a ‘training period’ during which support is given to develop the skills needed for independent living (there may also be help with the actual move). Others view stays as bringing stability to homeless people’s lives and work towards resettlement through helping them secure accommodation and by either providing or arranging floating support services.

²⁴ See Neale, J. (1996) *Supported Hostels for Homeless People: A Review* York: Centre for Housing Policy.

- 3.36 Hostels can exercise controls that ensure that only those people whom their service can help are offered places so overcoming some of the operational issues that may affect direct access services, such as the successful management of shared space and resident and staff safety.
- 3.37 However, hostels need to be well designed and run to overcome the potential problems that arise in communal living. This applies to the design of services and staff and resident relationships. These services can also suffer from ‘silting up’ because resettlement arrangements are not satisfactory or there are difficulties in accessing suitable general needs housing for residents.

CURRENT SERVICE COVERAGE AND POTENTIAL ROLE

- 3.38 Hostels for homeless people are quite widespread, but tend to be concentrated in the more urban areas of England. There may be scope for the development of services in more rural areas, but services that can be operated on a smaller scale, such as transitional housing and supported lodgings may be more appropriate for rural localities.

FUNDING

- 3.39 The housing related support services provided in hostels are generally eligible for *Supporting People* funding.

REFERRAL ROUTES

- 3.40 Hostels work exclusively through referrals by other agencies. Many will have links with a range of agencies, including local housing advice centres, daycentres and direct access services. Some local housing authorities use hostel accommodation as temporary housing while homeless households are awaiting assessment or re-housing.

SUITABILITY FOR DIFFERENT GROUPS OF HOMELESS HOUSEHOLD

- 3.41 Hostels can be suitable for any group of homeless household, provided they are designed and operated in a way that suits that particular groups’ needs. These specific hostels are discussed in Chapter 4. Generic services may be unsuitable for households or individuals with specific sets of needs, or those who might be vulnerable in a communal setting.

Holdforth Court, Leeds

St Anne's Shelter and Housing Action have been providing a day centre for homeless people in the centre of Leeds for over thirty years. It is a quite large Housing Association with operations across the North East. In addition to its work with homeless people, St Anne's also works with people with learning difficulties and disabled people.

A 36 bed hostel offers medium term supported accommodation to single homeless men. Staffed on a 24-hour basis, the hostel provides keyworker support including the assessment of long term housing needs. On site facilities include single rooms, bathrooms, laundry and cooking facilities. The project workers have a direct role in working with residents to meet their long term housing needs. Considerable emphasis is placed on joint working with other agencies as part of the resettlement process.

St Anne's has its own supported shared housing services and move-on accommodation to which former residents can be referred. The Housing Association also has a number of bedsits and flats that have a tenancy sustainment service. The project is piloting a resettlement officer post at the hostel to offer a more focussed service to residents and towards the development of a small transitional housing project for former residents of the hostel who cannot be immediately resettled into the community.

Transitional housing services

SERVICES PROVIDED

- 3.42 Transitional housing services, also referred to as 'move-on' accommodation, 'half-way houses', 'second stage housing' or as 'dispersed hostels' provide support which is tied to specific general needs accommodation. A formerly or potentially homeless household moves to a flat, house or shared house to receive support before subsequently moving to independent accommodation.
- 3.43 Transitional housing services offer lower intensity support than that found in hostels. They may be provided by one agency, such as a local authority or Housing Association, which is both the landlord of the accommodation and the provider of housing related support. Alternatively, partnership agreements are used, where private sector landlords might provide accommodation and Housing Associations or voluntary sector organisations will provide a travelling support worker service.
- 3.44 These services are quite often employed in rural areas, where it may be more logical to develop a small service based around general needs housing than full scale direct access or hostel services. Provision of this type of service for specific groups of homeless households are discussed in Chapter 4.
- 3.45 Some services use flats or houses that accommodate one individual or family while others employ a cluster of flats within a small geographic area. There are also services that use shared houses in which resident individuals, couples or families each have a bed-sit or bedroom. Transitional housing is intended as a supported 'training' environment in which households can learn to live independently without being fully responsible for their home.

The aims are to:

- introduce residents to living in a domestic setting;
- provide an opportunity to learn basic home management in a setting in which support is provided;
- allow for a largely independent life;
- to provide a setting in which mutual support is available from others with similar experiences.

3.46 There has been little evaluation of transitional housing. The potential disadvantage is that the household has to move once they are ready for independent living, rather than being able to remain in the housing in which they have become settled.

3.47 Transitional housing can, for some households, act as a smaller scale and lower cost alternative to a hostel, particularly in rural areas.

CURRENT SERVICE COVERAGE AND POTENTIAL ROLE

3.48 Transitional housing services are found throughout England. As the support provided is tied to specific accommodation, it is important that these services have a clear role within local strategies. There may be scope to develop additional transitional housing services, as an alternative to hostel provision, in rural areas and elsewhere.

FUNDING

3.49 Housing related support services provided in these transitional housing schemes are generally eligible for *Supporting People* funding.

REFERRAL ROUTES

3.50 Transitional housing services might take referrals from other homelessness services, such as daycentres or advice and information services. They may also receive referrals from direct access services and from social landlords.

SUITABILITY FOR DIFFERENT GROUPS OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

3.51 Since it may not have on site staffing, transitional housing may sometimes not be suitable for:

- people with difficult or challenging behaviour;
- people with multiple needs;
- particularly vulnerable or easily led individuals (within shared settings);
- households who are likely to be able to manage independent living in general needs housing with the assistance of a floating support service.

- 3.52 Transitional housing services may be particularly appropriate for lone parents under 18 who are unable to live with their family or partner.

Shipley Group Homes, Bradford

Shipley group homes are part of an integrated service for homeless people provided by Bradford Cyrenians. The charity began operating in the city in Bradford in 1972. Shared supported housing is provided for eight men in two houses. Referrals come from the Bradford Cyrenians direct access hostel, with the two houses being intended for homeless men who do not need a high level of support, but are not in a position where they could be expected to take up their own tenancy.

Staff work with the residents in relation to skills such as budgeting, claiming benefits, support with rehousing and resettlement and provide emotional support. Two staff cover the two houses. There is a weekly house meeting of the residents organised by the staff to discuss any matters arising between the residents or in the management of the two houses. There is an expectation that the homeless men will be resident in the shared housing for up to two years while they develop the skills to live independently.

The basement of one of the shared houses has been converted into a communal area/television room while former offices of Bradford Cyrenians are being used to help residents acquire ICT skills. Proposed developments include single person flats with medium support.

Supported lodgings

SERVICES PROVIDED

- 3.53 Supported lodgings services provide places in family or landlord's homes for formerly or potentially homeless individuals who are vulnerable or may be vulnerable. The household providing the lodgings is usually trained and supported by a worker, who may also provide support to the vulnerable person. Both provide support to achieve re-settlement.
- 3.54 Although some of the agencies providing supported lodgings services undertake their own monitoring, there have not been a large number of independent evaluations of this sort of service. Existing research has concluded that supported lodgings services need to have²⁵:
- clarity of purpose and target groups;
 - sufficient staff time and expertise to manage the resource;
 - a thorough approval system (for landlord selection);
 - ongoing training and support for providers;
 - clear funding arrangements;

²⁵ See Hutson, S (1995) *Care leavers and young homeless people in Wales: the exchange of good practice*. Cardiff: University of Wales.

- planning in place to arrange move on accommodation;
 - reviewing and monitoring systems to check on outcomes.
- 3.55 Supported lodgings services can allow an individual to live in a family home, experiencing domestic life in a shared and supportive environment. Living in this setting may in itself be productive for someone who has become marginalised or who has never experienced it, perhaps because they have been in care or in institutions for most of their life. These services can also provide training in independent living.
- 3.56 Such services may also be particularly suitable for highly vulnerable individuals who might be easily led or otherwise exploited if they were living more independently. Risks such as exposure of homeless young people to illegal drugs and the sex industry may be avoided by using supported lodgings. The suitability for specific groups of homeless household are discussed further in Chapter Four.
- 3.57 There may be problems in recruiting sufficient numbers of lodging providers, particularly as there is a need for rigorous security checks because the service is targeted at vulnerable groups. Securing suitable move on accommodation could well also be a problem.
- 3.58 In addition formerly or potentially homeless people who have previously been excluded from a stable and supportive environment might become very attached to those providing them with a supported lodging. This is likely to result in the need to manage potential dependency and to provide continued contact with a host landlord/family once someone has moved on.

CURRENT SERVICE COVERAGE AND POTENTIAL ROLE

- 3.59 Supported lodgings are not particularly widespread in England. They can be operated on a small scale and may therefore be suitable for rural areas where it is not viable to develop larger scale provision such as hostels. Supported lodgings may be particularly suitable for some groups of homeless people, such as vulnerable young people.

FUNDING

- 3.60 Some supported lodgings services may simultaneously use different funding streams, including social services spot contracting and grants from charitable trusts. The housing related support provided is likely to be fundable under the *Supporting People* programme.

SUITABILITY FOR DIFFERENT GROUPS OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

- 3.61 Such services may not generally be suitable for people with challenging or difficult behaviour; people requiring specialised support services or who require a high degree of care; and those people who are likely to be able to manage more independent living.

Barnardos Supported Lodgings for Young People Scheme (SLYP), Harrogate

Barnardos is one of the largest UK child care charities, working with approximately 55,000 children and young people. The SLYP project works with a range of homeless or potentially homeless young people aged 16 and 17. The project coordinator offers support to the lodgings providers, including a 24-hour on call service. The project workers offer a combination of group-based support and one to one support to the young people. Support workers provide a range of training in relation to securing property, maintaining it, using appliances safely, dealing with neighbour disputes, budgeting, shopping and cooking. Young people are also taught to self-advocate and deal with other service providers themselves. A licence agreement places obligations on the lodging provider and support workers and requires that the young person accept support from either or both of these parties.

CHAPTER 4

Specialist and Long-Stay Services for Particular Groups

Introduction

- 4.1 Homeless households can contain someone with a mental health problem, drug or alcohol dependency, a former offender, someone escaping domestic violence or someone with other characteristics that mean they are both a 'homeless person' and a member of another user group. Some homeless people with specific needs will require services that are targeted both at their needs as a homeless person and at the other particular difficulties or issues that they may be facing. This Chapter of the guidance is concerned with these types of services and examines:
- floating support, short and medium stay supported housing services for young homeless people and potentially homeless young people;
 - long-stay supported housing for homeless or potentially homeless frail older people and people with multiple needs.
- 4.2 Other guides in the series cover services that may be relevant to homeless people who are also members of another user group. These include the *Supporting People* guides on the accommodation and support options for households who are experiencing domestic violence²⁶ and for people who misuse substances (forthcoming).

Some issues for consideration

- 4.3 Commissioners and providers need to consider whether the needs of particular groups of homeless people can only be met via specialised services. For a specific service to be developed, it needs to be clear that a group of homeless people has needs that cannot be met by existing services.
- 4.4 Many services for specific groups of homeless people are examples of the types of service discussed in Chapters 2 & 3 but they focus on specific types of homeless or potentially homeless people and differ only in the detail of their operation.

²⁶ *Guide to Accommodation and Support Options for Households Experiencing Domestic Violence* (ODPM, 2002) (and other guides in the series) available at: www.spkweb.org.uk – under How It Will Work / Supporting People Overview / Papers and Publications

Services for young people

- 4.5 Specific services are provided for homeless and potentially homeless young people, aged between 16 and 21, because:
- young people are considerably over-represented amongst people living in hostels and other forms of temporary accommodation²⁷.
 - young people may have specific needs related to their age, recent experiences of family disruption, conflict or experience of the care system;
 - the most effective means of meeting the needs of young people are often significantly different from older people²⁸.
- 4.6 Youth homelessness is strongly associated with poor educational attainment and a disruptive and sometimes abusive family life. Young homeless people often have no experience of living independently and are likely to need help in developing daily living skills²⁹.
- 4.7 Several types of service are provided for homeless and potentially homeless young people:
- services for care leavers;
 - reconciliation and mediation services;
 - foyers;
 - floating support and supported housing services.

SERVICES FOR CARE LEAVERS

- 4.8 Social services departments are responsible for the costs of accommodation and support for all 16 and 17 year old care leavers from October 2001. Services aimed at care leavers aged up to 18 cannot be funded from *Supporting People* and are consequently outside the scope of this guidance.
- 4.9 Research has consistently shown that young people who have been ‘looked after’ or ‘in care’ of the local authority (either fostering and/or children’s homes) have a heightened risk of becoming homeless. Care leavers are expected to establish independent lives at a much earlier age than most young people in the population. Yet they usually have few qualifications, are more likely to be unemployed, and are more likely to experience teenage parenthood³⁰. The *Quality Protects*³¹ initiative for Children’s Social Services includes an

²⁷ In the last major survey of single homeless people, 30% of those living in hostels and bed and breakfast hotels for homeless people were aged between 16 – 24 compared to 18% of the population (Anderson, I, Kemp, PA & Quilgars, D (1993) *Single Homeless People*, London: Department of the Environment)

²⁸ <http://www.housing.odpm.gov.uk/information/homelessness/handbook/>
www.odpm.gov.uk

>About homelessness >Publications >homelessness strategies: a good practical handbook

²⁹ Jones, G. (1997) *Leaving Home*, Buckingham: Open University Press.

³⁰ Ploeg, J. Van Der Cholte, E. (1997) *Homeless Youth*, London: Sage.

³¹ <http://www.doh.gov.uk/qualityprotects/>

objective to ensure that ‘young people leaving care are living in good accommodation at the age of 19’. Good accommodation is defined as ‘safe, secure and affordable’, with any accommodation which exposes young people to ‘risk of harm or social exclusion by reason of its location’ not being suitable.

- 4.10 Research suggests that transitions to independent living for care leavers need to be well-structured, adequately supported and make use of a range of good quality housing and support³². The services that can be used include specially targeted floating support services, hostel services, transitional housing and supported lodgings for care leavers.
- 4.11 The Department of Health has produced a resource pack entitled *Getting It Right: Good Practice in Leaving Care*³³. ODPM Homelessness Directorate has also jointly produced, along with the Department of Health and Centrepoin *Care leaving strategies: a good practice handbook (2002)*. Centrepoin is one of a number of voluntary sector providers working with care leavers³⁴.

RECONCILIATION AND MEDIATION SERVICES

- 4.12 Reconciliation and mediation services are a form of floating support service that work with young people and their families to attempt to resolve conflict that has forced the young person to leave the parental home. Services require the voluntary participation of family members and aim, both through individual and group work, to help all parties to understand the situation of other family members and to manage expectations.
- 4.13 Services aim, both through individual and group work, to help all parties to understand the situation of other family members and to manage expectations. Services must obviously be highly professional with strict assessment procedures; to ensure that young people are not encouraged to return to an unsatisfactory and possibly unsafe environment. Such services are obviously not suitable for very vulnerable young people who have experienced abuse or neglect in the parental home.
- 4.14 These services are not likely to be eligible for *Supporting People* funding.

St Basil’s Family Mediation Service

This scheme supports young homeless people in improving or re-establishing relationships with their families. The aim is to prevent homelessness by assisting young people to develop supportive relationships to sustain them through to independence. A team of workers intervene at an early stage of homelessness where there is likely to be more of a chance of either a return to home or mending relationships. Work with young people in hostels may be eligible for funding under the *Supporting People* programme. Work from advice centres and with families where the young person is still at home and is at risk of leaving in a crisis, are unlikely to be.

³² Vernon, J. (2000) *Audit and Assessment of Leaving Care Services in London*, London: Department of Health and National Children’s Bureau. Biehal, N. and Wade, J. (1999) ‘I thought it would be easier’: the early housing careers of people leaving care’, in Rugg, J. *Young People, Housing and Social Policy*, London: Routledge.

³³ <http://www.doh.gov.uk/scg/leavingcare/>

³⁴ <http://www.centrepoin.org.uk/>

FOYERS³⁵

- 4.15 Foyers developed in the 1990s in response to the twin problems that young people were facing in finding suitable accommodation and employment. By 2001, there were 105 foyers in operation.
- 4.16 The funding of foyers is complex and they are supported from a wide range of different sources. As noted in *Supporting People: Policy into Practice*³⁶
- [foyers] provide services, clearly within the ambit of *Supporting People*, (such as help with Housing Benefit, with sustaining a tenancy while in the Foyer and with resettlement into permanent accommodation), and others that are outside the remit of *Supporting People* (such as job-search, ICT and basic skills training.)
- 4.17 Effective inter-agency working with foyers and related services is essential. A range of Government initiatives have been instituted to support young people with the increasingly difficult, and extended, transition to the world of work, and it is important young homeless people have access to services such as foyers and the Connexions programmes (<http://www.connexions.gov.uk/>).

FLOATING SUPPORT AND SHORT AND MEDIUM STAY SUPPORTED HOUSING SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

- 4.18 There are a considerable number of floating support services specifically for young people who have been homeless or who are at risk of homelessness. These services are found throughout England, particularly in more urban areas. There are many such services in London. These services are similar to the floating support services provided for other homeless people but are likely to have more of an emphasis on helping with the education, training and employment needs of young people. They may also have a stronger emphasis on the development of daily living skills.
- 4.19 Many short and medium stay supported housing services are targeted on young homeless people. Over half of London's hostels and direct access services (excluding foyers) are provided for young homeless people³⁷. Many schemes have been developed for particular groups of young homeless people, including young women; young people with black and minority ethnic backgrounds; care leavers and for young former and potential offenders. Short and medium stay supported housing projects range between schemes providing minimal supervision and low level support through to higher support schemes for more vulnerable young people. Some hostels for young people have floating support services attached to help resettle residents who are moving on to independent housing.
- 4.20 Many of the transitional housing and supported lodgings schemes in England are aimed at homeless or potentially homeless young people. A hybrid service, known as 'emergency lodgings placements' has also been developed. This service refers young people without accommodation to a family home for emergency housing, whilst other accommodation is arranged. Most of these arrangements have been developed under the Nightstop umbrella, which now operates a national network of emergency supported lodgings placements.

³⁵ More information on foyers is available from the Foyer Federation <http://www.foyer.net/>

³⁶ <http://www.spkweb.org.uk/>

³⁷ Quilgars, D. and Pleace, N. (1999) 'Housing and support services', in Rugg, J. (ed) *Young People, Housing and Social Policy*, London: Routledge.

Nightstop UK

The first Nightstop scheme was set up in Leeds in 1987. There are now 32 independent schemes working under the Nightstop umbrella. Annually, these services provide 3,000 bed-nights of free emergency accommodation for young single homeless people for one to three nights at a time in the homes of approved volunteers or 'hosts'. One or two members of staff run each Nightstop, supported by volunteers who assist with administration and transport, as well as providing accommodation to the young people. Hosts are vetted and trained to provide a safe and supportive environment for a young person. Nightstop can help young people in identifying longer term hostel or permanent housing whilst they are staying with hosts, and/or refer them on to other agencies in the area which can offer help, advice and accommodation.

Long stay services for older homeless people

- 4.21 The effects of homelessness on health and well being have led some commentators to argue that there are good reasons to define homeless people aged over 50 as 'older homeless people'³⁸. This is on the basis that homeless people in this age group share many characteristics, in terms of health status, with people who are much older.
- 4.22 Older homeless people are likely to have a range of needs that are particularly related to their experiences of homelessness, including:
- a need for separate services, due to fear of experiencing crime at the hands of younger homeless people;
 - a high degree of social exclusion as a result of prolonged homelessness;
 - often very poor physical health;
 - experience of homelessness or sleeping rough that is directly related to confusion, dementia or other cognitive or mental health problems.
- 4.23 Some older homeless people may not be able to live independently in the community. While some will manage well in independent housing with floating support, others will not. In recognition of this, some long stay hostel services for older homeless people have been developed. The majority of these services focus on providing ongoing support and accommodation to frail older people with multiple needs. There are a handful of examples of sheltered housing schemes that have been developed specifically for older homeless people.³⁹

³⁸ See Crane, M and Warnes, T. (1999) *Lessons from Lancefield Street: Tackling the Needs of Older Homeless People* London: National Homeless Alliance/Homeless Link.

³⁹ e.g. the Arlington Road scheme run by Bridge <http://www.novas.freewire.co.uk/novas3.htm>

Services for homeless people with multiple needs

- 4.24 The definition of a homeless person with multiple needs, developed by Homeless Link,⁴⁰ is that they will have three or more of the following characteristics or difficulties, and will not be in effective contact with services:
- mental health problems;
 - misuse of substances (i.e. drugs and/or alcohol);
 - a personality disorder;
 - offending behaviour;
 - borderline learning difficulties;
 - physical health problems;
 - challenging behaviour;
 - vulnerability because of age.
- 4.25 Multiple needs exist, where, if one need were resolved, the others would still give cause for concern.
- 4.26 There is a longstanding concern that those homeless people with multiple needs are excluded from supported housing and floating support services. Direct access services cannot manage people with very high and challenging needs, and other supported housing services may find them problematic. This can lead to those with multiple needs being passed around different services that may each attempt to address a specific support issue without ever addressing the full range of support needs a person may be experiencing. Joint working of services is therefore crucial for homeless people with multiple needs, in order to adequately meet the full range of support needs that they may be experiencing. Floating support services are not appropriate, as they are primarily a low intensity support service.
- 4.27 Homeless people with multiple needs often have poor contact with health and community care services. This is due to the way in which services are structured, the attitude of some care and health professionals towards homeless people, and previous difficulties with joint working between housing, housing support, community care and health services⁴¹. This poor contact has tended to increase the difficulties that housing related support services have faced in working with this group. Joint working is crucial in providing services for homeless people with multiple needs both to ensure that their support needs are met and to avoid them being 'passed around' services and agencies without receiving appropriate support.

⁴⁰ <http://www.homeless.org.uk/>

⁴¹ For an overview of access to health services see Pleace, N. and Quilgars, D. (1996) *Health and Homelessness in London: A Review* London: The Kings Fund.

- 4.28 Local homelessness strategies are designed to enhance the delivery of services to all homeless households through joint work between agencies. Some of the key procedures for improved joint working, as detailed in the guidance include⁴²:
- common and joint assessments, working through common client assessment procedures, including joint forms;
 - joint protocols, setting out in detail the role and responsibilities of different agencies;
 - joint commissioning, involving coordinating service commissioning that can lead to joint purchase or provision of services.

LONG STAY SUPPORTED HOUSING SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH MULTIPLE NEEDS

- 4.29 Existing services for people with multiple needs tend to be long-stay supported housing. Floating support might be used as part of a package of services to support a homeless person with multiple needs in independent housing, but this package would have to include a range of other services. It would be logistically difficult and expensive to support people with multiple needs through a floating support service.
- 4.30 Long stay supported housing services tend to be concentrated in the major cities, with the largest number found in London. They can provide relatively high intensity of support and frequent monitoring of the well-being of their residents. Some have 24 hour staffing, though this may not involve waking cover. Long-stay services are quite often purpose built.
- 4.31 Some forms of supported housing for homeless people with multiple needs may provide personal care services. Personal care services will not be eligible for *Supporting People* funding.
- 4.32 Some supported housing provision for people in this group is registered as residential care. Such services are ineligible for *Supporting People* funding, as they are a care, rather than a housing related, service. Commissioners and providers must seek the advice of the National Care Standards Commission⁴³ (NCSC) on any questions relating to whether a supported housing service for homeless people should be registered as a care home.
- 4.33 Equivalent supported housing for people with no experience of homelessness will sometimes be relatively ill equipped to meet particular needs that might arise because of someone's history of homelessness. For example, a frail older person with multiple needs, who has spent time sleeping rough, might find it difficult to adjust to extra care housing that is wholly inhabited by older people from the general population. Such a scheme might also find it difficult to manage the needs of such an individual.
- 4.34 Where possible, these services can work towards resettlement, but this will not always be practical or desirable. Long-stay supported housing schemes for homeless people with multiple needs can, however, enhance quality of life by maximising independence in a housing setting, so that formerly homeless people with high needs are not living in an institutional setting.

⁴² *Homeless Strategies: A Good Practice Handbook*; available at www.odpm.gov.uk/homelessness >About homelessness >Publications

⁴³ The National Care Standards Commission helpline Monday – Friday between 9am-5pm and can be reached on 0191 233 3556.

- 4.35 Rural localities might not have enough people with multiple needs within their homeless populations to justify the development of long stay supported housing for people within this group. Nevertheless, sufficient need may well exist at regional level and there may be scope for cross-authority commissioning.
- 4.36 The limitations of long stay supported housing are similar to those that might affect other scheme-based services. There may be issues in relation to communal living, although higher staff-to-resident ratios and specialist training among staff may help in the management of potential difficulties in this respect.

Bridge Housing Association

Bridge is a London based Housing Association that is part of the Novas Ouvertures group. Among other services it provides a referral-only scheme for people with multiple needs who are over 60 and have a history of homelessness. Referrals come from the direct access service run by Bridge and from LB Camden's Homeless Person's Unit. The scheme is fully wheelchair accessible, offering a mix of sheltered housing and hostel accommodation. There is 24-hour waking cover. A key-work system is in place with a support plan being drawn up for each resident. The hostel is also equipped with six care beds, which provide assistance with personal hygiene and medical management. The scheme is intended as a long term home.

St Mungo's Drinkers Projects

St Mungo's is a Housing Association providing services for homeless people and people sleeping rough. St Mungo's "recognises that many homeless people who drink heavily are not yet ready to change their lifestyle but are looking for appropriate and safe housing" and provides a series of 'drinkers projects'. Each supported shared housing project for drinkers can take up to eight individuals in single rooms. Drinking is allowed throughout the house. There is a designated worker for each shared house. This worker sometimes has an office on site or visits regularly throughout the week. The worker provides help with day to day living, practical and emotional support. Residents are not directly pressured into stopping drinking, but should they make a decision to stop, help is given in accessing detoxification services, rehabilitation services and counselling schemes. Residents also have access to a range of other services provided by St. Mungo's including mental health workers.

CHAPTER 5

Recognising and Supporting Diversity

Introduction

- 5.1 Commissioners and providers of *Supporting People* services need to ensure equality of opportunity and to challenge unfairness. They need to work towards an appropriate diversity of services that properly reflects the needs of their community. The provision of fair, equal and appropriate housing related support services is at the heart of the *Supporting People* programme⁴⁴.
- 5.2 This Chapter of the guidance is concerned with the recognition and support of diversity. Three areas are examined, providing appropriate and culture-specific service responses for homeless people with a black or minority ethnic background, gender issues and issues relating to sexuality.

Providing services for homeless people with a black or minority ethnic (BME) background

- 5.3 Homelessness statistics demonstrate that BME communities are over-represented amongst those accepted as homeless. Whereas nationally, around 8% of the population are from BME communities, they account for around 22% of those accepted as homeless. They are therefore nearly three times more likely to be statutorily homeless.
- 5.4 The key principles in service provision for people from BME communities are described in the *Supporting People* handy guide: *Reflecting the Needs and Concerns of Black and Minority Ethnic Communities in Supporting People*⁴⁵ these include:
 - ensuring that the needs and concerns of current, and potential BME service users, provider organisations and community groups are fully represented and taken into account in service planning and service provision;
 - that there is fair access for BME service users to all Supporting People services and that these services have arrangements in place to challenge discrimination and unfairness;
 - that commissioners use service reviews to ensure that support services are culturally sensitive to existing BME communities and adaptable to the needs of arriving (refugee) communities;

⁴⁴ See DETR (2001) *Supporting People: Policy into Practice* available online at <http://www.spkweb.org.uk/>

⁴⁵ OPDM, 2002

- that commissioners consider working with specialist providers to provide services for BME communities if mainstream services cannot offer equality of access and cultural diversity;
- that commissioners and providers ensure that commitments to equality and diversity in mainstream services should not be superseded or diluted because of the presence of small-scale specialist provision in an area, specialist services for black and minority ethnic users should be seen as a complement, *not as an alternative*, to mainstream services;
- that cross authority and multilateral arrangements are used to commission specialist services to meet the needs of numerically small black and minority ethnic communities.

5.5 Service delivery should be characterised by:

- providing information and communicating in a clear and accessible way, including making provision for homeless people whose first language is not English;
- enabling and supporting consultation, choice and control for homeless households and ensuring equality of access and equality of representation for households with a BME background in these processes;
- clear policies on racism, with transparent procedures that are fully explained to homeless households and workers and which:
 - react quickly when a complaint is made;
 - regularly update the complainant on progress;
 - are seen to enforce sanctions when a complaint is upheld.

5.6 Racism or the threat of racism can:

- deter people from using some services, such as direct access services, that have a largely White, male clientele;
- deter people from any service in which staff, volunteers or residents demonstrate racist attitudes;
- be a barrier to successful resettlement and potentially cause homelessness, if for example neighbours demonstrate racist attitudes, harass, or attack, an individual or family with a BME background.

5.7 Some formerly or potentially homeless people with a BME background may require culture-specific or specialised services. People with a BME background may feel more comfortable and secure with a service that has workers, other service users, or residents, who share their experience, culture and language⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ See Davies, J. *et al.* (1996) *Homeless Black and Minority Ethnic People in England* London: Nuffield Foundation Research Findings.

- 5.8 Housing related support is provided for homeless people with BME backgrounds by a number of providers, including some Housing Associations. These services are specialised versions of floating support services and supported housing services. As such, they tend to differ only in the *detail* of their operation from mainstream services.
- 5.9 The diversity within BME groups should not be forgotten. More information can be found in the research review *The Diverse Needs of Black and Minority Ethnic Communities*⁴⁷ and from the Federation of Black Housing Organisations⁴⁸.
- 5.10 The Homelessness Directorate at ODPM has also commissioned research to inform guidance for local housing authorities on effective responses to homelessness for people from different BME communities. This guidance should be published towards the end of 2003.

The Young People's Housing Project

The Young People's Housing Project provides supported housing services to 18-25 year olds from primarily, though not exclusively, African and African-Caribbean backgrounds. The Project operates two supported hostels, a resettlement service to promote independent living and has recently developed a counselling and outreach service to help meet the emotional, psychological and developmental needs that some people in its user group were found to have. The project is based within Waltham Forest in London.

Gender

- 5.11 Housing related support providers should not tolerate any form of sexism or harassment from staff, volunteers or service users. Equality of access, treatment and representation should be inherent in the operation of any *Supporting People* service.
- 5.12 Women-only supported housing can provide a supportive and safe environment for women who would find it difficult to live in any environment containing men, particularly if they have experienced violence or abuse⁴⁹. However, it should not be assumed that risks to personal safety and harassment will never arise in women-only services and policies and procedures should be defined accordingly. Supported housing services catering for both genders should consider whether it would be appropriate to provide separate facilities for women residents.
- 5.13 Homeless and potentially homeless women may have more complex needs than some other homeless people because they have their children with them. Lone women have also often had traumatic or damaging experiences preceding, or during, their homelessness and may also have support needs as a result⁵⁰.

⁴⁷ Sodhi, D. et al. (Jan 2001) *The Diverse Needs of Black and Minority Ethnic Communities: An Annotated Bibliography of housing and related needs studies*. This is one of a number of Housing Corporation funded studies, see: <http://cig.bre.co.uk/igp/>

⁴⁸ <http://www.fbho.co.uk/>

⁴⁹ For details of services for households experiencing domestic violence see ODPM *Supporting People Guide to Accommodation and Support Options for Households Experiencing Domestic Violence* ODPM (2002)

⁵⁰ Jones, A. (1999) *Out of Sight, Out of Mind: The Experiences of Homeless Women* London: Crisis.

- 5.14 Formerly and potentially homeless women are not a homogeneous group. The needs of homeless women, as the needs of homeless people generally, are diverse. Gender may be important, but like someone's ethnic origin, it may not be the most important issue in providing an appropriate and effective service. A woman's specific needs may have much more to do with a requirement for a specific type of housing related support, than they have to do with her gender.

The Blenheim Project, Bradford

This floating support service is run by Bradford and West Yorkshire Methodist Housing. Emotional and practical support is provided to women in their own homes. The project supports homeless or potentially homeless lone women, women with children and women escaping violence. The project is cross-tenure. A service can be offered to women whose first language is Urdu or Punjabi. The level of support provided is reviewed in consultation with the woman receiving the service. The duration of support provided is not fixed and can range from between six months to two years.

Sexuality

- 5.15 Homelessness among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people has received relatively little attention⁵¹. People in these groups can encounter difficulties when using mainstream services for homeless people, particularly with regard to their relationships being recognised. They may also face potential harassment, abuse and violence from other service users and from staff or volunteers.
- 5.16 Service providers should not tolerate harassment of individuals or couples who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Harassment or abuse from staff, volunteers or other service users, should be regarded in the same way, and dealt with using the same procedures, as racism and sexual harassment.
- 5.17 Services specifically aimed at lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are unusual and tend to be found only in major cities. Again, the need for specific service provision should be balanced against the diversity within groups such as gay and lesbian people. Some homeless people in this group may benefit from specific services, but others only require mainstream services that treat them equitably. Specific services can be made available as an option, but there should not be an expectation that someone with a particular sexuality should use only services for people with the same sexuality.
- 5.18 Homeless Network has published guidance on these issues⁵².

⁵¹ See O'Connor, W. and Molloy, D. (2002) *"Hidden in Plain Sight": Homelessness Amongst Lesbian and Gay Youth* NCSR: London.

⁵² *Meeting the Needs of Homeless Lesbian and Gay Youth: A Guide for Housing and Homelessness Agencies* <http://www.homeless.org.uk/>

Stonewall Housing

Stonewall Housing provides hostels for lesbians and gay men, and advice and information on homelessness, housing options, harassment and finding accommodation.

CHAPTER 6

Improving service delivery

Introduction

- 6.1 For the last 15 years, the provision of housing related support to homeless people has been characterised by innovation. Some of the first floating support services were developed in the homelessness sector, as were some of the first cross-tenure services. During the same period, it has also been a sector that has become increasingly characterised by its focus on enabling independent living for its service users and on working jointly with other agencies to achieve this aim. In many respects, much of the sector already strongly reflects the key objectives of the *Supporting People* programme.
- 6.2 The examples given in this final Chapter illustrate some of the areas where there is scope for further innovation. These areas include:
- greater consideration of the evidence base when developing services;
 - evaluation of services;
 - further development of the preventative role of services;
 - further development of user involvement;
 - the extension of services to under served groups;
 - mentoring services involving formerly homeless people.

The evidence base

- 6.3 A recent review of homelessness research over the last decade concluded that there has sometimes been insufficient consideration of the evidence when setting up schemes⁵³. Similarly, a review of life skills training (or daily living skills) for homeless people⁵⁴, which has long been regarded as an integral part of the resettlement process, found that services sometimes did not have a clear definition of what 'life skills' were. It was also found that the assumption that 'life skills' training is an effective part of prevention and resettlement services is not based on robust evidence.
- 6.4 Over caution can hamper innovation. However, there is at the same time a need to be clear what the objectives of a service are and to establish effective means of monitoring its performance in meeting those objectives.

⁵³ Fitzpatrick, S.; Kemp, P.A.; Klinker, S. (2000) *Single Homelessness: An Overview of Research in Britain* Policy Press: Bristol – available online at <http://www.crashindex.org.uk/>

⁵⁴ Jones, A.; Quilgars, D. and Wallace, A. (2001) *Life Skills Training for Homeless People: A Review of the Evidence* Edinburgh: Scottish Homes.

- 6.5 Long term effectiveness is a key issue in assessing housing related support services for homeless and potentially homeless people. Much of the sector is characterised by short term interventions, including almost all floating support services and the majority of supported housing services. It cannot be expected that each household using these services will subsequently be able to avoid homelessness, but where possible, services should be able to demonstrate their effectiveness over the long term. This might even extend to low level monitoring of the housing status of former service users over several years.
- 6.6 The ODPM Homelessness Directorate is currently giving priority to its work on improving the evidence base on the underlying causes of homelessness and to identifying and promoting effective homelessness prevention services.

Evaluating services

- 6.7 Commissioners of services for homeless households should ensure that services have adequate arrangements in place to monitor and evaluate themselves and the service that they are providing. Commissioning bodies may want to receive reports from services based on this activity. Such arrangements should take account of the *Supporting People* quality and monitoring framework.⁵⁵ For more detailed guidance on service reviews see the relevant section of the *Focus on the Future* document available on <http://www.spkweb.org.uk>.
- 6.8 Service evaluation should include consideration of service quality, upkeep of service standards, contractual compliance and the outcomes that are achieved for service users. The *Supporting People* Quality and Monitoring framework focuses on the former three.
- 6.9 Service evaluation should also focus on evaluating the impact of services on:
- a) National, regional and local strategic objectives;
 - b) Service wide objectives, such as reducing the number of failed tenancies in an area or preventing homelessness for example, and
 - c) Specific objectives for individual service users such as success in effectively budgeting to maintain a payment plan for mortgage or rent. This may cover more specific issues related to both the planned and unplanned outcomes for individual service users.
- 6.10 The outcomes that are appropriate for individual users will be different for different client groups, and for different users.
- 6.11 Users should be actively involved in the process of agreeing the objectives of their receipt of services as well as in the reviewing of their achievement. Guidance on setting and reviewing outcomes with clients will be published by ODPM during 2004. This will help services to take a user centred approach to working with clients and reviewing the effectiveness of services.

⁵⁵ A package of guidance on quality and monitoring processes has been published by ODPM. The guidance is available at <http://www.spkweb.org.uk> under General Documents and Discussion/General Documents/Quality and Monitoring.

- 6.12 In reviewing the impact of service delivery, providers should take into account the involvement of other agencies in delivering services to their clients, including where possible the impact of these services (or lack of them) on the outcomes that have been achieved.
- 6.13 Services should involve their users in the on going development and evaluation of the services that are provided.⁵⁶ This could include consulting service users on:
- their views of the services that are provided;
 - the issues that are important to them in evaluating services; and
 - the outcomes that they would like to achieve.

Further development of the preventative role of services

- 6.14 The services discussed in this guidance are designed to prevent homelessness from reoccurring among formerly homeless households and can also be used to prevent homelessness from occurring among those at risk of it. However, the sector has traditionally been characterised by providing services after homelessness has occurred. This pattern is changing, with the creation of services such as floating support for potentially homeless young people who have not actually experienced homelessness.
- 6.15 Further development of the preventative role of services need not involve the creation of new services. Existing support services that are designed to prevent a recurrence of homelessness might also prove effective in preventing it from occurring in the first instance. Floating support services, may, for example, extend their preventative role simply by extending their user group to include households in risk groups who have not been homeless before.

Peabody Trust Tenancy Support Team

Peabody Trust is a major Housing Association working in London. The Tenancy Support Team provides advice and support to any Peabody tenant who is in danger of losing their tenancy, whether they have been homeless before or not. Referrals can come from housing management staff, the tenant themselves or a third party. The service is designed for short term interventions provided through floating support. The service will however arrange long term floating support from other service providers, should it be required. While support will be provided with some more minor needs, if someone is, for example, encountering problems with their tenancy due to mental health problems, there will be an emphasis on arranging appropriate health and social services for that individual. There is a strong emphasis on interagency working.

⁵⁶ See paragraph 6.16 for reference to general guidance on user involvement in housing related support services. Specific guidance on involving users in quality and monitoring processes will be published by ODPM during 2003.

Further development of user involvement

- 6.16 User involvement is an aspect of service delivery that requires further development in homelessness services. There is a *Supporting People* handy guide to user involvement⁵⁷. There is also the Groundswell Project, launched in 1996 and designed to “promote and develop self-help initiatives with people who are homeless.”⁵⁸

Extending services to under-served groups

- 6.17 Two groups of homeless and potentially homeless households that are currently under served are one and two parent families with children and couples without children. *Homelessness Strategies: A Good Practice Handbook*⁵⁹ notes:

While the support needs of homeless people without children have been increasingly recognised, those of homeless families have received much less attention. There has been a tendency in the past to regard homeless families as simply being in need of accommodation to resolve their problems. Where social services support has been available, it has tended to focus on the needs of the children, rather than the whole family. Most voluntary sector agencies work only with homeless people without children (at para 6.2.1).

- 6.18 Recent research on the Shelter ‘Homeless to Home’ floating support service for homeless families suggests that families with children can face multiple difficulties that make resettlement difficult. There is also some evidence of repeated experience of homelessness among families⁶⁰.
- 6.19 Little is currently known about homeless couples without children, including what proportion of the homeless population they represent. There may be a need for support if either or both partners are vulnerable. While there may not be sufficient need to develop specific services for homeless couples without children, there may be a need for some existing services to support couples as well as individuals. In many cases it may be as simple as services recognising that not all homeless households without children are necessarily lone individuals. Hostels might provide some double rooms and floating support services could support childless couples as well as homeless individuals and families.

⁵⁷ *Supporting People: Guidance to Providers on Developing a Strategy and Practice for User Involvement* (2003) available online at <http://www.spkweb.org.uk/>

⁵⁸ For more information see: <http://www.groundswell.org.uk/>

⁵⁹ www.odpm.gov.uk/homelessness
>About homelessness >Publications

⁶⁰ See Jones, A.; Pleace, N. and Quilgars, D. (2002) *Firm Foundations: An Evaluation of the Shelter Homeless to Home Service* London: Shelter <http://www.shelter.org.uk/>

Catherine Booth House, Portsmouth – Salvation Army Housing Association

This 27-bedroom hostel can accommodate up to 17 homeless families (40 people) at any one time. Residents share living areas, kitchens and bathrooms and prepare their own meals. This referral-only scheme works with both one and two parent families and pregnant women. The scheme is for families who are too vulnerable at the time of referral to live independently. A range of support is provided to enable resettlement. The project works closely with local social services.

APPENDIX ONE

Homelessness legislation Priority need categories

The following homeless applicants have a priority need for accommodation (and will be owed a main homelessness duty if they are eligible for assistance, and have become homeless through no fault of their own):

- a pregnant woman or a person with whom she resides or might reasonably be expected to reside;
- a person with whom dependent children reside or might reasonably be expected to reside;
- a person who is vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or handicap or physical disability or other special reason, or with whom such a person resides or might reasonably be expected to reside;
- a person who is homeless or threatened with homelessness as a result of an emergency such as flood, fire or other disaster;
- a person aged 16 or 17 – other than two categories for whom local social services authorities have responsibility, namely, “a relevant child” for the purposes of the Children Act 1989 and a child in need to whom a duty is owed under section 20 of the Children Act. A “relevant child” is a child aged 16 or 17 previously in care (and who qualified as being an “eligible child”) but no longer in care;
- a person under 21 who was in care between the ages of 16 and 18 but is no longer in care – except a “relevant student”, (that is, a care leaver under 24 years of age in full time education who is being assisted by the social services authority with accommodation during a vacation).
- a person who is vulnerable as a result of: –
 - having been in care (persons over 20 except “relevant students”);
 - having served in the armed forces;
 - having been in custody or committed for contempt of court.
- those who are vulnerable as a result of leaving accommodation because of violence or threats of violence likely to be carried out.

Further Information

If you have any comments on Supporting People, or need further information, look out for the Supporting People website at www.spkweb.org.uk, or call our helpline on 020 7944 2556.



OFFICE OF THE
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

This guide is aimed at staff and managers in organisations providing housing related support services as part of the **Supporting People** programme. It encourages provider organisations to involve service users in all aspects of housing related support services.

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