

Housing
Executive

CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS ACTION PLAN

MAY 2019

*ending homelessness **TOGETHER***

Chronic Homelessness Action Plan

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FOREWORD

We are pleased to introduce our first Chronic Homelessness Action Plan, which focuses on the Housing Executive's commitment, set out in the Homelessness Strategy 2012-17 for Northern Ireland 'Ending Homelessness Together', to develop appropriate responses to address the needs of the population in Northern Ireland experiencing chronic homelessness.

This action plan sets out what we plan to do with the support of our partners in the statutory, voluntary and community sectors, over the course of the next three years, to tackle chronic homelessness. We have grown in our understanding of the complex issues which contribute to chronic homelessness. It is more than just a housing issue which can lead to a cycle of repeat homelessness. Issues such as family breakdown, addictions, mental and physical health issues, engaging in street activity including rough sleeping and encounters with the criminal justice system can contribute to people experiencing chronic homelessness.

The impact of chronic homelessness on an individual or a household can be devastating and extremely difficult to exit from. There are many opportunities through the provision of advice, assistance and support to promote early intervention to stop an individual or household reaching the point of chronic homelessness. The needs of those experiencing chronic homelessness are wide ranging and this action plan supports a rapid response that ensures housing provision and support services are tailored to meet the needs of each individual appropriately.

This action plan shows the Housing Executive's commitment to introducing new ways of working which will see us working collaboratively with a range of stakeholders across the statutory, voluntary and community sector in the best interests of this group of people. The Housing Executive is constantly seeking to improve our engagement with the sector and that engagement has been vital in identifying the aims and objectives for the Chronic Homelessness Action Plan and in helping to identify appropriate actions.

The outcomes based approach approved by the Programme for Government (2016-21) has been adopted by the Housing Executive in its delivery of the Homelessness Strategy and will be extended to the delivery of this Chronic Homelessness Action Plan

We wish to express our sincere appreciation to those organisations, services users and our own Housing Executive staff who took the time to participate in the extensive consultation exercises in the development of this action plan. Their input was instrumental in improving our understanding of chronic homelessness and has led to the development of criteria to define an individual who can be said to be experiencing chronic homelessness.

The development of the Chronic Homelessness Action Plan will seek to measure and understand the scale of the problem and improve early intervention which will lead to a reduction in the number of individuals or households affected by chronic homelessness. We know this is a complex issue, and we have more work to do. This is why we are committed to keeping this action plan under review and to continue to develop our approach to respond to the challenges of chronic homelessness.

Throughout the document we have indicated aims, actions and outcomes. Following this consultation and subsequent approval of the final action plan an implementation programme over the next three years to achieve these actions will commence. This will be more difficult due to the increasingly challenging context we face in terms of addressing homelessness in Northern Ireland. We remain confident, however, that by working together, with all our partner agencies we will achieve the aims set out in this action plan and make a positive change.

Chronic Homelessness Action Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is no doubt that the experience of homelessness is difficult and troubling for anyone who experiences it. However, when considering how to most effectively prevent and respond to homelessness, it is beneficial to differentiate the homeless population in terms of length and severity of experience. Specifically, to consider those who are experiencing chronic homelessness, i.e. 'a group of individuals with very pronounced and complex support needs who find it difficult to exit from homelessness.'¹

Although individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness account for a minority of the homeless population, their diverse needs, mental and physical health issues, addictions, legal and justice issues and the discrimination they may face all tend to be much more severe. Moreover, in spite of their smaller numbers, the services required to address chronic homelessness require proportionately more resources from the homelessness system. This group is much more likely to experience catastrophic health crises requiring medical intervention, and a greater prevalence of contact with the criminal justice system.

We know from research that the longer an individual or household is homeless, the greater the impact on their health and well-being. Social and economic isolation increases, making it much more challenging to reverse the cycle of homelessness and reintegrate into the community.

The Chronic Homelessness Action Plan has been developed in response to feedback from the homelessness sector in the delivery of the Homelessness Strategy 2017-22. The Homelessness Strategy Steering Group (HSSG) is an inter-departmental, multi-agency group tasked with ensuring the strategic delivery of the Strategy and the Housing Executive made a commitment to HSSG in March 2018 to develop an action plan that specifically addresses chronic homelessness.

The vision of the Homelessness Strategy is 'Ending Homelessness Together' and this action plan will support this vision. If we are to address chronic homelessness we will require input and support from a range of stakeholders across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors. This action plan shows the Housing Executive's commitment to introduce new

ways of working internally as well as support for a range of cross-government initiatives which will see us working jointly on these new approaches. The Housing Executive is constantly seeking to improve our engagement with the sector in the delivery of the Homelessness Strategy and that engagement has been crucial in identifying the need for the Chronic Homelessness Action Plan and helping identify appropriate actions.

The Chronic Homelessness Action Plan will align with the Homelessness Strategy and covers a three year period from April 2019 to March 2022. Originally the Homelessness Strategy identified two actions relevant to chronic homelessness:

- Review and implement Belfast and Derry/Londonderry Rough Sleepers Strategy.
- Identify chronic homeless need outside Belfast and Derry/Londonderry and devise appropriate action plan to tackle any issues.

With the agreement of the HSSG and Central Homelessness Forum these two actions are both incorporated in to this action plan. This plan focuses on the need to:

- Improve the measurement and understanding of the scale of the problem of chronic homelessness and establish a baseline.
- Promote early intervention and prevention of chronic homelessness.
- Provide a rapid response to chronic homelessness to ensure interventions are effective and well targeted.
- Promote a cross departmental and inter-agency approach to addressing the problem of chronic homelessness.

¹ A Review of Single Homelessness in the UK 2000 – 2010 Anwen Jones and Nicholas Pleace', Crisis (2010) http://www.crisis.org.uk/data/files/publications/ReviewOfSingleHomelessness_Final.pdf

Objectives of this action plan are to:

1. Design specific criteria for measuring chronic homelessness and implement data collection arrangements.
2. Introduce mechanisms to monitor and report on chronic homelessness trends.
3. Utilise chronic homeless data and trend information to identify existing and emerging needs to address chronic homelessness in the context of legislation, policy and service provision.
4. Develop mechanisms across agencies for early identification of those who are at risk of homelessness or chronic homelessness.
5. Implement a range of support services to help people sustain their accommodation including floating support and tenancy sustainment.
6. Implement arrangements to ensure services engage with people at risk of chronic homelessness as quickly as possible.
7. Make the stay in temporary accommodation as short as possible.
8. Consider a range of housing options for the chronic homeless including Housing First and ensure they are supported into permanent accommodation as soon as possible.
9. Promote inter-agency issues and actions required to address chronic homelessness.
10. Ensure mechanisms are in place to implement and oversee the implementation of the Chronic Homelessness Action Plan.

The action plan supports the Homelessness Strategy in the early intervention and prevention of homelessness and local joint working. Subject to identified need the action plan will link to relevant commissioning and/or grant funding structures to provide more statutory homelessness and support services that are specifically relevant to the needs of those within the chronic homelessness category.

The aim to reduce chronic homelessness will be undermined without improvements to housing options and this action plan has attempted to help address both the causes of homelessness and to ensure that homeless households have access to settled, affordable and suitable housing.

Without these improvements, the situation is likely to escalate resulting in more pressure on services and funding. From a Housing Executive perspective this will lead to 'gate-keeping' of services, increased out-of-area placements and repeat homelessness, with damaging consequences for individuals and households experiencing chronic homelessness, and little improvement in meaningful outcomes.

Consultation is an important aspect in the formation of the action plan and the Housing Executive welcomes all feedback during the twelve week consultation period.

The Housing Executive has taken cognisance of relevant legal obligations in the production of the action plan. The Housing Executive Equality Unit has reviewed and confirmed that the Equality Screening template developed for the Homelessness Strategy is applicable to the Chronic Homelessness Action Plan. As a result the Housing Executive is satisfied that the existing screening report adequately covers existing issues and principles within the Chronic Homelessness Action Plan. The equality issues will be subject to an annual review to ensure the action plan is relevant to any issues that may arise on an annual basis between now and the conclusion of the action plan.

Consultation with the NIHE Rural Unit has taken place during the development of this action plan to ensure rural needs are reflected. The plan has been completed with due consideration for the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 and as a result a Rural Needs Impact Assessment has been published alongside the Chronic Homelessness Action Plan for public consultation.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Chronic homelessness is a state at the most severe end of the homelessness spectrum. It can manifest itself in a wide range of circumstances including, but not exclusive to rough sleeping or street activity.

There is no doubt that the experience of homelessness is difficult and troubling for anyone who experiences it. However, when considering how to most effectively prevent and respond to homelessness, it is beneficial to differentiate the homeless population in terms of length and severity of experience. This action plan specifically considers those who are experiencing chronic homelessness i.e. 'a group of individuals with very pronounced and complex support needs who find it difficult to exit from homelessness.'²

Although individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness account for a minority of the homeless population, their diverse needs, mental and physical health issues, addictions, legal and justice issues and the discrimination issues they may face tend to be much more severe. Moreover, in spite of their smaller numbers, the services required to address chronic homelessness require proportionately more resources from the homelessness system. This group is much more likely to experience catastrophic health crises requiring medical intervention and a greater prevalence of contact with the criminal justice system.

Research indicates that the longer an individual or household is homeless, the greater the impact on their health and well-being. Consequently, social and economic isolation increases, making it much more challenging to reverse the cycle of homelessness and reintegrate into the community.

Rough sleeping is widely acknowledged as being the most visible form of chronic homelessness but those experiencing chronic homelessness extends beyond those who sleep rough. Characteristically, individuals who are experiencing chronic homelessness tend to have multiple support needs which leads to their inability to sustain a permanent tenancy, or a temporary accommodation placement, and can result in episodes of non-engagement with support services.

Due to the concerns about the number of individuals and households who are experiencing chronic homelessness, there is a need to consider the Housing Executive's strategic response to the issue, particularly when a methodology is implemented to properly quantify the problem so resources are directed where they are needed and appropriate services are in place.

Chronic homelessness is a subgroup included in, but not limited to, the statutory homelessness population as not all those who experience chronic homelessness may be known to the Housing Executive. With this in mind it is vital that the Housing Executive engages with other statutory and voluntary partners to ensure such individuals are included in any data published on chronic homelessness.

Whilst we refer throughout the document to individuals experiencing chronic homelessness it is important to note individuals and households can be affected by chronic homelessness.

² A Review of Single Homelessness in the UK 2000 – 2010 Anwen Jones and Nicholas Pleace', Crisis (2010)
<https://www.york.ac.uk/media/chp/documents/2010/A%20Review%20of%20Single%20Homelessness%20in%20the%20UK%202000%20-%202010%20-%20summary.pdf>

Chapter 2

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document was produced as a result of a commitment made by the Housing Executive in Ending Homelessness Together³, The Homelessness Strategy 2017-22, “to further understand and address the complexities of chronic homelessness across Northern Ireland.” It seeks to explore the extent and nature of chronic homelessness in Northern Ireland, the impact of this experience on their lives and how the Housing Executive can play its part in effectively addressing the issues surrounding chronic homelessness.

The purpose of this document is to outline the action that will be taken by the Housing Executive to address chronic homelessness through a range of activities contained in this action plan. The Housing Executive, with the support of other agencies, wishes to translate its commitments into activities, showing how the aims and objectives set out in this document will be met. A key priority is to build on the Rough Sleepers Strategies for which there are specific actions within this document.

The Housing Executive’s commitment to addressing the needs of those experiencing chronic homelessness is reinforced in the Homelessness Strategy 2017-22, Year 1 Annual Progress Report 2017-18⁴, where two of the actions within objective three have been combined. The actions to ‘Review and implement Belfast and Derry/Londonderry Rough Sleepers Strategy’ and ‘Identify chronic homeless need outside Belfast and Derry/Londonderry and devise appropriate action plan to tackle any issues’ have been incorporated in to an action to ‘Develop and implement a Chronic Homelessness Action Plan for Northern Ireland’.

Identifying chronic homeless need and devising an appropriate action plan has been progressed through the development of criteria by which the Housing Executive can identify the number of individuals in Northern Ireland experiencing chronic homelessness.

The Housing Executive will identify, through its engagement with homeless individuals and households, those who meet the defined criteria (outlined in Chapter 4) for chronic homelessness and for whom Housing First models may be appropriate. This analysis of homeless individuals and households will be extended to all offices across Northern Ireland in 2018/19 which will, in turn, inform the potential commissioning and/or grant funding of any future Housing First models.

This document has been prepared for formal consultation and will be subject to change as a result of consultation. While the Housing Executive will seek to develop appropriate service responses to the needs identified, this will be subject to funding availability.

The Housing Executive has listened to the sector and its concerns regarding addressing the needs of individuals who are experiencing chronic homelessness. The Housing Executive has completed a number of consultation exercises asking key questions around chronic homelessness including through the Homelessness Local Area Groups, Housing Solutions, service providers, community representatives and partner agencies in the voluntary and statutory sectors. Consultation has also taken place through the Central Homelessness Forum and at the launch of the Homelessness Strategy Annual Progress Report 2017-18.

The Chronic Homelessness Action Plan will complement the actions and priorities contained within the Inter-Departmental Homelessness Action Plan. The Inter-Departmental Homelessness Action Plan aims to identify and address service gaps for those at risk of homelessness and those who become homeless including chronic homeless individuals. The Inter-Departmental Homelessness Action Plan was developed most specifically for non-accommodation issues with input from the Department for Communities, Health, Justice and Education, statutory partners and homelessness service providers.

³ Homelessness strategy for Northern Ireland 2017-22 NIHE (2017) https://www.nihe.gov.uk/northern_ireland_homelessness_strategy.pdf

⁴ Homelessness Strategy 2017-22 Annual Progress Report 2017-18 NIHE (2018) https://touch.nihe.gov.uk/homelessness_annual_progress_report_2017-18.pdf

Chapter 3

WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

The Housing Executive wants to produce a Chronic Homelessness Action Plan which shows commitment to leading on addressing the issues of those individuals who are experiencing chronic homelessness in Northern Ireland.

There are a range of people who are experiencing chronic homelessness with significant complex needs and through the actions set out in the action plan the Housing Executive aims to quantify and reduce this number. There is a need to work collaboratively with partner agencies in order to achieve the aims and objectives of the action plan and to accomplish the vision of this document which supports the Homelessness Strategy's vision of Ending Homelessness Together.

Research indicates⁵ that approximately 10% of homelessness applicants are experiencing chronic homelessness and therefore this is a problem that requires specific attention.

This document will support the vision of the Homelessness strategy 2017-22, and reflects that while inter-agency working is vital in the delivery of the Strategy it is even more important in addressing the needs of those who are within the chronic homelessness category. The Housing Executive has committed under Objective 3 'to further understand and address the complexities of chronic homelessness across Northern Ireland'. As has been noted in this document, engagement with the sector has identified the need to develop an action plan.

Key stakeholders have noted the importance of any action plan including an aim to introduce a methodology to identify chronic homelessness numbers and examine/provide appropriate housing models including Housing First models to meet the needs of those that are experiencing chronic homelessness. The Housing Executive want to see a range of joined up outreach and drop in services, and accommodation based services being targeted and delivered to those in need of appropriate service provision.

The aims of the action plan are to:

- Improve the measurement and understanding of the scale of the problem of chronic homelessness and establish a baseline.
- Promote early intervention and prevent homelessness.
- Support a rapid response to chronic homelessness to ensure interventions are effective and well-targeted.
- Promote a cross departmental and inter-agency approach to addressing the problem of chronic homelessness.

Objectives of this action plan are to:

1. Design specific criteria for measuring chronic homelessness and implement data collection arrangements.
2. Introduce mechanisms to monitor and report on chronic homelessness trends.
3. Utilise chronic homelessness data and trend information to identify existing and emerging needs to address chronic homelessness in the context of legislation, policy and service provision.
4. Develop mechanisms across agencies for early identification of those who are at risk of homelessness or chronic homelessness.
5. Implement a range of support services to help people sustain their accommodation including floating support and tenancy sustainment.
6. Implement arrangements to ensure services engage with people at risk of chronic homelessness as quickly as possible.
7. Make the stay in temporary accommodation as short as possible.
8. Consider a range of housing options for the chronic homeless including Housing First models and ensure they are supported into permanent accommodation as soon as possible.
9. Promote inter-agency issues and actions required to address chronic homelessness.
10. Ensure mechanisms are in place to implement and oversee the implementation of the Chronic Homelessness Action Plan.

5 Applying Cluster Analysis to Test a Typology of Homelessness by Pattern of Shelter Utilization: Results from the Analysis of Administrative Data, Kuhn and Culhane (1998) <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1022176402357>

Chapter 4

METHODOLOGY

This action plan began with a literature review which examined research findings and responses to chronic homelessness in Northern Ireland and neighbouring jurisdictions. This research was completed in conjunction with several tiers of consultation, engagement and collaborative working with practitioners to understand the issues. This is a document that has been developed by the Housing Executive listening to and engaging with the homelessness sector. This engagement will continue to be vital to ensure the effective implementation of the action plan.

Consultation Process

As part of the development of this Chronic Homelessness Action Plan the Housing Executive has completed several consultation exercises with the sector with a view to identifying key issues that should be addressed. Consultation to date has included:

- Three Local Area Groups which focussed specifically on chronic homelessness. These groups were in South Antrim/Mid & East Antrim, South West and Mid-Ulster. These groups were chosen at random and the same issues were raised by all groups. Their views were ratified by other Area Groups.
- Following these meetings 140 practitioners across the statutory and voluntary sector were invited to submit written feedback on the issues raised during these meetings.
- Individual meetings have been carried out with a wide range of external stakeholders within the statutory and voluntary sectors. These providers include Extern, The Welcome Organisation, Simon Community NI, Depaul, First Housing Aid and Support Services, Queens Quarter and the Salvation Army.
- One to one meetings have also been held with internal stakeholders, including the Rural Unit, Belfast Housing Solutions and Support Team and Area Offices.
- Consultation has taken place through formal inter-agency structures such as the Research Advisory Group and the Central Homelessness Forum.

- As a result of these discussions, a document has been compiled detailing the issues raised by the sector under 2 headings, accommodation and non-accommodation based issues. This is with a view to considering how accommodation and non-accommodation based issues can be addressed as part of the Chronic Homelessness Action Plan or through existing inter-agency/inter-departmental delivery mechanisms. The sector was very clear on the need to deal with accommodation and non-accommodation based issues as part of the solution to dealing with those that are experiencing chronic homelessness.
- Follow up meetings were carried out around accommodation and non-accommodation based issues to ensure that the document fully reflects the views/concerns of the sector ascertained through previous consultation.
- Workshops on Chronic Homelessness Action Plan at the Homelessness Strategy Annual Report launch on 26th October 2018.
- Rural service user input was also sought via consultation with the Rural Community Network and Rural Residents Forum to ensure that local issues were fully considered.

The aims and objectives of the action plan are reflective of the views received during consultation, within the context and acceptance that chronic homelessness is not just a housing problem and can manifest itself across a range of individuals and households and in many forms. This action plan therefore requires commitment across all agencies and will seek to build on the work of the Inter-Departmental Homelessness Action Plan which has delivered a cross-departmental response to non-accommodation based issues within the Homelessness Strategy.

The sector has identified the need to develop a range of outreach, drop-in and accommodation-based services being delivered by housing, healthcare and support service providers. These need to be bespoke services which are widely available, easily accessible and provide a holistic approach to addressing the needs of those that are experiencing chronic homelessness.

It is recognised that in the absence of additional funding this may mean reprioritisation of spending on current services.

The accommodation based issues will be taken forward by this action plan whereas the non-accommodation based issues will be prioritised and addressed through the Inter-Departmental Homelessness Action Group. (See Appendix A for accommodation and non-accommodation based issues identified)

This Housing Executive led action plan is a 3 year plan, reviewed annually in conjunction with the Homelessness Strategy and updated to reflect new or changing priorities.

Actions to date

To date, the Housing Executive has been unable to identify any authority within the UK with responsibility for homelessness which has provided indicators or triggers to specifically identify and report on individuals who are experiencing chronic homelessness. The Housing Executive, in conjunction with its partners, has developed criteria to define chronic homelessness so that going forward it will be possible to record the number of individuals who experience chronic homelessness in Northern Ireland.

The criteria identified as a result of the initial consultation for the development of this Action Plan are provided below and will be developed further as part of the next stage of public consultation.

An individual can be said to be experiencing chronic homelessness if they meet three or more of the criteria listed:

1. An individual with more than one episode of homelessness in the last 12 months (constant breakdown of tenancies).
2. An individual with multiple placements/exclusions from temporary accommodation.
3. An individual with mental health problems.
4. An individual with addictions e.g. drug user or alcohol addictions.
5. An individual that has engaged in street activity, including rough sleeping, street drinking, begging.
6. An individual prone to violence - risk to self, to others or from others.
7. An individual who has encountered the criminal justice system.

As a result of the development of the criteria to define chronic homelessness, outlined in more detail later in this action plan, each Housing Executive Area office was asked to estimate the number of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness within their Area with the knowledge that going forward the Housing Executive will put in place recording mechanisms that will allow an evidence baseline to be established. Based on criteria 1-6, each Area office was asked to identify the number of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness who are currently engaged with our organisation from their current records. This resulted in 473 individuals being identified. It should be noted that this was an estimate which in the main was based on limited data sources or was anecdotal and will therefore not be used as the evidence base going forward. Criterion number 7 was added to the list after this initial information gathering exercise was completed.

Based on research⁶ conducted elsewhere it would be expected that between 5-10% of the homeless population could be identified as experiencing chronic homelessness. Given that over 22,000 full duty applicants were registered with the Housing Executive at the end of December 2018, it would not be unreasonable to assume between 1100 - 2200 of these individuals or households could be experiencing chronic homelessness.

Area	Chronic Homelessness number within Area
West Area	21
Causeway Area	17
Mid & East Antrim Area	28
South Antrim Area	28
North Down and Ards Area	50
South Down Area	34
South Area	6
Mid Ulster Area	39
South West Area	18
Belfast Housing Solutions	232
Total	473

It is intended that as part of the action plan the measurement of those experiencing chronic homelessness against these criteria will become an integral part of the data capture process on the first occasion they come into contact with the Housing Executive seeking assistance.

⁶ Applying Cluster Analysis to Test a Typology of Homelessness by Pattern of Shelter Utilization: Results from the Analysis of Administrative Data, Kuhn and Culhane (1998) <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1022176402357>

Chapter 5

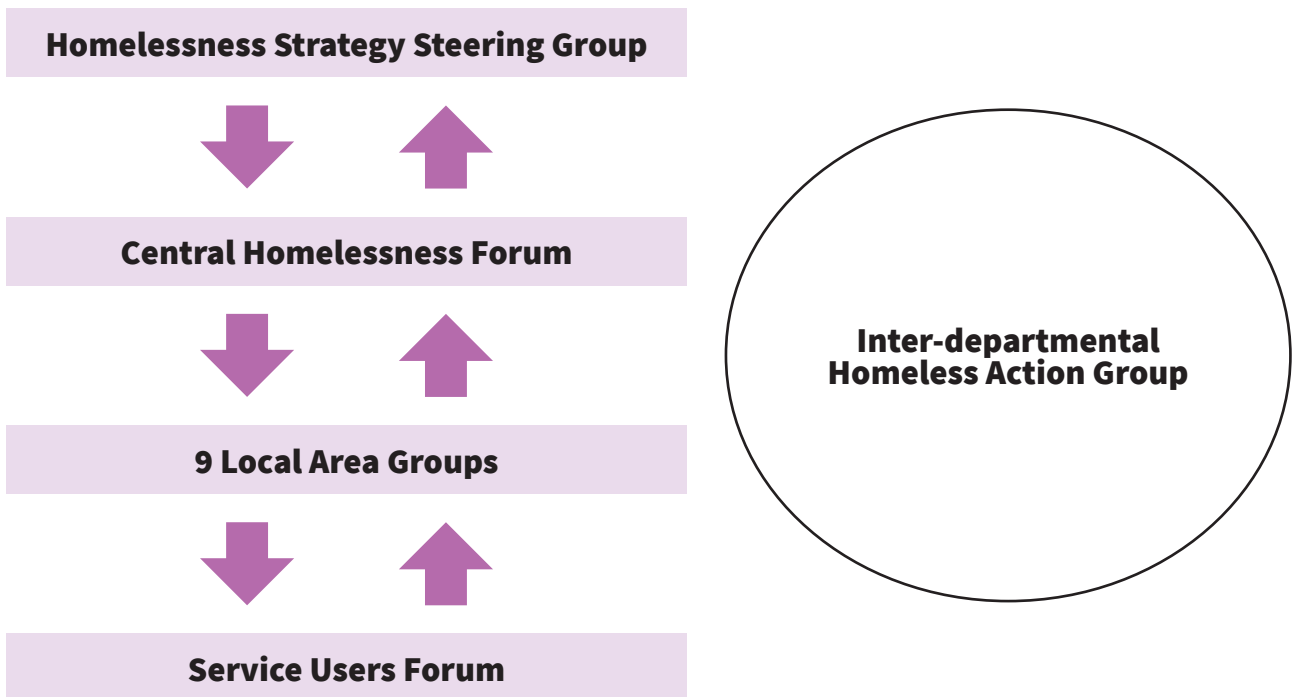
HOW WILL WE TAKE THIS ACTION PLAN FORWARD?

The Housing Executive will work with the Department for Communities and all relevant stakeholders to ensure delivery of this action plan. As the Housing Executive develops more understanding of the problem and more evidence becomes available, including through the separate project to conduct a Strategic Review of Temporary Accommodation, the plan will be reviewed and amended to reflect this new information. The action plan will align with the Homelessness Strategy and therefore covers the years 2019-2022.

Upon completion of the consultation process this action plan will be submitted for formal approval to the Housing Executive's Board before a delivery process commences. The action plan delivery mechanism will run in parallel to existing Homelessness Strategy structures with links to the HSSG, Central Homelessness Forum, local area groups and service user forums.

Formal reporting against actions will be provided to the Central Homelessness Forum and the HSSG to enable them to monitor progress. There will also be a reporting mechanism published as part of the Homelessness Strategy Annual Report.

Strategy Delivery Mechanism –



Chapter 6

BACKGROUND - WHAT IS CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS?

Definition of chronic Homelessness

The Homelessness strategy 2017-22 defines chronic homelessness using a definition from a Crisis Report 2010⁷ "A Review of Single Homelessness in the UK 2000-2010" which notes a "group of individuals with very pronounced and complex support needs who found it difficult to exit from homelessness."

Ending Homelessness Together - The Homelessness Strategy 2017-22 recognises that chronic homelessness is one group within the homelessness population. It cited the categorisations used by the European Conference on Homelessness⁸ as follows:

- Transitional homelessness - households that enter the process, are assessed and rehoused and do not return to homelessness.
- Episodic or repeat homelessness - brought about by ongoing changes in circumstances and events.
- Chronic homelessness - long term users of emergency services, in particular rough sleepers.

The Housing Executive has, as a result of consultation, developed criteria to define chronic homelessness.

Hidden homelessness

The Homelessness Strategy 2017-22 has noted concerns around hidden homelessness which included, "people living in a range of circumstances, for example, households that may be staying with friends or sharing with family because they have no accommodation of their own."

The Homelessness Strategy has a clear focus on homeless prevention, this includes actions around:

- Identifying particular groups which are at the highest risk of homelessness.
- Assisting in the public's understanding of the complex nature of homelessness.

- Raising awareness of homelessness to ensure households approaching crisis can access support.
- Undertaking pre-crisis intervention. This can take the form of advice and mediation services; proactive interventions and targeted services at known risk points.
- Preventing recurring homelessness, including ensuring tenancy sustainment is central to preventing repeat homelessness.

As part of the Homelessness Strategy, the Housing Executive has developed a Communication Action Plan and a training package which raises awareness of pre-crisis homelessness indicators.

The implementation of a Communication Action Plan aims to ensure households approaching crisis can access the right support quickly. The training package aims to ensure that key staff, initially within the Housing Executive but to be extended to other agencies, are aware of potential trigger signs for homelessness and have the knowledge of relevant support agencies to act accordingly. The Housing Executive will also be undertaking a range of other prevention activities as part of the Year 3 Implementation of the Homelessness Strategy.

Accessibility for marginalised Groups

Accessibility for marginalised groups, for example persons from abroad is an ongoing issue. The Homelessness Strategy notes the difficulty that persons from abroad with no recourse to public funds have accessing benefits and services. This may apply to individuals who are experiencing chronic homelessness.

Article 6(D)1 of the Housing (Amendment) Act (NI) 2010 provides for free advice in relation to homelessness and the prevention of homelessness to be made available to all persons. This may include referring the applicant to other support agencies. This means that such free advice is available to persons subject to immigration control and other persons from abroad.

⁷ 'A Review of Single Homelessness in the UK 2000 – 2010 Anwen Jones and Nicholas Pleace', Crisis (2010) http://www.crisis.org.uk/data/files/publications/ReviewOfSingleHomelessness_Final.pdf

⁸ Homelessness and Housing Policies in Europe: Lessons from Research, FEANTSA (the European Federation of Organisations Working with the Homeless) (2010) http://www.feantsaresearch.org/IMG/pdf/fea_020-10_en_final.pdf

Where an applicant is ineligible for assistance under the Housing (NI) Order 1988 but they are destitute and have a pre-existing care need [a pre-existing care need, this may be similar to circumstances outlined in the priority need categories in Article 5 of the Housing (NI) Order 1988], they may be referred to Social Services under the Health & Personal Services (NI) Order 1972.

Furthermore, Health and Social Care Trusts have a duty under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 to provide a range of services for persons under 18 who are children in need. Therefore, a referral can be made to the relevant Health and Social Care Trust in such instances.

Inter-Departmental Homelessness Action Plan

The Inter-Departmental Homelessness Action Group involving the Departments for Communities, Health, Justice and Education will produce a second outcome centred action plan to support the needs of the homelessness population in Northern Ireland. A number of their commitments have been referred to in this action plan.

The first Inter-Departmental Homelessness Action Plan was published in November 2017 and focussed on addressing gaps in services that have the most impact on those who are experiencing chronic homelessness, homeless or most at risk of homelessness. The plan was developed with other government departments, statutory partners, homelessness service providers and service users. Year 1 of the action plan contained nine actions which have been identified as priorities for all departments and agencies involved.

The Inter-Departmental Homelessness Strategy Steering Group (HSSG) which meets quarterly will oversee implementation of the Homelessness Strategy and the Inter-Departmental Homelessness Action Plan. It endorsed the Year 1 Homeless Strategy Implementation Plan and the Year 1 Homelessness Inter-Departmental Action Plan.

There is an indicative link between each of the Inter-Departmental Homelessness Action Plan's priorities and those actions identified as part of the Chronic Homelessness Action Plan consultation. Going forward further development of these links may be worthwhile.

Chapter 7

ROUGH SLEEPING

Belfast Area Rough Sleepers Strategy 2004-2006

The Housing Executive's commitment to dealing strategically with Rough Sleepers is not a new concept. The Housing Executive gave a commitment to dealing with street homelessness in Belfast. This resulted in the establishment of an inter-agency Rough Sleepers Forum which produced a Belfast Area Rough Sleepers Strategy 2004-2006. This provided an opportunity for the Housing Executive and the statutory and voluntary sectors to provide a focussed approach to addressing the problems faced by rough sleeping through more than just a housing response.

This led to the introduction of local inter-agency structures and a new range of specialist provision which included; Multi-disciplinary Homeless Support Team (MDHST), provision of Crash beds, low threshold harm reduction service (wet hostel), a range of generic singles hostels across the City, Street outreach and a drop in service. It was also envisaged that the successful implementation of the Belfast Area Rough Sleepers Strategy would lead to consideration as to how the services could be replicated across other areas.

The actions identified as part of the strategy provided the foundations to deal with rough sleepers. Those actions implemented have evolved and are continually being built upon by the Housing Executive and partner agencies.

The Rough Sleepers/Street Drinkers Strategy for Derry City 2009

The Rough Sleepers/Street Drinkers Strategy for Derry City 2009 was launched in order to deal with the issue of people who were sleeping rough and/or drinking in and around Derry/Londonderry City centre. Its main objective was to ensure that there was appropriate preventative and responsive housing support and care services in place for those who were sleeping rough and those at risk of homelessness due to alcohol addiction in the city.

It identified a number of services including generic homeless hostels, specialist alcohol accommodation, drop in facilities and housing with care provision

required within the inner city. The strategy identified 2 key themes; a number of services were not strategically relevant in their current form and required adaptation and there was a need to develop inter-agency strands in relation to establishing effective pathways between services to meet the needs of service users.

The strategy proved to be successful as many of its service recommendations are still operating today.

Street Needs Audit 2015-16

Street activity has remained a cause for concern and as a result a Street Needs Audit was undertaken by Depaul and the Welcome Centre on behalf of the Housing Executive, over 12 weeks in 2015, to quantify street activity and rough sleeping. The audit showed that visible rough sleeping levels remain low in Belfast city centre, averaging 6 people per night with 361 individuals engaged in 'street activities' i.e. drinking, begging or sleeping over the course of the audit. The audit took countenance of the distinction between "actual homelessness, episodic rough sleeping and public intoxication." The exercise also identified seven individuals classed as 'entrenched rough sleepers',

The Belfast Street Needs Audit⁹ report January 2016 identified the main barriers to accessing services identified by homeless individuals:

- Problems with other residents, including drug and alcohol use, violence, theft, bullying, noise and arguments and feeling unsafe.
- Substance users making it difficult for other individuals to tackle their own substance misuse.
- Overcrowding, a lack of bed spaces.
- Rules, in particular around curfews were considered unnecessarily restrictive.

The stakeholders who carried out the audit identified there was a larger group engaging in street drinking and street begging and a multi-agency approach was needed to address this issue. The report recommended the implementation of a case management approach to rough sleepers

9 BELFAST STREET NEEDS AUDIT, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, The Welcome Organisation and Depaul, Belfast City Centre Management Final Report, NIHE (January 2016) https://www.nihe.gov.uk/belfast_street_needs_audit.pdf

and the re-evaluation of service provision in Belfast including capacity and responsiveness of services to meet clients needs. A key recommendation was for information sharing protocols to be agreed to ensure that organisations working with those at risk of rough sleeping have access to relevant and appropriate information.

Tri- Ministerial Action Plan

The Homelessness Monitor 2016¹⁰ noted the success of the Tri-ministerial Action Plan bringing together the Ministers for Social Development, Health and Social Care, and Justice, as a result of issues regarding rough sleeping.

The action plan identified short term, medium term and long term actions. Many short term recommendations related to housing and homelessness services, such as extension of the outreach service and increasing the number of emergency beds.

Longer term actions included service providers in Belfast re-examining access arrangements to hostels and their model of service delivery to improve access for vulnerable users and development of arrangements /protocols between agencies to provide an effective and efficient service, for example between the Housing Executive and the PSNI to ensure that individuals being released from police custody are signposted effectively to services.

The action plan provided a constructive framework for engagement with health and justice departments and cross-departmental working in its delivery. The Housing Executive is hoping to build on this level of co-operation in the delivery of the Chronic Homelessness Action Plan.

NIAO Report on Homelessness

The Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) Report on Homelessness is relevant to this action plan as it makes a specific recommendation in relation to rough sleepers. Rough Sleeping can be classed as a sub group within chronic homelessness.

Recommendation 9 of The NIAO Homelessness Report recommends, “that the NIHE in partnership with other service providers, develop improved systems for regularly monitoring and measuring the extent of rough Sleeping throughout Northern Ireland to determine if action currently being taken is adequate.”

Street Counts

As part of the commitment to achieving the NIAO recommendation, the Housing Executive and partner organisations carried out rough sleeper street counts in Belfast, Derry/Londonderry and Newry during November 2018. The methodology for the street counts is broadly similar to the process followed by Local Authorities in England, Scotland and Wales and therefore consistent with data submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. During the street count rough sleepers were identified using the definition below:

People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places, not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations or ‘bashers’).

In areas where the need for a street count was not identified the Housing Executive used an estimate to identify the number of rough sleepers. In order to gather this data the Housing Executive contacted local partners, including the PSNI, asking for the Housing Executive to be notified of any rough sleepers on the night of Wednesday 28th November 2018. As with the rough sleeper street counts this is again consistent with the approach taken in neighbouring jurisdictions.

It is important to emphasise that the purpose of the street counts and estimate is to determine the numbers of people rough sleeping on the typical night chosen, rather than a larger sample of street activity, hidden homelessness or people using homelessness services. This means that, for example, a person who sometimes sleeps rough but sometimes has accommodation/shelter will not be included in the estimate unless there is evidence that they did sleep rough on that night. In previous years the Housing Executive have not provided any estimates of rough sleepers beyond those identified during the street counts in the larger cities and the purpose of this exercise is to provide a snapshot of rough sleeping activity in smaller settlements/rural areas.

The recent street counts and estimates identified a total of 38 rough sleepers across Northern Ireland. The Housing Executive is committed to carrying out this exercise on an annual basis as part of this action plan.

¹⁰ The Homelessness Monitor NI Crisis (2016)
https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/236838/the_homelessness_monitor_northern_ireland_2016.pdf

Ending Homelessness Together - Homelessness Strategy for Northern Ireland 2017-22

Although there has been a lot of positive work carried out as a result of previous strategies in terms of provision of support services and inter-agency work, Ending Homelessness Together, The Homelessness Strategy 2017-22 identifies the need to further investigate and research the needs of people who are experiencing chronic homelessness of which rough sleeping can be classed as a subgroup.

In relation to the action within the Strategy to “review and implement Belfast and Derry/Londonderry Rough Sleepers Strategy” the Housing Executive has engaged with a wide range of stakeholders on the issue of rough sleeping and chronic homelessness during 2017/18.

Historically, NI has had very low levels of rough sleeping by comparisons to other jurisdictions and our engagement with statutory and voluntary sectors, particularly through the Local Area Groups, has noted the need to focus on a broader scope of chronic homelessness. As a result this action from the strategy has been amended to ‘Develop and implement a Chronic Homelessness Action Plan for Northern Ireland’.

The Homelessness Strategy includes an action to devise appropriate housing models for those who are experiencing chronic homelessness including rough sleepers. This has been progressed through the development of criteria by which the Housing Executive can identify the number of homeless applicants in Northern Ireland experiencing chronic homelessness. This will involve Housing Solutions teams gathering information on clients who may fall within the chronic homelessness category. In such cases there can be multiple failed temporary accommodation placements and Housing First models may be considered as the appropriate response to deliver a sustainable housing solution.

Chapter 8

STRATEGIC CONTEXT- NORTHERN IRELAND

The UK government has a legal responsibility for homelessness which varies across the 4 jurisdictions; England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Councils have this responsibility in England, Wales and Scotland, while in Northern Ireland the Housing Executive has this responsibility. Each region has a slightly different approach, but in general the authorities have a duty to provide temporary and/or permanent accommodation if after investigations they meet the homelessness tests. They have to meet the eligibility criteria including as a person from abroad, are accepted as homeless, are in a priority need category, (except in Scotland), and haven't become homeless intentionally (which is optional for councils in Wales).

In Northern Ireland the Housing (NI) Order 1988 as amended by the Housing (NI) Order 2003 ('the 2003 Order'), and the Housing (Amendment) Act (NI) 2010 ('the 2010 Act') places a statutory duty on the Housing Executive to assess and investigate homelessness applicants and where appropriate provide temporary and/or permanent accommodation.

In order to be "accepted" as statutorily homeless, a household must meet the four tests of:

- Eligibility;
- Homelessness;
- Priority Need;
- Intentionality.

The Housing (Amendment) Act (NI) 2010 ('the 2010 Act') introduced a new duty on the NIHE to provide advice on homelessness and its prevention to anyone in Northern Ireland who requested it.

Homeless service delivery is different in GB compared to NI as local authorities (local government) have responsibility for a wide range of services. In England local councils are the most common type of local authority and are responsible for a range of vital services including social care, schools, housing and planning. Combined Authorities exist where two or more councils collaborate and take collective decisions across council boundaries such as Greater

Manchester Combined Authority. Due to the local authority structure in England, integration of services is much easier compared to Northern Ireland where a diverse range of services fall under the remit of different government departments and therefore different implementation bodies.

The Homelessness Monitor NI 2016 identified three new emerging themes in NI, 'Housing Solutions and Support' approach to homelessness prevention by the NIHE, developments with regard to rough sleeping, begging and street drinking in Belfast; and a Housing First pilot project in Northern Ireland. These themes indicate the direction of Housing Executive policy regarding those deemed to be experiencing chronic homelessness.

NI Based Temporary Accommodation Research

Research conducted by Lynne Mc Mordie through I-SPHERE / Oak Foundation Internship Programme at Herriot Watt University was published in July 2018. The research "Chronic Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation Placement in Belfast,"¹¹ looked at the provision and design of temporary accommodation services in Belfast and its use by individuals who have experienced chronic homelessness.

This research refers to a sub-group within the Northern Ireland homeless population who experience repeated temporary accommodation placements, periods of rough sleeping and other forms of homelessness and questions the efficiency of current service provision in resolving homelessness for those with more complex needs. The research also found that this group of homelessness people suffer marginalisation at every stage in the service provision and this is further compounded when they fail to secure independent living.

The research suggests that service users adopt a range of coping mechanisms to reduce the stresses of living in a hostel which in turn exacerbates their circumstances and results in placement failure. This adds to the perpetual cycle of homelessness which in

11 Chronic Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation Placement in Belfast, Lynne Mc Mordie, Heriot-Watt University, I-SPHERE, Oak Foundation (July 2018) <https://ihurerblog.files.wordpress.com/2018/07/chronic-homelessness-and-temporary-accommodation.pdf>

turn will lead to deterioration of physical and mental health and increased risk of encounters with the criminal justice system.

This cycle of repeat homelessness reduced the possibility for tenancy sustainment and permanent rehousing, as people become institutionalised with decreased independent living skills and social isolation.

While this report recommends the implementation of a Chronic Homelessness Action Plan, it was agreed that the Housing Executive would pursue an action plan in March 2018. The Housing Executive's commitment preceded this report and the Housing Executive is pleased that the need was identified as a priority.

The report also recommended moving away from hostel forms of temporary accommodation and toward Housing First and housing-led forms of provision for this particular sub group of homeless individuals. The research also recommends that strategies, action plans and reviews, by the NIHE and DFC, in relation to housing and homelessness, should take cognisance of their impact on chronic homelessness and should include prevention as a key theme. The report's final recommendation is the development of a framework to monitor sustainable exits from temporary accommodation and homelessness.

Further details on the Strategic context - UK , wider context and a sample of good practices can be found in Appendix B of the appendices

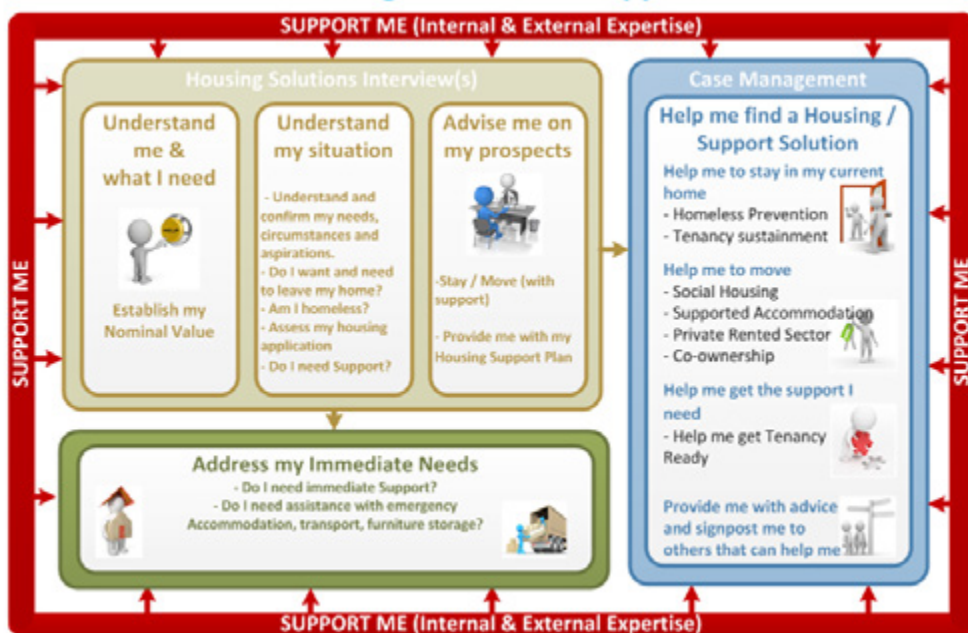
How the Housing Executive is structured

In 2014 the Housing Executive undertook a major review of front line service delivery and as a result developed a Housing Solutions and Support model for its housing customers. The Housing Executive's aim is to offer effective, relevant housing advice and information at the earliest possible stage which will let our customers make choices about which options are best for them. This includes work to prevent and respond effectively to homelessness.

The Housing Solutions and Support approach was rolled out across Northern Ireland from April 2018. There are currently 150+ Housing Advisors delivering the Housing Solutions and support service across Northern Ireland. Housing Solutions in Belfast is delivered from a Belfast Regional Housing Solutions team based in Great Victoria with outlets in Shankill, Diaryfarm, Lisburn and Dundonald. Housing Solutions outside of Belfast is delivered by the 9 Area Offices, whilst some teams are based in the Area Office the Housing Solutions and Support approach is delivered across all outlets.

The aim is to provide person centred services which are tailored to meet the needs of individual customers and support them to achieve sustainable housing solutions with an emphasis on homelessness prevention where possible. The model aims to provide good quality advice and assistance, working in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies and promotes the use of floating support services to prevent homelessness.

Housing Solutions and Support Team Structure



Further details on Housing Executive measures, data collection, outcomes and service providers funded can be found at Appendix C.

Chapter 9

BUDGETS AND FUNDING

The Housing Executive receives its funding for homelessness services from the Department for Communities. In contrast local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales receive their funding from a number of sources, including Government grants, council tax, fees and charges. In England, Government grants are provided to fund specific services, for example, implementation of Housing First model or implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

In 2017/18 the Housing Executive provided total funding of approximately £37.1m for homeless services across Northern Ireland, with figures listed below:

- £4.968m on temporary accommodation, including DIME (Dispersed Intensively Managed Emergency).
- £1.718m for storage of personal belongings.
- £2.84m on outside agencies in the voluntary sector.
- £27.6m on Supporting People funding of homelessness services.

The Housing Executive will undertake to examine current service provision and identify future needs of those who are experiencing chronic homelessness. They will consider the associated service and funding requirements. This will include, but not be exclusive to:

- Considering SP commissioning and/or grant funding arrangements and specifically the associated priorities in the SP Strategy for the Homelessness theme.
- Considering the findings of the Strategic review of temporary accommodation;
- Considering mechanisms for ensuring affordable housing supply.
- Identifying funding requirements and options for pilots/initiatives.
- Identifying innovative solutions to funding and service requirements.
- Reviewing legislation to ensure it is flexible and appropriate to meet current needs.

There will be associated budgetary implications with a number of the activities identified to deliver the aims of the action plan. Those actions which will require additional resources have been clearly identified in the draft plan. The budgetary requirements for the delivery of the plan will be finalised following consultation.

However, for certain key activities identified, the funding requirements would be considerable, including for example:

- A dedicated programme of prevention activity.
- The extension of support services to help people maintain their accommodation.
- The expansion of Housing First models in Northern Ireland.

Supporting People

The Supporting People budget has been protected in Northern Ireland since 2008 unlike in other parts of the UK. A recent Supporting People review¹² recommended moving away from primarily accommodation-based provision to more floating support models. This is in keeping with the support for Housing First models. The new structures will engage in planning on a cross agency basis to develop services that are strategically aligned with the Homelessness Strategy.

Approximately 37% of the current SP budget (£72.8m) is allocated to services for Homeless clients. Approx. 120 distinct services across NI are funded through SP, the majority being the traditional temporary accommodation based hostel model. Additionally, there are 24 floating support services. The range of sub groups (or primary client groups) supported through these services are Homeless Families, Women at risk of domestic violence, Offenders/people at risk of offending, single homes and people with alcohol/drug problems.

The majority of those individuals described as experiencing chronic homelessness would be referred or self-refer into the single homeless/ alcohol/drug categories. This subset accounts for about half of all SP funded homeless services. Their services are performance managed through the SP contract

12 DSD (2015) Supporting People Review Final Report. Belfast: DSD; DSD (2016) Action Plan for the Implementation of the Supporting People Review. Belfast: DSD

management framework, which includes monitoring of occupancy, turnover and quality assessment.

In addition to ongoing monitoring of these areas, SP have as of 2018/19 introduced an outcomes framework which over time will provide meaningful data to inform future service configuration. A relatively new model which is currently in operation on a small scale in Belfast and Derry/L'Derry is Housing First. There is evidence to support that this model is effective with chronic homeless and the potential for further rollout is subject to availability of funding, access to housing and also a strategic approach to reconfiguration of existing hostel models.

Chapter 10

VISION/AIMS/OBJECTIVES

The Chronic Homelessness Action Plan will align with the Homelessness Strategy 2017-22 and covers a three year period from April 2019 to March 2022. In setting out the vision, aims and objectives of this action plan, it is important that this action plan supports the objectives and actions identified in the Homelessness Strategy. It is also critical to ensure that it is inclusive of our partners across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors and that our visions, aims and objectives are reflective of this, within the context and acceptance that chronic homelessness is not a problem that housing alone can address.

The needs of individuals who are experiencing chronic homelessness are wide ranging. It is therefore imperative that housing provision and support services are tailored to meet the needs of each individual appropriately.

Being at the sharpest end of the homelessness spectrum can mean that someone is forced to sleep rough. However, it is critical to remember that rough sleepers make up a relatively small proportion of the overall number of people who are experiencing chronic homelessness and the actions within this plan are mindful of that.

The objectives have been developed in an attempt to capture the actions to prevent rough sleeping and other street activity; empower frontline services to improve access to suitable housing solutions; strengthen inter-departmental co-operation and develop a measurement framework based on outcomes.

Vision

The vision of this document will support the Homelessness Strategy's vision of **Ending Homelessness Together**.

This action plan will support this vision. If the Housing Executive is to address chronic homelessness, the Housing Executive will need to continue to work collaboratively with its stakeholders across the statutory, voluntary and community sector. This action plan shows the Housing Executive's commitment to introducing new ways of working as well as supporting a range of cross-government initiatives which will see us working collaboratively in the best interests of those experiencing chronic homelessness. The Housing Executive is constantly seeking to improve our

engagement with the sector and that engagement has been vital in identifying the aims and objectives for the Chronic Homelessness Action Plan and helping identify appropriate actions.

Aims

In order for the Housing Executive to fulfil its ambition of ending chronic homelessness it must understand what the problem is and what the scale of it is. As a result the Housing Executive aims to develop a methodology to improve data collection on potential risk factors for chronic homelessness in order to improve understanding of the issues and complexities surrounding chronic homelessness and the scale of the problem. The Housing Executive will use this information to ensure that it promotes early interventions that can prevent homelessness and ensure interventions are effective and well-targeted to ensure that anyone who falls into chronic homelessness is very quickly given the right type of support. This will in turn support the vision of this action plan to end homelessness.

As previously noted, it is accepted across the sector that chronic homelessness is not just a problem that housing alone can resolve. It requires collaborative working with colleagues across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors and that our final aim is reflective of this in this action plan.

The Homelessness Strategy identified two actions relevant to chronic homelessness:

- Review and implement Belfast and Derry/Londonderry Rough Sleepers Strategy.
- Identify chronic homeless need outside Belfast and Derry/Londonderry and devise appropriate action plan to tackle any issues.

With the agreement of the HSSG and Central Homelessness Forum these two actions are both incorporated into this action plan.

The aims of the action plan are to:

1. Improve the measurement and understanding of the scale of the problem of chronic homelessness and establish a baseline.
2. Promote early intervention and prevention of chronic homelessness.
3. Provide a rapid response to chronic homelessness to ensure interventions are effective and well targeted.
4. Promote a cross-departmental and inter-agency approach to addressing the problem of chronic homelessness.

Objectives

The 10 objectives were developed to support and enhance the 4 aims in relation to dealing with the problems of those individuals who experience chronic homelessness.

- Aim 1 has 3 linked objectives.
- Aim 2 has 2 linked objectives.
- Aim 3 has 3 linked objectives.
- Aim 4 has 2 linked objectives.

All objectives should have outcomes. This action plan has aligned to the outcomes set out in the Homelessness Strategy, where at the end of the process an individual should be in the position to say:

- “We have support that prevents us from becoming homeless;”
- “We live in Suitable homes”
- “We have the support we require to access and/or sustain a home”

A wide range of actions have been included in this action plan to meet the 10 key objectives, including developing a measurement framework which is used to inform future policies and actions and for which outcome based results will be evaluated.

The outcomes will be measured to gauge progress.

Objectives linked to Aim 1

1. Design specific criteria for measuring chronic homelessness and implement data collection arrangements.

The outcome will be to understand the scale of chronic homelessness and its causes, which will help the Housing Executive and its homeless sectorial partners take appropriate targeted action to reduce the prevalence of chronic homelessness.

2. Introduce mechanisms to monitor and report on chronic homelessness trends.

The outcome will be to understand the scale of chronic homelessness and its causes. The Housing Executive and its partners in the homeless sector will then be able to prioritise resources to target services at those most at risk, reduce repeat homelessness and achieve higher levels of tenancy sustainment.

3. Utilise chronic homelessness data and trend information to identify existing and emerging needs to address chronic homelessness in the context of legislation, policy and service provision.

The outcome will be the monitoring /development of existing and new legislation, policies and services. This will assist in the analysis of trends to inform legislation, service review, funding and commissioning and/or grant funding.

Objectives linked to Aim 2

4. Develop mechanisms across agencies for early identification of those who are at risk of homelessness or chronic homelessness.

The outcome will be the development and, implementation of formalised joint working arrangements to identify those at risk of chronic homelessness. This will assist in targeting those at greatest risk in order to prevent chronic homelessness

5. Implement a range of support services to help people sustain their accommodation including floating support and tenancy sustainment.

The outcome will be an improved range of housing options to prevent homelessness.

Objectives linked to Aim 3

6. Implement arrangements to ensure services engage with people at risk of chronic homelessness as quickly as possible.

The outcome will be the provision of rapid assessment and support planning. This will assist in improving engagement and the reduced possibility of individuals becoming chronically homeless.

7. Make the stay in temporary accommodation as short as possible

Actions will be implemented to reduce the length of stay of temporary accommodation through the delivery of alternative options that are sustainable and provide appropriate support solutions for individuals and households who are affected by chronic homelessness.

8. Consider a range of housing options for the chronic homeless including Housing First models and ensure they are supported into permanent accommodation as soon as possible

Actions will be implemented to increase the provision of the right type of accommodation and support for individuals and households who are affected by chronic homelessness.

Objectives linked to Aim 4

9. Promote inter-agency issues and actions required to address chronic homelessness.

Actions will be implemented to improve the services delivered to individuals and households who are affected by chronic homelessness

10. Ensure mechanisms are in place to monitor and oversee the implementation of actions contained within the Chronic Homelessness Action Plan.

Arrangements will put in place to ensure the actions taken to deliver the are monitored, reviewed and evaluated against the overall aims of the Plan.

Chapter 11

3 YEAR PLAN 2019-22

This Housing Executive led action plan will be a 3 year plan, reviewed annually in conjunction with the Homelessness Strategy.

Action Plan – Year 1

What are we going to do?

Objectives

1. Design specific criteria for measuring chronic homelessness and implement data collection arrangements.
2. Introduce mechanisms to monitor and report on chronic homelessness trends.
3. Utilise chronic homelessness data and trend information to identify existing and emerging needs to address chronic homelessness in the context of legislation, policy and service provision.
4. Develop mechanisms across agencies for early identification of those who are at risk of homelessness or chronic homelessness.
5. Implement a range of support services to help people sustain their accommodation including floating support and tenancy sustainment.
6. Implement arrangements to ensure services engage with people at risk of chronic homelessness as quickly as possible.
7. Make the stay in temporary accommodation as short as possible
8. Consider a range of housing options for the chronic homeless including Housing First models and ensure they are supported into permanent accommodation as soon as possible
9. Promote inter-agency issues and actions required to address chronic homelessness.
10. Ensure mechanisms are in place to implement and oversee the implementation of the Chronic Homelessness Action Plan

Objective 1 - Design specific criteria for measuring chronic homelessness and implement data collection arrangements

Development of criteria of Chronic Homelessness

In order to understand the issues and complexities surrounding chronic homelessness the Housing Executive has set out to gather as much evidence and information as possible about potential risk factors. The Homelessness Local Area Groups were consulted on the definition of chronic homelessness and broadly agreed that it required an enhanced interpretation through the development of a range of potential risk factors or criteria which in combination would identify the person or household as experiencing chronic homelessness. After the initial criteria were determined other homeless sector organisations were consulted. There was broad acceptance of the criteria whilst recognising that it was difficult to deliver a definition that was adequate to cover all statutory and voluntary organisations that provide services to individuals who are experiencing chronic homelessness.

The identified criteria are outlined below.

An individual can be said to be experiencing chronic homelessness if they meet **three or more** of the criteria listed:

1. A homelessness individual with more than one episode of homelessness in the last 12 months (constant breakdown of tenancies).
2. A homelessness individual with multiple placements/exclusions from temporary accommodation.
3. An individual with mental health problems.
4. An individual with addictions e.g. drug user or alcohol addictions.
5. An individual that has engaged in street activity, including rough sleeping, street drinking, begging.
6. An individual prone to violence-risk to self, to others or from others.
7. An individual who has encountered the criminal justice system.

Meeting three or more criteria was determined as the appropriate benchmark to identify an individual or household as experiencing chronic homelessness, so that the definition was neither too broad nor too restrictive in its application. Consultation reflected positively on this decision. As part of the ongoing consultation for the Action Plan, these criteria will be further developed to ensure there is a clear understanding of their applicability to individuals or households and ensure consistency in their collection and reporting.

Chronic homelessness baseline measurements

Based on criteria 1-6, each Housing Executive Area office was asked to identify the number of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness who are currently engaged with our organisation from their current records or anecdotal information. This resulted in 473 individuals being identified. Criterion no. 7 was added to the list after this initial information gathering exercise was completed.

It should be noted that this was an estimate which in the main was based on limited data sources or was anecdotal and will therefore not be used as the evidence base going forward.

Based on research¹³ conducted elsewhere it would be expected that between 5-10% of the homeless population could be identified as experiencing chronic homelessness. Given that over 22,000 full duty applicants were registered with the Housing Executive at the end of December 2018, it would not be unreasonable to assume between 1100 - 2200 of these individuals or households could be experiencing chronic homelessness.

Other Actions under Objective 1

Going forward the Housing Executive will improve data collection by determining what information needs to be collected and retained within existing IT systems. This may include information recorded on HMS (Housing Management System which holds all customer information regarding housing, homelessness and tenancies) and CMS (Customer Management System which captures information on the number, method, frequency, time and nature of the demands placed on our service by customers) and consider any amendments needed to the systems to collect, retain and analyse this information. We also need to understand the limitations of the data collection processes so that we can try to improve them. This is particularly in the ability for data systems to be cross referenced between organisations.

The Housing Executive will conduct annual street counts in Belfast, Derry/Londonderry and other towns/cities to understand the scale of rough sleeping in Northern Ireland and will use this information as another method of measuring the scale of chronic homelessness.

Subject to funding the Housing Executive would intend to identify chronic homelessness numbers collectable by other agencies using the new standard indicators developed by the sector. Data will initially be collected by the Housing Executive's Housing Solutions and Support staff but this will be expanded to include data from other sources and other agencies in order to track customer journeys across agencies.

Linked to Objective 1, The Housing Executive would intend to take the opportunity to conduct Belfast and Derry/ Londonderry street audits and explore the potential of carrying out a Newry street audit which would result in a more comprehensive understanding of the scale of street activity including rough sleeping across urban areas in Northern Ireland.

The Housing Executive would intend to commission further research to understand the scale and specific impacts of chronic homelessness for specific groups including on women and poly drug users.

The outcome of this objective would be to understand the scale of chronic homelessness that is presented to the Housing Executive and in turn identify potential service gaps. This will provide an evidential basis to consider current and future service provision. Over time it will also enable the Housing Executive and its partners to measure the success of the action plan in terms of reducing the prevalence of chronic homelessness.

Objective 2 - Introduce mechanisms to monitor and report on chronic homelessness trends

The Housing Executive will develop reports to identify trends in relation to chronic homelessness based on the data collected initially internally but ultimately across all relevant agencies. This information will be used to determine the prevalence or incidence of particular risk factors for chronic homelessness which will in turn help to inform service review and development. This will lead to a better understanding of the scale of chronic homelessness and how it is changing over time.

The Housing Executive intends to develop reports to identify trends in relation to chronic homelessness from data collected by all agencies to help inform

13 Applying Cluster Analysis to Test a Typology of Homelessness by Pattern of Shelter Utilization: Results from the Analysis of Administrative Data, Kuhn and Culhane (1998) <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1022176402357>

strategic planning. Systems must be able to track customers across services so that data is not duplicated when being reported. The Action for Year 1 will be to explore options for the implementation of joint data capture arrangements from objective 1. This would improve the understanding of the scale of chronic homelessness across all agencies.

An integral part of the review of current service provision and the consideration of future housing models will be to collect and reflect on the views of service users. Actions include exploration of the issues with the existing Service User Forum and to identify other mechanisms for capturing service users' experiences. This will include gathering feedback from people who have used homeless services across Northern Ireland to find out more about their experiences of accessing services and finding accommodation. This will help inform the development of appropriate service responses.

The Housing Executive also proposes to review the incidences of and reasons for repeat homelessness in depth. This will look at causes and trends in relation to repeat homelessness and develop actions to address underlying issues. Consequently, action can be taken to target those most at risk, reduce repeat homelessness and achieve higher levels of tenancy sustainment.

Ultimately, the systematic collection and interpretation of data should greatly improve our ability to understand homelessness in Northern Ireland. This understanding of homelessness trends will then have implications both for national policy and for policymakers and practitioners at the operational level.

Objective 3 - Utilise chronic homelessness data and trend information to identify existing and emerging needs to address chronic homelessness in the context of legislation, policy and service provision

Objective 3 sets out how the Housing Executive will seek to interpret chronic homelessness data and trends, along with other key statistical and qualitative information to monitor the impacts of legislative or policy developments and service commissioning and/or grant funding decisions on homelessness in Northern Ireland.

The Housing Executive will use the interpretation of data and trends to consider strategic, policy and operational impacts.

The Housing Executive will use data collected on chronic homelessness and indicators to target prevention. Data collected will be reviewed to identify

particular groups which are at the highest risk of chronic homelessness and seek to prioritise the pathways and interventions needed to prevent this outcome for particular groups.

In order to meet this objective, the Housing Executive and its partners should have data collection and analysis arrangements which provide an evidence-informed framework within which sector-led solutions can be joined up in a coordinated effort to address homelessness. This should be placed in the broader context of legislative and policy development as well as service commissioning and/or grant funding.

Objective 4 - Develop mechanisms across agencies for early identification of those who are at risk of homelessness or chronic homelessness

The Housing Executive aims to develop mechanisms, through inter-agency working for early identification of those who are at risk of homelessness or chronic homelessness and take preventative action.

The Homelessness Strategy has a clear focus on homeless prevention, this includes actions around:

- Identifying particular groups which are at the highest risk of homelessness
- Assisting in the public's understanding of the complex nature of homelessness.
- Raising awareness of homelessness to ensure households approaching crisis can access support.
- Undertaking pre-crisis intervention. This can take the form of advice and mediation services; proactive interventions and targeted services at known risk points.
- Preventing recurring homelessness, including ensuring tenancy sustainment is central to preventing repeat homelessness.

This action plan seeks to promote prevention and early intervention through a number of initiatives. The Housing Executive is keen to raise awareness of prevention through early intervention, by identifying potential risk indicators including how adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) can be used as a chronic homelessness indicator. An Action for Year 1 of the action plan is to focus on working with Health & Social Care to review research and understand its application to homelessness prevention.

The Housing Executive seeks to address the needs of particular groups on an inter-agency basis through the review of protocols relevant to young people, prisoners, hospital discharge and care leavers in order to consider how to improve outcomes for relevant individuals including in relation to sustainable housing options prior to discharge/release. This should result in a reduction in homeless presentations following discharge.

The Housing Executive supports the need to improve accessibility for marginalised groups including advice to persons from abroad who are ineligible for housing assistance. The Housing Executive wishes to work collaboratively with other agencies to establish methods to identify this group. There are a number of areas where improvements are essential including exploring methods of improved data collection across all agencies and ensuring all staff members are trained to provide advice and assistance to this group. This should result in improved sharing of information of numbers of persons from abroad who are ineligible for housing assistance across agencies and more effective targeted advice for marginalised groups

The Housing Executive is committed through the Homelessness Strategy to promoting public awareness regarding support, advice and assistance for marginalised groups.

The Housing Executive will continue to promote services including day services which will assist those that are experiencing chronic homelessness including rough sleepers.

The Housing Executive will adopt innovative approaches to preventing homelessness through a dedicated programme of activity including specifically targeting chronic homelessness. A range of activities will be commissioned and/or grant funded to prevent homelessness including effectively targeted awareness campaigns, to identify households at risk of homelessness and ensure appropriate tailored advice, assistance and support is available to them as well as engagement activities instigated and promoted.

There is a need to improve public awareness and communicate prevention work to the public around chronic homelessness. The Housing Executive needs to provide a positive message to the public on how they can assist those that are experiencing chronic homelessness. This can in part be achieved through the Homelessness Strategy's Communication strategy to assist in promoting prevention and providing guidance on action that can be taken by the public and highlight difference between street activity and actual homelessness.

This action plan has identified the need for better alignment between statutory and strategic requirements in terms of prevention, with a statutory focus on prevention and rehousing. This can be achieved through legislative reviews including consideration given to the extension of homelessness legislation to mirror the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 in England, specifically to introduce new duties to the original statutory rehousing duty; duty to prevent homelessness and duty to relieve homelessness.

This will enable a renewed focus on the prevention of homelessness and local joint working, and has the potential to provide more client-focused, personalised statutory homelessness services and lead to better legislative and strategic alignment.

Objective 5- Implement a range of support services to help people sustain their accommodation including floating support and tenancy sustainment

The Housing Executive intends to implement formal mechanisms to ensure support is targeted at those identified as experiencing chronic homelessness or at risk of experiencing chronic homelessness.

The Housing Executive would wish to see a range of cross tenure tenancy sustainment support available to help prevent people from losing their tenancies and support those homeless individuals or households who have been rehoused in order to prevent recurring homelessness. Ensuring the right support, tailored to an individual's needs, which is provided alongside accommodation, is fundamental.

The Housing Executive will continue to promote prevention work by Housing Advisors and Patch Managers. The Housing Executive is committed to improving tenancy sustainment and providing customer support through the review of the Tenancy Sustainment Strategy. It will also continue to implement policies such as the Financial Inclusion Policy.

The Housing Executive will continue to support customers to access a range of housing options across all tenures. This will include identifying and seeking to address the barriers to accessing the private rented sector, potentially with the implementation of a new private rented access scheme.

The action plan includes a commitment to identify service gaps and prioritisation of service development through existing commissioning and/or grant funding arrangements to help tenancy sustainment. The Action for Year 1 will be to identify gaps in service provision in order to improve service provision and delivery.

With more resources the Housing Executive could explore other options to support the private rented sector and promote security of tenure, such as, rent/ deposit/ damage guarantee schemes and incentives to encourage landlords to provide secure long term tenancies to those who have or are experiencing homelessness.

Objective 6- Implement arrangements to ensure services engage with people at risk of chronic homelessness as quickly as possible

As part of the action plan, the Housing Executive intends to adopt the principles of a rapid rehousing approach for those who are experiencing chronic homelessness. This is about making sure that these individuals' needs are assessed and they reach a settled housing option as quickly as possible rather than staying too long in temporary accommodation.

Those who are experiencing chronic homelessness should be rapidly rehoused and offered comprehensive support to ensure their specific needs are addressed so they can move to suitable permanent accommodation at the earliest opportunity.

As a first stage of moving to rapid rehousing approach, the Housing Executive are committed to implementing arrangements to ensure services engage with people at risk of chronic homelessness as quickly as possible. This includes considering how our frontline services are delivered within the Housing Executive, the out of hours provision for homelessness and our emergency housing arrangements.

The action plan also aims to promote the prevention of rough sleeping and where rough sleeping cannot be prevented, supports a no second night out approach. We want to ensure there is a rapid response to new rough sleepers in that that we can provide an offer of accommodation that means they do not have to sleep out for a second night.

The Housing Executive wants to ensure there is rapid assessment (case management) by all agencies of those who are found to be rough sleeping or involved in street activity.

We will engage with the homeless sector to consider the role of peer support service to help those individuals who are experiencing chronic homelessness.

An important aspect of the delivery of services to the chronic homeless is through day services. It is therefore essential to consider the role of day services in delivering support. The action plan recommends the need to evaluate and review the role of day centres in delivering assistance.

Objective 7- Make the stay in temporary accommodation as short as possible

As part of a rapid rehousing approach, if and when required, temporary accommodation should contribute to ending someone's experience of homelessness as quickly as possible as part of a transition back into mainstream accommodation.

The Housing Executive wants to make the stay in temporary accommodation as short as possible.

The Housing Executive supports a move to a rapid rehousing approach. Rapid rehousing means: provision of a settled mainstream housing option as quickly as possible and time spent in temporary accommodation is reduced to a minimum, with minimal transitions. When temporary accommodation is needed, the optimum type is mainstream, furnished and within the community.

The Housing Executive has commenced a strategic review of temporary accommodation in Northern Ireland which will consider how the demand for it can be reduced through effective prevention and re-housing and how the throughput and move-on from temporary accommodation can be improved.

As part of the review the Housing Executive will also seek to better understand current and future needs for temporary accommodation which considers the type, quality and location of this accommodation as well as the overall mix.

The action plan commits the Housing Executive to ensuring homelessness applicants have access to safe emergency accommodation with support by ensuring adequate provision and suitable move-on to improve throughput. The Housing Executive supports a person centred approach and wants to improve emergency accommodation provision for those that need it in appropriate locations (near family support or strong connections) that includes a mixed model of temporary accommodation.

Objective 8 - Consider a range of housing options for the chronic homeless including Housing First models and ensure they are supported into permanent accommodation as soon as possible

There is a need to explore a comprehensive range of housing options, with planned move on to permanent accommodation through social housing, the private rented sector or using the Housing First model. It is imperative to ensure all housing solutions provide clear support and exit plans for those who are experiencing chronic homelessness. This will ensure enhanced provision of right type of service for the chronic homelessness.

For those experiencing chronic homelessness, people with multiple needs beyond housing, there is a need to adopt Housing First models and investigate the feasibility of extending provision throughout NI. While Housing First services are being delivered in Northern Ireland and have been positively evaluated in terms of their benefits, they are on a proportionately smaller scale than other regions of the UK and are geographically restricted to Belfast and Derry/Londonderry.

The Housing Executive is committed to the provision of the right type of accommodation and support in order to effectively implement a comprehensive Housing First provision across Northern Ireland. This will require a multi-agency approach to consider and address both the accommodation and non-accommodation needs of these individuals.

Alongside the appropriate accommodation provision there is a need to identify and implement appropriate support services. This support should be flexible as time bound models of service delivery are not always best for this client group. The outcome will be improved provision of the right type of service for the chronic homelessness.

Objective 9 - Promote inter-agency issues and actions required to address chronic homelessness

Objective 9 promotes inter-agency working to address chronic homelessness. Government departments need to continue working strategically together to address chronic homelessness. The Housing Executive will continue to work with government departments, statutory partners and homelessness service providers to ensure that the actions in this Plan complement the work of the Inter-Departmental Homelessness Action Plan through identifying gaps in service provision and addressing those shortfalls. These actions will improve the lives of those individuals or households who are

affected by chronic homelessness.

The Housing Executive supports a review of homelessness legislation. This review would involve exploring options to extending 28 days to 56 days as statutory requirement to deal with threatened homelessness and review the use of priority need and other relevant legislative guidance as identified by stakeholders.

The Housing Executive would support continued investment in multi-disciplinary working including through a review of the multi-disciplinary approach in Belfast with a view to implementing appropriate models in Belfast other urban centres such as Derry/Londonderry, Newry and Ballymena.

Objective 10- Ensure mechanisms in place to implement and oversee the implementation of the Chronic Homelessness Action Plan

This objective can be linked in with the Homelessness Strategy governance mechanism as per objective 4. Reports are provided to various groups such as Central Homelessness Forum or HSSG as outlined in the strategy. This will lead to scrutiny of outcomes for those experiencing chronic homelessness and result in improved accountability and actions. We will also link with the Inter-Departmental Homelessness Action Working Group to ensure that the actions in this Plan complement the work of the Inter-Departmental Homelessness Action Plan.

Funding for this Action Plan

This action plan supports the Homelessness Strategy in the early intervention and prevention of homelessness and inter-agency working. Subject to identified need the action plan will link to relevant commissioning and/or grant funding structures to provide more appropriate and targeted support services that are specifically relevant to the needs of those within the chronic homelessness category.

The aim to reduce chronic homelessness will be undermined without improvements to housing options and this action plan has attempted to help address both the causes of homelessness and to ensure that homeless households have access to appropriate temporary accommodation and can rapidly move to settled, affordable and suitable permanent housing.

The Housing Executive has looked at funding for homelessness services across the UK and although funding streams are different, comparisons in some areas of service provision can be made, for example, in relation to Housing First. In England the Housing

First programme¹⁴ will receive £28 million additional Government funding for 3 different locations covering a population of just over 5 million people.

- Liverpool City Region (£7.7m) (490,000 population).
- Greater Manchester (£8.0m) (2.8 million population).
- West Midlands (£9.6m) (1.8 million population).

The Barnett formula is used to calculate funding allocated to Northern Ireland. If the formula was applied to this new £28 million allocation and previous project allocations in England, funding for Northern Ireland should increase accordingly. The impact of Housing First has been noted in a House of Commons Briefing Paper¹⁵ which noted 'Having sustained accommodation helps people access cheaper mainstream services, such as primary health care.'

Existing Housing First services are already funded by public grants in England. Between 2011 and 2014, the Department for Communities and Local Government (now the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) provided £20 million to create the Homelessness Transition Fund. The fund was aimed at innovative approaches to ending rough sleeping including Housing First projects.

In addition to this the government has allocated a resource of £617 million in Flexible Homelessness Support Grant funding, which the government provides to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

The Scottish government¹⁶ has allocated of £21 million funding to support a transition to rapid rehousing and Housing First as well as increased focus on support for people and on homelessness prevention. The Housing First Scotland Fund has been allocated funding of £3.2m¹⁷ for projects across 5 cities Glasgow, Edinburgh, Stirling, Aberdeen and Dundee during 2018.

By February 2018, the Welsh Government had been funding 10 Housing First projects at a cost of £2.6 million.

The Welsh Government¹⁸ is committed to investing £30 million over a two year period to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping. This includes an additional investment of £900,000 for Housing First projects covering 5 locations.

¹⁴ The House of Commons Briefing Paper Rough Sleeping, 08368. (England), 23 February 2018 , Alexander Bellis & Wendy Wilson, House of Commons Library (2018) <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN02007/SN02007.pdf>

¹⁵ The House of Commons Briefing Paper Housing First: tackling homelessness for those with complex need, 08368 (England), 17th July 2018, Alexander Bellis & Wendy Wilson, House of Commons Library (2018) <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8368/CBP-8368.pdf>

¹⁶ Ending homelessness 27 Jun 2018, Scottish Government (2018) <https://www.gov.scot/news/ending-homelessness/>

¹⁷ Housing First Scotland projects to benefit from £3.2m fund, 7th August , 2018 Turning Point Scotland <http://www.turningpointscotland.com/news/housing-first-scotland-projects-to-benefit-from-3-2m-fund/>

¹⁸ Funding for projects supporting people out of homelessness, December 2018, Welsh Government (2018) <https://gov.wales/newsroom/housing-and-regeneration/2018/funding-for-projects-supporting-people-out-of-homelessness/?lang=en>

OBJECTIVE 1

Define specific criteria for measuring chronic homelessness and implement data collection arrangements

What we will do now

What will we do?	How will we do this?	Responsibility	When will we do it?/ Comments	Outcome	Funding requirements
Identify chronic homelessness numbers collectable by the Housing Executive using new approved standard indicators.	<p>Improve data collection by looking at enhancing information captured in the Housing Executive's existing IT systems including the Housing Management System (HMS) and/or Customer Management System (CMS). If a client meets 3 or more of the indicators they would be identified as experiencing chronic homelessness</p> <p>This should include the ability to identify those individuals within marginalised groups</p>	NIHE	Year 1	Understand the scale of chronic homelessness that is presented to the Housing Executive	There are minimal non recurrent costs associated with the reconfiguration of existing NIHE IT systems
Review nature and format of indicators	Review criteria to define chronic homelessness indicators to ensure they are appropriate after improvements in data collection	NIHE/CHF/ Local Area Groups	Year 2	Validated criteria for the measurement of chronic homelessness	There may a non-recurrent financial impact if an independent review is procured and implemented
Conduct annual street counts in Belfast, Derry/ Londonderry and other towns/cities as identified by the Local Area Groups	Organise annual counts between 1st October-30th November each year where required	NIHE/Local Area Groups	Year 1 Annually (Oct/Nov)	Understand the scale of rough sleeping in Northern Ireland	There is a small recurrent cost associated with the completion of these counts

What could be done with more resources

Identify chronic homelessness numbers collectable by other agencies using new standard indicators.	<p>The methodology will use data initially from the Housing Executive but this will be developed further to include data from other sources and other agencies which will trace customer journeys across agencies</p> <p>This may be achieved through use of universal identifier for each customer</p> <p>The Action for Year 1 will be restricted to exploring options for the implementation of joint data capture arrangements</p>	All stakeholders	Year 1 action Year 2 and 3 actions dependent on Year 1	Understand the scale of chronic homelessness that is presented to all agencies that provide services to chronic homeless individuals	There are likely to be non-recurrent costs associated with setting up shared information capture arrangements
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Continued overleaf

OBJECTIVE 1 continued

What could be done with more resources

What will we do?	How will we do this?	Responsibility	When will we do it?/ Comments	Outcome	Funding requirements
Conduct street audits	Complete Belfast and L'Derry street audit. Explore potential of Newry street audit	NIHE to co-ordinate with other statutory input	1st Street Audit completed by Year 1 Subsequent audits Year 2 and Year 3	More comprehensive understanding of the scale of street activity including rough sleeping	There is an associated non recurrent funding requirement for the appointment of appropriate stakeholder(s) to complete the street audits
Conduct research to understand the specific impacts of chronic homelessness on women	Complete research which looks at the scale and impact of chronic homelessness on women and gender specific issues	NIHE/CHF/HSSG	Year 2	More detailed understanding of female specific chronic homelessness issues	Non recurrent cost associated with commissioning and conduct of research
Conduct research in to Poly-drug and IV drug addiction in single chronic homeless accommodation	Complete research in to Poly-drug and IV drug which seeks to collate an evidence base of people with drug problems in single homeless accommodation	NIHE/CHF/HSSG	Year 2	More detailed understanding of the housing related support needs of single homeless people who have a drug addictions	Non recurrent cost associated with commissioning and conduct of research

OBJECTIVE 2 Introduce mechanisms to monitor and report on chronic homelessness trends.

What we will do now

What will we do?	How will we do this?	Responsibility	When will we do it?/ Comments	Outcome	Funding requirements
Develop reports to identify trends in relation to chronic homelessness from data collected by NIHE	Analyse data collected from CMS and HMS to determine the prevalence or incidence of particular indicators to inform gap analysis in service provision	NIHE	Year 2 (to commence analysis of trends)	Understand the scale of chronic homelessness presented to NIHE	No associated cost
Develop reports to identify trends in relation to chronic homelessness from data collected by all agencies	Analyse data collected across all agencies providing services to chronic homeless individuals/ households. Systems must be able to track customers across services so that data is not duplicated when being reported. Explore options for the implementation of joint data capture arrangements (from objective 1)	DfC/NIHE/CHF	Year 1 action to explore options for the implementation of joint data capture	Understand the scale of chronic homelessness presented to all agencies	There are likely to be non-recurrent costs associated with shared information gathering and reporting
Use Service Users Forum to assist in the provision of qualitative information on chronic homelessness	One meeting per year of the Service Users Forum will focus on chronic homelessness. Take cognisance of the views of service users to improve journey of a person who is experiencing chronic homelessness	NIHE	Year 1	Understand the impact of chronic homelessness on service users	No additional cost

What could be done with more resources

Review the causes of repeat homelessness	Review causes and trends in terms of repeat homelessness and develop actions to address underlying issues	NIHE/CHF	Year 1 to agree specification	Understand the causes of repeat homelessness and target service users most at risk Reduce repeat homelessness Higher levels of tenancy sustainment	This is likely to be a non-recurrent cost if independent research is required
Explore other mechanisms for capturing service user experiences of chronic homelessness	Consider broader opportunities to capture the views and experiences of service users not restricted to accommodation service users	NIHE/CHF/HSSG	Year 1 to agree specification	Understand the impact of chronic homelessness on service users	This is likely to have a non-recurrent financial requirement if independent research is required

OBJECTIVE 3

Utilise chronic homelessness data and trend information to identify existing and emerging needs to address chronic homelessness in the context of legislation, policy and service provision

What we will do now					
What will we do?	How will we do this?	Responsibility	When will we do it?/ Comments	Outcome	Funding requirements
The interpretation of data and trends to inform legislation	Produce analysis of data for key strategic structures in order to inform legislation review where appropriate and identify gaps in legislative frameworks	DFC/NIHE	Year 2	Analysis of trends to inform legislation, review and development	No additional cost
The interpretation of data and trends to inform policy review and development	Produce analysis of data for key strategic structures in order to challenge policy where appropriate and identify gaps in policy frameworks	NIHE/CHF	Year 2	Analysis of trends to inform policy implementation, review and development	No additional cost
The interpretation of data and trends to inform review of existing services and new service requirements	Produce analysis of data to inform service review and commissioning and/or grant funding including: SP Thematic Group on Homelessness, Homeless Funding requirements and future funding criteria Inter-departmental priorities	All stakeholders	Year 2	Analysis of trends to inform service review, funding and commissioning and/or grant funding	No additional cost
What could be done with more resources					
Use data on chronic homelessness and indicators to target prevention	Review data collected to identify particular groups which are at the highest risk of chronic homelessness and seek to prioritise the pathways and interventions needed to prevent this outcome for particular groups This will involve identifying high risk groups and potentially introducing preventative measures through for example, Task and Finish group, support services and education programmes or NIHE website advice to target these groups	All stakeholders	Year 2	Analysis of trends to inform service review, funding and commissioning and/or grant funding	Potential associated recurrent cost for data analysis and targeted prevention activity

OBJECTIVE 4 Develop mechanisms across agencies for the early identification of those at risk of homelessness or chronic homelessness

What we will do now

What will we do?	How will we do this?	Responsibility	When will we do it?/ Comments	Outcome	Funding requirements
Promote prevention/ early intervention	Develop Advice and assistance for prevention – online NIHE website	NIHE	Year 1 and ongoing	Promote prevention/ early intervention	No additional cost
Promote prevention/ early intervention	Support Department of Education initiatives through Inter-Departmental Homelessness Action Plan, for example, development of resources for schools in relation to homelessness and appropriate advice available and given by Colleges through welfare support, GP's etc	NIHE	Year 1 and Ongoing	Promote prevention/ early intervention	No additional cost
Promote prevention/ early intervention	Raise awareness of prevention through early intervention by looking at adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and how this can be used as a chronic homelessness indicator. Action for Year 1 focussed on working with Health & Social care to review research and understand its application to homelessness prevention	All stakeholders	Year 1 and ongoing	Promote prevention/ early intervention	No additional cost currently identified
Address needs of particular groups on an inter-agency basis	Review protocols which address the needs of particular groups including Young People, Prisoners, Hospital Discharge and leaving care	All stakeholders	Year 1 (Prisoners Protocol) Other protocols reviewed Year 2 and 3 as required	Protocols developed which set out processes for sustainable housing options prior to discharge/ release Reduction in homeless presentations following discharge	No additional cost
Improve accessibility for marginalised groups including advice to PFA who are ineligible for housing assistance	Work with other agencies to establish methods to identify this group. Explore improved data collection across all agencies Ensure staff are trained to provide advice and assistance to this group Use Communication strategy to promote public awareness regarding support, advice and assistance	All stakeholders	Subject to discussion with sector	Sharing of information of numbers of PFA who are ineligible for housing assistance. More effective targeted advice for marginalised groups.	No additional cost identified at this stage

Continued overleaf

OBJECTIVE 4 continued

What we will do now

What will we do?	How will we do this?	Responsibility	When will we do it?/ Comments	Outcome	Funding requirements
Promote services which help build skills and confidence of chronic homeless including rough sleepers	<p>Promote services which help chronic homeless build skills and confidence and help them access training and employment including day services</p> <p>Implement as part of the Homeless Strategy Communication plan</p>	NIHE/HSSG/ CHF	Year 1	Increased public awareness of chronic homelessness and how to prevent it	No additional cost identified at this stage

What could be done with more resources

Adopt innovative approaches to preventing homelessness through a dedicated programme of activity including specifically targeting chronic homelessness	<p>Range of activities commissioned and/or grant funded to prevent homelessness including awareness campaigns, engagement activities etc.</p>	All stakeholders	Year 1 and ongoing into years 2 and 3	<p>Innovative approaches to preventing homelessness will be encouraged and explored, which would include effectively targeted campaigns to identify households at risk of homelessness and ensure appropriate tailored advice, assistance and support is available to them.</p> <p>All interventions will be rigorously evaluated so that successful approaches can be extended.</p>	Dedicated recurrent funding will be required for this action
<p>Improve public awareness around chronic homelessness.</p> <p>Communicate prevention work to the public</p>	<p>Provide a positive message to the public on how they can assist those that are experiencing chronic homelessness.</p> <p>Use Homelessness Strategy's Communication strategy to assist prevention and guidance on action that can be taken by the public and highlight difference between street activity and actual homelessness.</p> <p>Encourage giving money to charities rather than to those involved in street activity</p> <p>Implement as part of Homeless Strategy Communication Plan</p>	NIHE/CHF/ HSSG	Year 1	Raise public awareness of chronic homelessness and how public can provide support to prevent and tackle homelessness	Additional recurrent cost linked to communication activity

OBJECTIVE 4 continued

What could be done with more resources

What will we do?	How will we do this?	Responsibility	When will we do it?/ Comments	Outcome	Funding requirements
<p>Better alignment between statutory requirements in terms of prevention, with a statutory focus on prevention and rehousing</p>	<p>Consider extension of homelessness legislation to mirror the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 in England specifically to introduce new duties to the original statutory rehousing duty: Duty to prevent homelessness and Duty to relieve homelessness.</p> <p>This will enable a renewed focus on the prevention of homelessness and local joint working, and has the potential to provide more client-focussed, personalised statutory homelessness services.</p>	<p>All stakeholders</p>	<p>TBA (requires revisions to primary legislation)</p>	<p>Better legislative and strategic alignment</p> <p>Statutory focus on prevention of homelessness</p>	<p>N/A</p>

OBJECTIVE 5

Implement a range of support services to help people sustain their accommodation including floating support and tenancy sustainment

What we will do now

What will we do?	How will we do this?	Responsibility	When will we do it?/ Comments	Outcome	Funding requirements
Formal mechanisms to ensure support is targeted at those identified as experiencing chronic homelessness within the Housing Executive and other agencies	Review NIHE policies to ensure that the appropriate policies are in place to reflect the needs of the chronic homelessness based on data collected and analysed under objective 2	NIHE	Year 1 and ongoing	Improved tenancy sustainment	No additional cost
Continue to promote prevention work by Housing Advisors and Patch Managers	<p>-Promote prevention work and record type of prevention</p> <p>- Support tenancy sustainment through review of Customer Support and Tenancy Sustainment Strategy for those experiencing chronic homelessness.</p> <p>-Continue to implement Financial Inclusion Policy</p>	NIHE	Year 1 and ongoing	Improved NIHE outcome based accountability indicators	No additional costs
Promote PRS and security of tenure	<p>-Develop housing solutions and tenancy sustainment through the Private Rented Sector. Linked with objective 2 of the Homelessness Strategy to ensure delivery of a successful Private Rented Sector Access Scheme.</p> <p>-Explore new options for affordable housing. This may include shared accommodation model for permanent accommodation (Potential policy/ legislative development required)</p> <p>- Explore options and methods by which landlords can be incentivised to provide properties for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research on available options in other jurisdictions. • Development of new models that will assist in the delivery of this action. 	All stakeholders	Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3	Improved housing solutions and tenancy sustainment	Recurrent costs associated with this action

OBJECTIVE 5 continued

What we will do now

What will we do?	How will we do this?	Responsibility	When will we do it?/ Comments	Outcome	Funding requirements
Ensure Patch Managers work with most vulnerable tenants promoting health, wellbeing and resettlement skills	-Ensure patch managers promote health and well-being and resettlement skills through promotion of a directory of services within each Area which is being undertaken as a Year 2 action in the Homelessness Strategy implementation plan	NIHE/Local Area Groups	Year 1 and ongoing	Improved health and wellbeing of homelessness applicants	No additional costs
Identification of service gaps and prioritisation of service development through SP Commissioning and/or grant funding arrangements	Make results of new data collection available to Supporting People so that service delivery models can be reviewed and appropriate changes made to facilitate better service delivery thus ensuring that support is the right type in the right location for vulnerable individuals who are experiencing chronic homelessness identify gaps in service provision	NIHE Housing Services/ Supporting People	Year 1 Action to identify gaps in service provision	Improved service provision and delivery to the chronic homelessness	TBC – Determined after year 1 as a result of identification of service gaps
What can be done with more resources					
Explore other options to support PRS and security of tenure	If funding available explore rent/ deposit/damage guarantee schemes -Encourage landlords to provide secure long term tenancies e.g. a 3 year tenancy	All stakeholders	TBC	Improved housing solutions and tenancy sustainment	There are likely to be recurrent costs associated with schemes

OBJECTIVE 6

Implement arrangements to ensure services engage with people at risk of chronic homelessness as quickly as possible

What we will do now

What will we do?	How will we do this?	Responsibility	When will we do it?/ Comments	Outcome	Funding requirements
Improve prevention work through inter-agency working	Support the implementation of the recommendations from Health and Homelessness Task & Finish Group on Improving Access to Health & Social Care for People Experiencing Homelessness Year 1 Actions will include NIHE support to the creation of a Homelessness Hub pilot in Belfast with access to services including housing and health. This will be evaluated in the context of its broader roll-out	All stakeholders	Year 1	More effective engagement with statutory services for chronic homeless individuals	There is a potential associated recurrent cost aligned to this action
Consider how we develop services in Housing Executive e.g. counter services that can triage chronic homeless clients	Review counter services in order to facilitate triage of chronic homeless clients	NIHE	TBC	Improved access for chronic homeless to services	No additional costs
Review provision of out of hours provision for homelessness including wider partnership approach to delivery	Review of accommodation available out of hours Review partnership approach to out of hours support to access accommodation	All stakeholders	Year 1	Out of hours procedures up to date and agreed by partners	To be determined, may be a cost associated with service provision outside of NIHE
Promote the prevention of rough sleeping through emergency housing arrangements. Where rough sleeping cannot be prevented, support no second night out approach	Continue to support outreach services in Belfast in order to identify those who require emergency accommodation. -Implement no second night out model -Place promptly in appropriate temporary accommodation. This can be helped by the implementation of recommendations from the Common Assessment Framework project and Central Access Point project -Ensure there is Rapid Assessment (case management) by all agencies of those who found to be rough sleeping or involved in street activity. This rapid assessment model could be facilitated through Homelessness Access Hub	All stakeholders	Year 1 actions	Improved engagement and reduced possibility of those individuals ending up rough sleeping	No additional cost if linked to development requirements

OBJECTIVE 6 continued

What will we do?	How will we do this?	Responsibility	When will we do it?/ Comments	Outcome	Funding requirements
What can be done with more resources					
Encourage the development of peer support to help chronic homeless	Create new peer service to support those facing chronic homelessness. Research required and project team to be established. Link in with the proposed Peer Advocacy Service which will provide an enhanced community & voluntary support services including peer led service to support access to healthcare for those experiencing chronic homelessness	All stakeholders	Year 3	Improved engagement and support for chronic homeless	Potential recurrent cost of peer support
Consider role of day services in delivering help to chronic homeless	Evaluate and review role of day centres in delivering assistance to those experiencing chronic homelessness. This will include a report on effective practice.	NIHE/external consultant	Year 2	Improve number of chronic homeless receiving relevant support from day centres	Associated non recurrent cost with review
Promote the prevention of rough sleeping through emergency housing arrangements. Where rough sleeping cannot be prevented, support no second night out approach	Continue to support and extend outreach services in L'Derry and explore possibility of outreach services in other areas in order to identify those who require emergency accommodation. -Implement no second night out model	All stakeholders	Year 1 action to identify need	Improved engagement and reduced possibility of those individuals ending up rough sleeping	Cost to be determined after year 1

OBJECTIVE 7 Make the stay in temporary accommodation as short as possible

What we will do now					
What will we do?	How will we do this?	Responsibility	When will we do it?/ Comments	Outcome	Funding requirements
Review current provision to identify service gaps and service effectiveness	Independent review of temporary accommodation provision being carried out	NIHE/external consultant	Year 2	Better strategic alignment and effective service provision	Non recurrent cost associated with review
Ensure access to safe emergency accommodation with support is available by ensuring adequate provision and improving move-on to improve throughput	<p>Support a person centred approach – Improve emergency accommodation provision for those that need it in appropriate locations (near family support or strong connections) that includes a mixed model of temporary accommodation with the provision of wet hostels, hostels with low support needs and single lets. There is a need to review tolerance levels within temporary accommodation</p> <p>This can be achieved through review of Single Let Provision and Strategic Review of Temporary Accommodation -</p> <p>-Implement recommendations Common Assessment Framework project and Central Access Point project to ensure temporary accommodation is being fully utilised in the most appropriate manner</p>	<p>Review of temporary accommodation – external consultant NIHE internal project</p>	<p>TBC</p> <p>Review of single let provision – Year 1 action</p> <p>Strategic Review of Temp accomm Year1- 2 action</p> <p>CAF and CAP Year 1 actions</p> <p>Year 1</p>	<p>Appropriate emergency accommodation provision for those that need it</p>	<p>Non recurrent cost associated with review</p> <p>Recurrent cost of additional service requirements</p>
		All stakeholders			

OBJECTIVE 7 continued

<p>Move to a rapid rehousing approach</p> <p>Rapid rehousing means:</p> <p>A settled mainstream housing option as quickly as possible. Time spent in temporary accommodation reduced to a minimum, with minimal transitions. When temporary accommodation is needed, the optimum type is mainstream, furnished and within the community</p>	<p>Ensure there is rapid assessment (case management) by all agencies of those who found to be rough sleeping or involved in street activity. This rapid assessment model could be facilitated through Homelessness Hub</p> <p>Person centred approach- Ensure those involved in street activity continue to be offered appropriate support services particularly where individuals are reluctant to initially engage</p>	<p>NIHE</p>	<p>Year 1 and ongoing</p>	<p>Improvement in time taken to make suitable placements</p>	<p>Non- recurrent cost associated with review</p> <p>Recurrent cost of additional service requirements</p>
<p>Work with partners to identify housing outcomes to reduce length of time in temporary accommodation</p>	<p>Review access and referral arrangements for temporary accommodation (via CAF/CAP project)</p> <p>Evaluate HOME model (Housing Options Made Easier) with a view to extending beyond Belfast</p>	<p>All stakeholders</p>	<p>Year 2</p>	<p>Improvement measured by Reduction in length of time of temporary accommodation</p>	<p>Additional cost associated with implementation of outcomes from Common Access and Assessment project. Extension of HOME model will require further Homeless funding</p>

OBJECTIVE 8

Consider a range of housing options for the chronic homeless including Housing First models and ensure they are supported into permanent accommodation as quickly as possible

What we will do now					
What will we do?	How will we do this?	Responsibility	When will we do it?/ Comments	Outcome	Funding requirements
For people with multiple needs beyond housing adopt a Housing First approach	Investigate the feasibility of the provision of additional services including Housing First in Belfast and throughout NI.	Supporting People Thematic group/ Housing solutions	Year 1	Improved provision of right type of service for chronic homelessness	No additional costs
What can be done with more resources					
For people with multiple needs beyond housing adopt a Housing First approach	Support a Housing First approach for chronic homeless individuals. Ensure Housing solutions provide clear support and exit plans for those who are experiencing chronic homelessness.	Supporting People Thematic group/ Housing solutions	Year 1 and ongoing	Improved provision of right type of service for chronic homelessness	Additional recurrent cost associated with action
Identify and implement transition arrangements to change approach and current service provisions	Ensure provision of support is flexible and interchangeable as time bound models of service delivery are not always best for this client group.	SP thematic group	Year 1 and ongoing	Improved provision of right type of service for chronic homelessness	Additional recurrent cost associated with action

OBJECTIVE 9 Promote inter-agency issues and actions required to address chronic homelessness

What we will do now					
What will we do?	How will we do this?	Responsibility	When will we do it?/ Comments	Outcome	Funding requirements
Government departments to continue working together to deal with chronic homelessness including DFC, health and justice. NIHE and Health Trusts to work collaboratively to support those that are experiencing chronic homelessness	<p>Better cross over in policies and funding across government to allow services to work collectively to provide the best support for individuals by promoting multi- agency partnerships to be addressed through Inter-Departmental Homelessness Action Plan</p> <p>Identify good practice and ensure staff across agencies have sufficient knowledge and training to ensure appropriate and timely signposting for individuals so they have access to the help they require</p>	All stakeholders	Year 1 and ongoing	Improved inter-agency working resulting in improved service for chronic homeless	No additional costs
Review homelessness legislation	<p>Review homelessness legislation.</p> <p>Review extending 28 days to 56 days as statutory requirement to deal with threatened homelessness</p> <p>Review use of priority need and other relevant legislative guidance as identified by stakeholders</p>	All stakeholders	TBC	Improved prevention service provision for chronic homeless	TBC
What can be done with more resources					
Support Investment in a multi-disciplinary working system	<p>Review multi-disciplinary team approach in Belfast</p> <p>Implement a multi -disciplinary team approach outside Belfast in other urban centres L'Derry, Newry and Ballymena</p>	All stakeholders	Year 1 and on going	Improve health and wellbeing of chronic homeless	Additional cost associated with action

OBJECTIVE 10

Ensure mechanisms in place to implement and oversee the implementation of the Chronic Homelessness Action Plan

What we will do now

What will we do?	How will we do this?	Responsibility	When will we do it?/ Comments	Outcome	Funding requirements
Link in with Homelessness Strategy governance mechanism as per objective 4	Report to various groups such as Central Homelessness Forum or HSSG as outlined in the strategy	All stakeholders represented on the various groups	Year 1 and ongoing	Improved accountability and actions	No additional costs
Link to Inter-Departmental Homelessness Action Plan for non-accommodation based issues	Link with Inter-departmental Homelessness Action Working Group	All stakeholders	Year 1	Improved service to chronic homeless	No additional costs

This document is available in alternative formats.
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