

Jobcentres to receive new £3 million fund to support homeless people

The new funding will see jobcentre staff joining outreach teams on the streets to speak to people sleeping rough, helping them to claim their benefits, find new work, secure stable accommodation and direct them to additional support.

Staff will be able to spend more time working with charities and other organisations to help people who are homeless, including those rough sleeping.

The funding will also be used to bolster projects jobcentres are already working on with various organisations, such as the Salvation Army in Cardiff, Crisis in Edinburgh and Teardrops in St Helens, to support homeless claimants.

Jobcentre staff could also be stationed in charity run day centres to advise those who use those services, but have not yet visited a jobcentre.

Minister for Welfare Delivery Will Quince said:

We are determined to help anyone experiencing homelessness, and if this means getting staff out of the jobcentre to speak to people on the street directly then we will do that.

There's a huge amount of support available to help people who are homeless, but they often don't know about the support they can access. So we're going out and taking the help to them, through outreach programmes and closer working with homelessness charities.

The work will build on the support already available from jobcentres for homeless people which includes:

- helping verify their ID to set up claims for benefits
- assisting with opening bank accounts
- pausing requirements to look for work while they find stable housing
- making regular payments to help pay for housing
- signposting to drug, alcohol and other support services

Minister for Homelessness, Luke Hall said:

As Minister for Homelessness, it's my priority to ensure that we reduce all forms of homelessness and rough sleeping.

And while our interventions are working there is still more to do. Today's announcement will mean homeless people get the support they

need to get back on their feet and find new work.

The new funding, which will be delivered in 2020 to 2021, follows on from dedicated training given to hundreds of jobcentre managers last year on how best to support homeless claimants.

It builds on the government's introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act in 2018. This sees English local authorities, public services and charities working together to actively prevent homelessness for people at risk, irrespective of whether they are a family or single person, the reason why they have been put at risk or whether, or not, they have a local connection to the area.

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Current jobcentre outreach activities include:

Cardiff

The local jobcentre has deployed an outreach worker to local homeless charities and a residential house run by the Salvation Army. They help resolve any issues with benefits, check on people who have missed appointments and teach staff about Universal Credit.

Cheshire

Chester Jobcentre has work coaches in Hamilton House, run by the charity Chester Aid to the Homeless. Work Coaches help people coming into the centre to access benefits and speak with them if there are any issues with their claim.

London

London has nine dedicated Homeless Advisers who provide outreach services in organisations across London. They help connect homeless organisations, refer homeless people to further support and assist with benefit claims.

Merseyside

St Helens Jobcentre has developed a 'Housing Hub' to help with all things housing and homelessness related in partnership with local charity, Teardrops.

Edinburgh

DWP staff join street outreach teams to build rapport with rough sleepers. Once rapport is established by the outreach worker, DWP staff will offer assistance with Universal Credit applications and on-going support.

DWP has a long established relationship with the charity Crisis. Their advisers deliver an outreach service on a weekly basis in the Edinburgh jobcentres, which includes advice and signposting. A third of referrals to Crisis are from DWP.

The latest homeless support funding was allocated to DWP as part of the 2019 Spending Round process. On December 23 2019, the Prime Minister announced £263 million of funding for local authorities to support people who are homeless or at risk of losing their homes.

The funding will empower councils across England to provide the best services for local needs, helping those experiencing homelessness in their area to improve their lives and get back on their feet. Councils can use the funding to employ specialists to provide practical advice to vulnerable people to help ensure they are meeting their rent payments, as well as helping them to find long-term stable accommodation.

Last year, the Department for Work and Pensions developed training for jobcentre Customer Service Managers with guidance from expert organisations, including Crisis, Homeless Link and Shelter. The training is aimed at ensuring people experiencing homelessness, and those at risk of becoming homeless, get access to all relevant services offered by the department.

As part of this, managers also act as a point of contact for partner homelessness organisations in their local area, focusing on building relationships with them and ensuring people are signposted appropriately to additional, expert support.

The government is committed to increasing the supply of social housing and has made £9 billion available through the Affordable Homes Programme to March 2022 to deliver approximately 250,000 new affordable homes of a wide range of tenures, including social rent.

This government introduced the Homelessness Reduction Act, the most ambitious legislative reform in decades, in 2018. This sees English local authorities, public services and charities working together to actively prevent homelessness for people at risk, irrespective of whether they are a family or single person, the reason why they have been put at risk or whether, or not, they have a local connection to the area.

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