

# Landmark legislation helping people at risk of homelessness

- Nearly a quarter of a million people at risk of homelessness or homeless helped since 2018
- People getting help who would not have had access to help before
- Those at risk supported by councils, as well as other public bodies

Nearly a quarter of a million people who were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless have been helped to keep their home or into longer term accommodation, a report on the Homelessness Reduction Act published today (25 September 2020) has found.

The review of the Homelessness Reduction Act, which was brought into law in April 2018, has found 243,680 people have had their homelessness prevented or relieved.

The Act placed a duty on councils to try to prevent homelessness and a duty on public bodies to refer people at risk of homelessness, flagging those most vulnerable to homelessness and rough sleeping so they could receive support.

Since the introduction of the Act, 365,000 single households (almost two thirds of the total number of households), including 28,000 people with a history of rough sleeping and over 15,000 people who were rough sleeping at the time of the assessment, have been assessed as owed help to prevent or relieve their homelessness.

This means the Act is meeting its goal of helping people who previously wouldn't have had access to support.

The review of the Act has also provided feedback on where further work is needed, including on administration, data collection and joint working. Working with dedicated professionals, the government is determined to address these issues and meet their commitment to fully enforce the Act.

The Act is part of the government's landmark commitment – backed by over half a billion pounds to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping over 2020 to 2021 – to break the cycle of homelessness and end rough sleeping for good.

Measures also include the [Next Steps Accommodation Programme](#), which funds local authorities and their partners to prevent people from returning to the streets, and the fast-tracking 6,000 additional homes for former rough sleepers across the country.

The government has also put in place an unprecedented package of support for renters, with an eviction ban for six months, and we have changed the law to increase notice periods to 6 months so most renters now served notice can stay in their homes over winter.

Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing Kelly Tolhurst MP said:

The action that this government is taking to support the most vulnerable people in our society has helped nearly a quarter of a million people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness to find long term accommodation.

The Homelessness Reduction Act is working well, with councils supporting the most vulnerable, meaning many more people who may not previously have been eligible for support now have the help they need.

This government is committed to ending rough sleeping for good by the end of this Parliament, and we've backed this up with over half a billion pounds of funding this year alone.

The government is providing £4.8 billion councils to help councils to manage the impacts of COVID-19 which includes their work to support homeless people. This also includes £3.7 billion which is not ringfenced and over £1.1 billion specifically to support social care providers. This is part of a package of over £28 billion which the government has committed to support local areas, with funding going to councils, businesses and communities.

## **Case studies**

### **Southwark Council:**

As a result of the Homelessness Reduction Act the early intervention and prevention services have improved. This has included developing more provision for single people and households with no dependants. For example, during year one of the act being enforced, Southwark developed a singles procurement pathway.

Collaborative and increased partnership working with the third sector and in-house departments has improved; Shelter and Solace Women's Aid provide independent housing advice and advocacy from the Southwark Housing Solutions service office.

### **Medway Council:**

In terms of outcomes, prior to the Act Medway Council was already actively pursuing a prevention and relief approach. However, the extra financial resources made available to ensure the successful implementation of the Act have enabled us to invest primarily in an increase in staff for our Housing Options Service. Extra staffing resource has enabled Medway to focus more effort on prevention/relief work to those who are homeless or at threat of homelessness at the earliest possible stage. As a consequence, Medway has

significantly increased the numbers of successful preventions and reliefs.

## **Additional information**

- The government has made clear that no one should be without a roof over their head, which is why we have committed to end rough sleeping within this Parliament. The work of the Rough Sleeping Taskforce further demonstrates our commitment to supporting the most vulnerable in society.
- We have provided £4.8 billion to help councils to manage the impacts of COVID-19, which includes their work to support homeless people, including £3.7 billion which is not ringfenced, and over £1.1 billion specifically to support social care providers.
- Also, we have accelerated plans – backed by £433 million over the next four years – which will deliver 6,000 additional homes for former rough sleepers across the country.
- On 18 July, we launched the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP). This makes available the financial resources needed to support local authorities and their partners to prevent these people from returning to the streets. The NSAP is made up of two sources of funding: £161 million to deliver 3,300 units of longer term move-on accommodation within the next 12 months (part of the £433 million total); and on 17 September we announced the allocation of £92million of funding to pay for interim support to ensure that people do not return to the streets.
- We are supporting these efforts as part of our landmark commitment – backed by over half a billion pounds this year – to break the cycle of homelessness and end rough sleeping for good.
- This government implemented the Homelessness Reduction Act, the most ambitious reform to homelessness legislation in decades, which placed new duties on local housing authorities to take reasonable steps to try to prevent and relieve a person's homelessness. These new duties apply irrespective of whether a person has 'priority need' or may be regarded as being 'intentionally homeless'.
- See more information on the [HRA Review](#)