

PREVENTION REVIEW GROUP – 18 NOVEMBER 2019

Minute of meeting

Present:

Chair: Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick (Heriot-Watt University)

Members: Matt Downie (Crisis), Cllr Elena Whitham (East Ayrshire Council / COSLA), John Mills (Fife Council / ALACHO), Sally Thomas (SFHA), Callum Chomczuk (CIH), Maggie Brunjes (Homeless Network Scotland), Ruth Whatling (Scottish Government), Kathy Cameron (COSLA).

In attendance: Jess Husband (Shelter Scotland, for Gordon MacRae), Dr Peter Mackie (Cardiff University), Francesca Albanese (Crisis), Beth Reid (Crisis), Judith Chisholm (Crisis)

Apologies: Professor Tom Mullen, (University of Glasgow), Susanne Millar (Glasgow City HSCP), Gordon MacRae (Shelter Scotland)

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed the members to the inaugural meeting of the Prevention Review Group.

2. Terms of reference and ways of working

The Chair highlighted the terms of reference for the group in particular that the Group has been convened to take forward the recommendation in the Scottish Government's Homelessness Action Plan to: *"work with public bodies, housing providers and other partners to develop a new duty on local authorities, wider public bodies and delivery partners for the prevention of homelessness."*

The Group's task is to develop recommendations to the Scottish Government for a legal duty or duties on Scottish local authorities and crucially wider public bodies to prevent homelessness. It is also within the Group's remit to provide advice on how to ensure the recommendations are successfully implemented.

The Group's membership seeks to capture all key stakeholders' views for homelessness policy and practice using a collaborative approach. The work is trying to be as inclusive as possible with opportunities for those with lived experience and frontline experience and wider stakeholders to contribute to the work of the Group.

3. Schedule of meetings

- **Working group meetings:** the Group has seven meetings scheduled to cover various themes around prevention for both housing and homelessness bodies and wider public bodies. The Group will publish recommendations to the Housing Minister in Summer 2020.
- **Preparatory consultations with stakeholders:** for each theme there will be a preparatory consultation meeting with stakeholders. The Group will have the opportunity to frame questions or themes for each of those meetings. Invitations are designed to be as representative and as inclusive as possible. It is recognised that not all stakeholders will be able to attend meetings and there will be alternative ways to contribute views, for example in 1-2-1 meetings, or in writing. The Group were provided with a schedule of those meetings. **Action:** the Group to provide details of contacts or bodies that they consider should be represented at those meetings.
- **Lived experience and frontline input:** Homeless Network Scotland have been commissioned to deliver a method to enable the Group to be informed by lived and frontline experience.

This will involve inviting around 12 applicants to make up an expert commission shadowing the Prevention Review Group, including overlapping meetings with the Review Group. The commission will be as representative as possible of the range of themes and pathways to inform and test the work against on-the-ground experience.

There was discussion of how this Group fits in with the other work in the sector, including Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans or other pathway work, for example, care leavers. Noted that the remit of this group is clear but **ACTION:** to develop a map of other elements of Scottish Government work in the Homelessness Unit for awareness.

4. Presentations – context and the legislation in England and Wales

- **Five-fold classification of homelessness prevention:** Suzanne Fitzpatrick presented to the group on the five-fold classification of homelessness prevention (as per published slide and briefing). It was clarified that this piece of work is mainly focused on the following types of homelessness prevention:
 - “targeted prevention” for those at high risk (for example people in high risk groups, or people facing high risk transitions such as leaving a prison or other institution)
 - “crisis prevention” for those at imminent risk of homelessness – often considered as the next two monthsIt is not addressing “universal” prevention work, such as poverty prevention, measures to tackle housing supply or the welfare safety net, nor “emergency” or “recovery” prevention which are being taken forward in other ways (e.g. Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans). However, it may be appropriate to consider more “upstream” measures such as homelessness directly linked to poverty or adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in some cases.
- **Legislation in Wales:** Dr Peter Mackie provided the Group with an overview of the legislation in Wales, and how it has been implemented. (slides attached).
- **Legislation in England:** Francesca Albanese provided the Group with an overview of the legislation in England, and how it has been implemented and its impact since its introduction. (slides attached)
- **Efficacy of prevention in Scotland currently, involvement of wider public bodies:** Beth Reid (Crisis) presented on how the prevention duty is currently working, and identified some of the current issues and challenges. (slides and briefing attached)

5. Next theme: duties on housing and homelessness bodies

The key issues identified were: that the structure of Scottish homelessness legislation causes a tension with a prevention agenda; the nature and status of reasonable steps to prevent homelessness are not clear; actions to prevent someone losing their home within 56 days of homelessness is sometimes viewed as ‘gatekeeping’ (including by the Regulator); and the effectiveness of any prevention work that takes place within the statutory framework is not clearly recorded.

The Group identified themes and questions for the preparatory consultation group of housing and homelessness bodies and were asked to consider invite list for that meeting. (themes and questions attached)

Action : Crisis to issue invitations for the stakeholder group and to compile an agenda for that meeting including the themes and questions identified by the Group to explore.

6. Next meeting

The next meeting is on 16 December at which the Group, based on the views of the commission of frontline and lived experience, and the stakeholders, will consider, develop and sign off on recommendations relating to what a legal duty should look like for housing and homelessness bodies.