

#prioritiseprevention



prioritise prevention

Homeless Network Scotland Conference Report 2019

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we are all in

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**Homeless
Network
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Connect, Learn and Act on Homelessness to help end it for good.

prioritise prevention

five key points from the day



Our homelessness prevention efforts will be most effective if weighted in favour of proactive, early intervention and away from crisis and emergency prevention. Creating a culture of partnership where homelessness prevention is everyone's business and not somebody else's job is key to success.



Scotland is well placed to learn from experiences in other parts of the UK to design and implement a new homelessness prevention duty that supports the public sector to orient their staff and services in favour of early intervention and prevention, while avoiding some of the challenges experienced in England and Wales.



Homelessness prevention strategies should be firmly based on the evidenced link between poverty and place, as well as rooted in an understanding of early years development and Adverse Childhood Experiences.



Using our existing data sources to develop an intelligence-led approach to homelessness prevention to identify and respond to homelessness risk is central to prioritising prevention.



Shifting our commissioning approach to focusing on building positive relationships rather than responding to people's problems has a significant role to play in homelessness prevention.



“Say someone is good at something and it can change their life”

Stuart Cosgrove

prioritise prevention

This year's annual homelessness conference focused on the theme of Prioritise Prevention with 250 people attending to consider how we best shift our collective efforts to prevent rather than respond to homelessness.

Welcome from the Chair

Stuart Cosgrove, broadcaster and author, warmly welcomed delegates from all over Scotland. Starting the day with an important message Stuart reminded us that with the significant political commitment around ending homelessness in Scotland we have a real opportunity to come together to ensure that early action becomes our priority.

The prevention framework

Universal prevention

preventing homelessness risk across the population as a whole. Including poverty reduction, affordable housing, security of tenure, employment and adequate welfare benefits.

Targeted prevention

early intervention focusing on those at the highest risk of future homelessness e.g. people leaving prison, young people leaving care.

Crisis prevention

working with people threatened with homelessness within the next 2 months.

Emergency prevention

working with people at urgent risk of homelessness e.g. of sleeping rough that night.

Recovery prevention

working with people who have previously been homeless to prevent the experience being repeated.





“Speaking to a group of young people with experience of trauma I was asked whether I would live the same life again. I answered that I would, but that I don’t want you to live it”

Keynote: Mind the Gap

David Ramsay

Homeless Network Scotland

By taking the conference through his photo album, David shared his experience of homelessness, which was illustrated as the “gap” in his life story with no photos in the album. To prioritise prevention we need a collective focus on ensuring we don’t continue to miss opportunities to avoid these gaps in people’s lives where connections to family and community are easily broken.

For David, services and staff showing faith in him and offering positive opportunities were important factors in building trust and hope. Reminding us that while people can and do recover from homelessness, we can do better and stop it from happening in the first place.

Two-way Q&A with the Minister

Kevin Stewart MSP

Minister for Local Government, Planning and Housing

Kevin Stewart MSP recognised the importance of homelessness prevention in Scotland, describing it as “the core of everything we are trying to achieve.”

Launching a Prevention Duty Review Group, chaired by Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick and supported by Crisis, work will begin in the coming weeks to consider options for legislating to ensure that local authorities and other public bodies can successfully prevent homelessness.

And to complement legislative change, practical approaches to homelessness prevention are crucial components of each local authority’s Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.

A two-way Q&A between the Minister and conference delegates covered an important range of issues including:

- the introduction of Universal Prevention measures to reduce poverty such as the extension of free childcare across the country and the forthcoming Child Payment
- targeted prevention measures such as the exemption of care leavers from council tax to improve tenancy sustainment rates for people at increased risk of homelessness
- strengthening Recovery Prevention by ensuring cross departmental funding to support the upscaling of Housing First and legal changes to the Unsuitable Accommodation Order to reduce the negative impact of temporary accommodation on families with children, seeking to reduce future homelessness risk.



“We cannot underestimate prevention... prevention is at the core of everything we want to achieve”

Kevin Stewart MSP

In Conversation with...

Panellists brought their ideas, perspectives and questions to the discussion about how we can improve our approach to Universal Prevention in Scotland.

Sir Harry Burns

Professor of Global Health,
University of Strathclyde

Bill Scott

Chair, Poverty and Inequality Commission

Celeste Singleton

GHIFT at Homeless Network Scotland

David Signorini

Deputy Director Better Homes Division,
Scottish Government

Zhan McIntyre

Policy Lead,
Scottish Federation of Housing Associations

- We need a method for preventing homelessness that is rooted in early years development, recognises that people's lives and experiences are not linear and is always adaptive.
- Tackling poverty is crucial through measures such as ensuring Local Housing Allowance rates cover the costs of renting in the PRS.
- Our approaches need to be rooted in trust, compassion and care – putting people at the centre of everything we do.
- The supply of affordable housing across the country is critical in our homelessness prevention strategies, as is working closely with housing associations based in communities all across the country.
- We need to get better at joining up our intelligence, perspectives and data to be able to better identify and respond to risk.

“We have to solve the problem of housing, or the other three pillars of welfare will collapse”

Bill Scott





**“Invite us, listen to us,
involve us in making
decisions”**

Celeste Singleton



**“proceed till
apprehended and just
do the right thing”**

Harry Burns

Prevention Showcase A



A Way Home – preventing youth homelessness

Sabrina Galella
Rock Trust

A Way Home Scotland (AWHS) is a national coalition set up to prevent, reduce and end youth homelessness, moving away from a crisis-based approach to earlier prevention. Sabrina highlighted unique challenges faced by young people who have not yet developed the practical skills to live independently and the emotional skills to handle difficult circumstances.

Work is currently underway through the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group to develop prevention pathways for young people entering or leaving prison or care, and young people from LGBTQ community.

Legal Duty to Prevent

Neil Morland,
Neil Morland Co.

The Scottish Government and COSLA Ending Homelessness Together High Level Action Plan commits partners to developing a new legal duty on local authorities, wider public bodies and delivery partners for the prevention of homelessness. Neil Morland outlined learning from the statutory homelessness prevention approaches taken in England and Wales to inform options for Scotland, considering:

- the different prevention and relief duties in English and Welsh legislation
- the different approaches taken to the duty to provide information, advice and assistance
- duties on public bodies to refer cases to local housing departments
- the implementation of a duty to cooperate.

Key learning to inform the newly established working group to develop a public sector homelessness prevention duty includes the improvements in partnership working and realignment of services towards prevention, as well as related bureaucratic, funding and IT challenges.

Preventing Evictions in the Private Rented Sector

Laura Haining & Claire Miller
Action for Children

Laura and Claire shared the experiences of Action for Children in trying to overcome barriers young people often face when experiencing homelessness, including unrecognised trauma, perceived stigma from peers and a lack of trust in authority.

With a focus on preventing homelessness, work has been undertaken with S4 school pupils in Dundee to talk about housing and consider the pros and cons of living at home to support people to make informed decisions about their futures.

Measuring Prevention

Stina Jonsson, Eilidh Morrisey & Dave Russell
Centre for Homelessness Impact



Stina, Eilidh and Dave outlined the SHARE framework that focuses on the five strategies, based on the best available evidence, that are most likely to achieve better outcomes for people.

The workshop provided an opportunity for participants to co-create the Homelessness Prevention indicators that will be measured and reported to show our progress in preventing homelessness.

<https://www.homelessnessimpact.org/share>



Community & Connections

Robin Wallace & Jim Barclay
Simon Community Scotland

Simon Community Scotland place positive relationships at the heart of their work in recovery, rehabilitation and prevention.

One recent development, in partnership with the local authorities in Glasgow and Renfrewshire, has been to design and implement a Shared Tenancy project that sees two people live together in a supported tenancy to prevent or move on from homelessness while ensuring a focus on building positive relationships, resilience and aspiration.

Veterans and their Families

Rachel Tribble
SSAFA

Glasgow's Helping Heroes (GHH) launched a tenancy sustainment programme in 2018, funded by Nationwide Community Foundation, to support 27 veteran households to sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness.

20 households so far have received support for six months with 17 continuing to sustain their tenancy and the other three choosing to move house.

Project learning has identified the specific issues that need to be taken into account for preventing veteran homelessness, including the impact of being stationed abroad and difficulties faced upon discharge from the armed forces.



Prevention Showcase B



**Martin Boyle and
Suzanne Fitzpatrick**

Hard Edges Scotland Silos and Disadvantage

Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick

Heriot-Watt University

Martin Boyle

GHIFT at Homeless Network Scotland

Professor Fitzpatrick outlined the key findings of the Hard Edges Scotland research project, including:

- 5,600 people in Scotland experience homelessness, substance misuse and offending over the course of a year
- Single white men aged 20-40 are the most likely to experience severe and multiple disadvantage (SMD)
- Routes into SMD are most commonly poverty, violence and trauma
- Opportunities to identify risk and prevent situations escalating are routinely missed by the range of services working with people.

Complementing the main research findings, Martin shared his experience of participating in Hard Edges Scotland and how it resonated with his own life. From not being safe at home as a child, to 27 years spent in a cycle of addictions, prison and homelessness as an adult until a positive experience while on a Drug Treatment and Testing Order created a real opportunity for positive change.

Martin described the importance of the relationship and two-way trust built up with the judge through monthly meetings in allowing him to begin to build a sense of self-worth and hope for the future. The consistency of the social workers and judge meant not having to continually repeat his story and revisit the trauma, creating space for him to 'stop running away from himself' and start thinking about a better future.

Staying In

Michelle Major

Homeless Network Scotland

Emma Soanes

Unity Enterprise

Emma and Michelle launched Staying In, Scotland's first place-based approach to homelessness prevention that looks to build community responses and protect the many positive relationships and connections that can be broken if people have to leave their communities as a result of homelessness.

Focusing on the Gorbals and Pollok in Glasgow, Staying In will bring together local expertise with a dedicated budget to test community based approaches to preventing homelessness, testing what works and what doesn't at a local level.

Alongside Disabled and Older People

Jil Dyson & Olivia Lindsay

Housing Options Scotland

Housing Options Scotland is a national housing and advice service that helps disabled people, older people and members of the armed forces community to find the right home in the right place.

Their work has highlighted a gap in information and support designed specifically for people over the age of 50 who often place a premium on protecting their dignity and independence. Housing Options Scotland focus on personalisation, relationship building, transparency and proactivity in their work to achieve high levels of success with older people. The 'Housing Buddy' volunteer programme is also delivering support to people across Scotland to tackle loneliness and isolation through the building of strong social support networks.

If you are a current or ex housing professional interested in volunteering with Housing Options Scotland, please contact ben@housingoptionsscotland.org.uk

Finding a Better Frame

Francesca Albanese & Camille Furtado

Crisis

How we choose to talk about homelessness matters. As does the way we frame our communications. Our communications tend to focus on individual and personal circumstances rather than the larger economic factors that increase the incidence of homelessness, such as the unemployment rate, low pay and lack of wage increases.

And our continued communication about responding to rather than preventing homelessness contributes to general belief that homelessness is inevitable and the best solutions are beds for the night and hot meals.

Changing the way we frame our communications to focus on the drivers of homelessness can help shift our collective emphasis onto creating the best universal conditions for prevention.





Getting Alongside People

Paul Stevenson

Bethany Christian Trust

Taking a strength-based approach is at the heart of the work of Bethany Christian Trust and crucial to homelessness prevention.

Communities all across Scotland – including those described as deprived or challenged – are full of people with connections, skills and assets. Identifying and focusing on these assets and getting alongside people in a positive way is the key to achieving good outcomes and should be at the core of our collective focus.

Prevention relies on having trusted individuals alongside people and we have for too long overlooked the members of the community who are already there.

Community Home First Approach

Sharon Freeman

Queens Cross Housing Association

Queens Cross Housing Association has built up expertise in working with vulnerable young people, reducing the risk of (repeat) homelessness.

Either as part of a therapeutic community or in independent tenancies, flexible, person-centred support is offered to young people to build a positive future.

Over 11 years they have delivered notable success including:

- no evictions or unplanned moves from tenancies
- three times more young people in education
- four times more young people in employment
- three times less people involved in criminal activity
- two times less people reporting issues with alcohol and/or drugs.



“Great to hear from the staff but more importantly from the young people using the service.”



Keynote: Learning from a local authority wide approach to homelessness prevention

Neil Munslow MBE
Newcastle City Council

Dr Beth Watts
Heriot-Watt University

Newcastle City Council has worked hard to create a partnership culture where homelessness prevention is “everyone’s business and not somebody else’s job.”

Active Inclusion Newcastle operates on the principle of supporting residents to build the foundations of a stable life.

- Somewhere to live (a home).
- An income (benefit entitlement).
- Financial inclusion (a life without excessive debt).
- Employment (inclusive growth).

An independent evaluation carried out by Heriot-Watt University identified that, by all recognised measures, Newcastle is leading the way in preventing homelessness with key factors contributing to this success including:

- visible leadership that prioritises prevention
- early intervention extending beyond statutory duties
- a focus on partnerships
- proactive policy and practice
- being data and evidence informed.

Q & A Panel

Prioritise Prevention

Dr Adam Burley

NHS Lothian/Edinburgh City Council

Neil Munslow MBE

Newcastle City Council

Dr Beth Watts

Heriot-Watt University

Councillor Elena Whitham

East Ayrshire Council & COSLA

Panellists brought their ideas, perspectives and questions to identify what needs to change for us to prioritise homelessness prevention across Scotland.

- A legal prevention duty that extends beyond housing and homelessness services is an important part of the solution
- Thinking about people before we think about systems is fundamental to prioritising prevention. Being proactive and building connections leads to greater successes;
- Genuine partnership working, shared responsibility and political commitment is crucial in sending a clear signal that preventing homelessness is everyone's business
- We need to build homelessness as an underlying consequence of poverty, absence of choice, and the need to understand this as one of many factors in the lives of people and communities.
- Start commissioning for connection rather than commissioning based on the visible symptoms of broken connections.

“The duty to prevent has to be shared by all partners round the table...”

Councillor Elena Whitham



“Most of our health services were designed by ‘healthy’ people ... madness to think someone from a more complicated background could come and engage openly with a complete stranger”



Dr Adam Burley



‘You can’t underestimate the importance of having something to look forward to and someone to look up to’

David Duke MBE



One last thing ...

David Duke MBE

Street Soccer Scotland

David Duke revisited a familiar theme of the day in describing his own experience: how a series of broken relationships and connections led to homelessness.

And when using homelessness services how ‘whoever you met first during the day’ whether someone offering you Valium, or a support worker with a positive message, shaped what your day would look like. A regular schedule of football training and positive relationship with the coach were crucial in moving forward.

“I’m a strong believer that relationships, security and purpose are key elements of a good life”

These experiences shaped the establishment of Street Soccer Scotland, an organisation that uses football to create purpose, hope and relationships to support people on their journey to security and happiness.

“Lived experience is what sets these events above all else, so humbling and thought provoking”

 Lisa Punton

“Make intelligence out of our data. We know who is at greatest risk we should be working together to intervene early and reduce risk”

 Zhan McIntyre
SFHA

