

# ALL IN FOR CHANGE

**Prevention Commission: Meeting 4 & 5**  
April & May 2020

## WHO IS THE PREVENTION COMMISSION?

The Prevention Commission is a group of people with lived and frontline experiences of homelessness who, as members of the Change Team, are motivated to drive forward the change needed to make real and lasting on-the-ground progress.

As well as people with current and recent experience of homelessness, the Prevention Commission is made up of people with frontline responsibilities in Local Authorities, Housing Associations and third sector support providers.

During the coronavirus lockdown the Commission has been meeting virtually, and for meeting 5 we were joined by Sabrina Galella from the A Way Home Scotland Coalition who led us through the recently developed Prevention Pathway for Young People Leaving Care and helped advise us on specific considerations for young people at risk of homelessness.

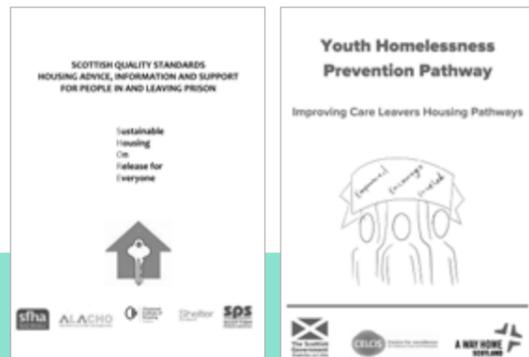


Some members of the Prevention Commission at the April meeting are (L-R) Lisa, Joyce, Claire, Shea, David, Davey

## WHAT DID WE COVER?

The Commission focused their discussions on two key areas:

1. Broader considerations about preventing homelessness for people leaving prison, hospital, or Local Authority Care; and
2. Considering how a potential No Discharge into Homelessness Duty could be implemented in practice.



The question underpinning our discussions was

**How do we shift from discharge into homelessness services being commonplace and acceptable, to a situation where people move straight into their own homes at point of discharge, bypassing homelessness services entirely unless in an emergency?**

Essentially, members of the Prevention Commission stress the importance of homelessness services as a safety net rather than default response.

## PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS FOR PEOPLE LEAVING INSTITUTIONS



### Leaving Prison

Some Commission members were already very familiar with the SHORE standards, which prioritise Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone through the delivery of high-quality information, advice, and support for people on remand or serving a short-term sentence.

It was agreed that the ambitions communicated in the SHORE standards and the pathways set out to achieve them remain positive, the key issue, as is often the case, is the resources to deliver.

Some practical considerations to prevent people being released from prison into homelessness services include:

- How to ensure that local authority housing departments and housing associations can operate as flexibly as would be needed to ensure people are released straight into their own safe, secure homes, e.g. all necessary repairs and adaptations carried out in potentially tight timescales to avoid the need for temporary accommodation.

- Solutions such as virtual viewings should be commonplace, allowing people to view and decide about the home that is on offer to them as early as possible.
- Questions about how to work best within Choice Based Lettings systems to ensure that we don't miss prevention opportunities.
- Housing First is a proven solution for people with multiple needs and earlier intervention to identify who would benefit the most while still in prison, lining up a package of housing and support at the point of release, would be a positive step forward.

## Leaving Hospital

Experience of hospital discharge protocols was more limited for members of the Prevention Commission. While it is understood that existing protocols can work well locally, they are still often built on discharge into temporary accommodation rather than to a safe, secure home.

Some practical considerations to prevent people being released from hospital into homelessness services, like the considerations for prison discharge, include:

- How to ensure that local authority housing departments and housing associations can operate as flexibly as would be needed to ensure people are released straight into their own safe, secure homes, e.g. all necessary repairs and adaptations carried out in potentially tight timescales to avoid the need for temporary accommodation.

- Solutions such as virtual viewings should be commonplace, allowing people to view and decide about the home that is on offer to them as early as possible.
- Questions about how to work best within Choice Based Lettings systems to ensure that we don't miss prevention opportunities.
- Considering the staff within health services who will be impacted by new duties, remaining mindful of not adding to the workload of clinical staff.
- Learning from interventions like the Navigator project run by the VRU in A&E departments – can models like this help quickly identify who is at risk of homelessness and triggering a rapid response.

## Leaving Care

Sabrina from A Way Home Scotland talked the members of the Commission through the prevention pathway developed for care leavers, helping us think through where legal duties would be a positive addition.

It was agreed that, while the legal and policy framework for care leavers is strong, too many care leavers still face homelessness far too often. With this gap between the legal framework and implementation in mind it is important to think carefully about where new legal duties would add real value to people's lives and not just strengthen our already strong framework.

The Prevention Commission members considered two ways in which legal duties would add value to the prevention of homelessness for care leavers:

1. A shared duty on local authority housing and social work departments to ensure that there are a range of flexible, easy access housing options available locally for care leavers to prevent the need for a homelessness application to be made.

These housing options need to consider the particular needs of young people and be flexible by allowing people to test different kinds of accommodation and change their minds about the best option for them without risking homelessness

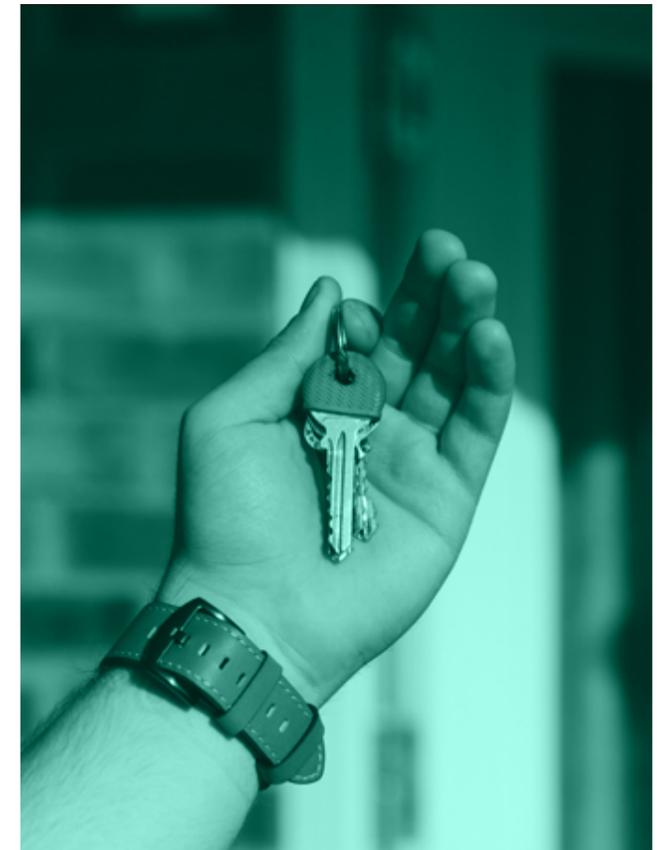
2. Changing the current rules about leaving care so that young people can stay in care until at least the age of 21, continuing to offer safety and security beyond the age of 16 and reducing the risk of homelessness.

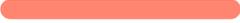


## CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE PREVENTION DUTY REVIEW GROUP

The Prevention Commission would like to see further consideration of:

- Positive choices lead to positive outcomes and it is important to think about how we ensure that potential legal duties to avoid discharge into homelessness don't force people into accepting a home that they don't want, or they don't believe meets what they need.
- The culture change required to strike the balance between recognising homelessness legislation as essential, while aiming for it to be used more as the intended safety net than a default response for too many people.
- How we continue to make the ethical case for new duties, including a potential duty of no discharge into homelessness, focusing on the benefits to the health, justice and LA Care sectors. This includes reconsidering whether the language of homelessness prevention becomes a barrier when communicating with other sectors and focusing on the positive outcomes we want to achieve while not getting immediately caught up in financial considerations.

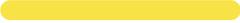




## NEXT STEPS

The Prevention Commission will meet twice more:

- once to consider prevention pathways for women and children experiencing domestic abuse, and
- a final time to review and reflect on the work of the Commission as a whole.



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