

Scottish Government £4m Fund for Preventing Homelessness 2025-26

A **Course of Action** from the
Everyone Home Collective
and All in For Change

Everyone Home is a collective of 36 academic and third sector organisations focused on housing and homelessness in Scotland. **All In For Change** is a platform for people with personal and frontline experience of homelessness to influence change.

1. Welcoming the Fund

Firstly, we welcome the Scottish Government's funding towards homelessness prevention as both a much-needed injection of resource to help toward full implementation of the policy intent behind Part 5 of the Housing Bill, as well as an important contribution to making a shift towards homelessness prevention.

While there are pockets of excellent services and responses that help every day to prevent homelessness, these are by no means the norm. And in general, much of the focus of our homelessness services are when a person is already homeless or at too late a stage to prevent homelessness.

The Housing Bill will for the first time create a statutory framework for homelessness prevention that places new duties on a range of relevant bodies. The £4m fund for prevention pilots from 2025-26 is an important opportunity to ensure that the statutory framework is robust for full implementation of the new duties, and that local practice and national policy is aligned and strengthened around the key pillars that need to be put in place to shift the housing and homelessness system towards prevention in Scotland.

First Focus: What do the Change Team say about prevention?

- Focus on **people most at risk** of homelessness and work with them to prevent it. Homelessness is predictable and we know who is most at risk.
- Focus on **points of transitions** – where people are leaving institutions or other systems like hospital, prison, care, the asylum system where homelessness is baked in to their journey.
- Focus on **data sharing rules** (GDPR) which prevent joined up services and systems and miss opportunities for prevention.

And on how funding is used:

- Focus on **making rights real** in a way that benefits people first. Don't fund innovation for innovations sake – help everyday public services to help prevent homelessness.

2. Focusing Impact of the Fund

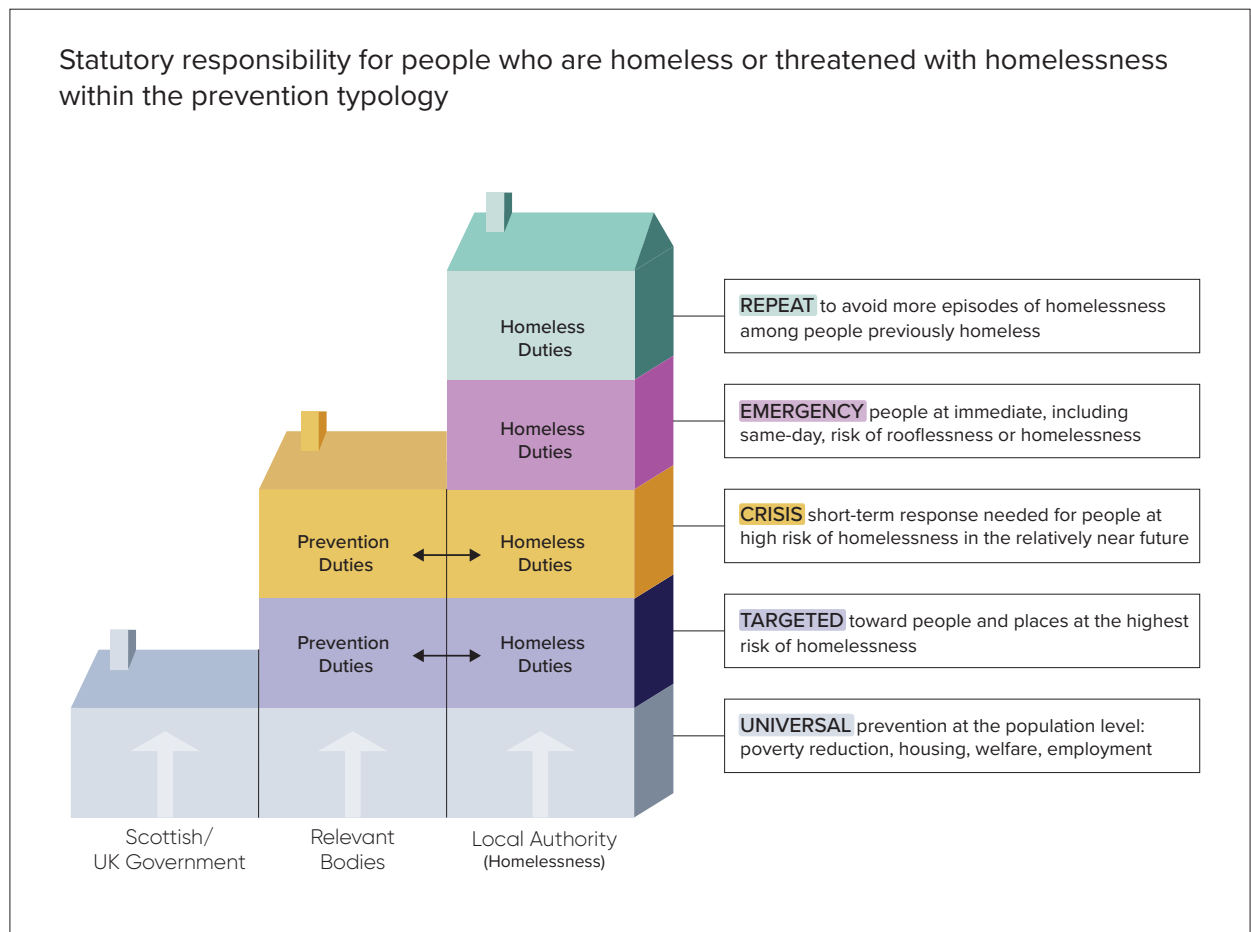
What is it for?

We propose that this funding is directed towards this overarching outcome:

Through action inquiry, relevant bodies and local partners can enable and share learning on the reasonable steps, resources, pathways, and services needed to effectively implement the 'ask and act' duties to prevent homelessness.

Who is it for?

In the 5-stage prevention typology¹, funds should be weighted towards **targeted prevention**, taking it upstream towards the people and places at the highest risk. For example, by taking a place-based approach, or to prevent homelessness as a consequence of men's violence against women and girls, or among people leaving prison or care.



¹ Advancing a Five Stage Typology of Homelessness Prevention (Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Peter Mackie, Jenny Wood) <https://researchportal.hw.ac.uk/en/publications/advancing-a-five-stage-typology-of-homelessness-prevention>

And why?

The relevant bodies will have different starting points in different areas. The fund should work in a way that assists the following learning and delivery outcomes at a local level:

Today, the relevant bodies are likely to:		By the end of this programme, partners will:
Have a mixed level of knowledge about homelessness.	<...>	Have a broad 'need to know' knowledge of the causes and consequences of homelessness.
Already undertake homelessness prevention work, whether it is recognised as that or not.	<...>	Recognise the scope of their sector's preventative work, selecting one local approach to wrap learning around.
Have a mixed level of awareness of the new duties to prevent homelessness.	<...>	Understand the modern policy direction for homelessness and where the prevention duties sit.
Have some uncertainty about which part of their sector the prevention duties will apply to.	<...>	Have identified and tested the most relevant part and shared their learning across their sector in other areas.
Have questions about how best to 'ask' about housing and homelessness.	<...>	Discover how best to ask about housing circumstances through existing functions.
Want to understand the types of reasonable steps they can take to help prevent a risk of homelessness.	<...>	Learn how to act on the information received, to prevent or mitigate risk of homelessness by using existing powers.
Be uncertain about when to refer to a local authority, nor have a clear referral route.	<...>	Establish pathway with RRTP leads to refer where necessary, not by default.

3. Defining Scope of the Fund

There is already significant experience, expertise, services and in some areas, guidance and standards (for example the SHORE standards), on effectively preventing homelessness. Each of the relevant bodies will already be undertaking homelessness preventative work in local communities, whether it is recognised as that or not. It is important that pilots are directed towards increasing, aligning and learning from what works on the ground.

Therefore, we recommend that the following approach is taken to the pilots:

Building from what works with a place-based and learning approach

A place-based approach will further enable the close observation of the very local systems and process needed to 'Ask and Act' – and to do so on a small and manageable scale for each of the relevant bodies. For best learning, this will be done alongside the frontline colleagues who will become responsible for implementing prevention duties in their day-to-day interactions with people using their services.

Taking a place-based approach would also build on the investment in the £1m Upstream Homelessness Prevention Fund for RSLs and the third sector, expanding this approach across the other relevant bodies.

We propose that funding is directed towards place-based pilots led by a relevant body, in partnership with RRTP structures within local authorities, and with at least one service provider to scale up and learn from coordinated action to prevent homelessness.

As determined by the local partners, the service provider will either (i) already be delivering an existing preventative response that is working well and which partners want to scale up and invest more capacity in; OR (ii) be able to provide a preventative response that partners have identified as a service gap in their area.

As such, the service provider may be a third sector organisation, a service that the relevant body provides or commissions, or a service that the local council's homelessness team provides or commissions.

At a local level

At a local level, it is important that each of the pilot partnerships give full consideration to the following:

- **Root causes:** Homelessness is ended with housing. But it is also more likely to be prevented when people have access to adequate income, positive social networks and good health and wellbeing. Facilitating access to advice, information and advocacy on these aspects should be core components and a cash-first approach to address material disadvantage should be threaded throughout.
- **Method:** With ambitious policy comes the risk of implementation failure, the gap between policy intent and real impact on the ground. To avoid this, a clear and stated method for the duties to be implemented will need designed into local systems and processes and frontline colleagues equipped to implement through their day-to-day interactions with people using their services.
- **Multi-agency approaches:** We know that people often do not experience a joined-up system which they can navigate easily, and which provides the support that they need at the time and way in which they need it. Coordination between organisations will not happen without adequate resourcing. The pilots can help to identify opportunities and pathways for multi-agency approaches to prevention, and local partnership models that can be replicated in other localities and relevant bodies.
- **Early intervention, targeted prevention:** Some people are at far greater risk of homelessness than others. The range of pilots should aim to reflect the circumstances that precede homelessness, and in particular, those who experience severe and multiple disadvantage due to poverty, trauma, mental ill health and substance use. There is also heightened risk of homelessness when people are discharged from hospital, prison, immigration accommodation and the care system, which can be mitigated more effectively by coordinated, targeted homelessness prevention.

At the individual level

Through testing and learning, local pilot partnerships should seek to understand:

- The housing risk facing the household.
- The protecting factors and other assets and resources the household has access to.
- What the household wants.
- What actions the household can take to prevent homelessness.
- What actions the relevant body can take to prevent homelessness.

Protecting factors that can prevent housing issues from escalating into homelessness include having access to:

- **Housing:** support to stay or to leave
- **Money:** reserves through savings and loans, formal and informal
- **Income:** through work, learning and/or benefits
- **Relationships:** support from friends and family
- **Support:** professional health and social care support
- **Information:** advice and advocacy, including legal advocacy

4. Sizing the Fund

An effective fund would identify and mobilise a range of pilots across different localities and targeted interventions which would provide the ability to test and learn effectively.

Careful consideration should be given to ensuring that each pilot is directly informed by a diversity of lived experience of those at the sharpest edge of the housing emergency. This includes informing the detailed shaping of the funding criteria, as well as to how each pilot is designed and delivered.

At least one, ideally two pilots for each of the relevant bodies would be mobilised, whereby individual pilot budgets would range between approximately £300-600k.

5. Embedding Learning in the Fund

We propose that the Scottish Government commission an experienced learning partner who will undertake an evaluation of the pilots and implement ongoing learning structures throughout the pilots. This will help to ensure that the full range of learning from this programme is drawn out and, importantly, shared across other areas in a way that maximises understanding and take up. In turn, this will provide a very firm foundation for the introduction of the duties in the following period.

In particular, evaluation and ongoing learning from the pilots must provide clarity around the reasonable steps that relevant bodies should take to 'ask and act' on homelessness, to directly inform upcoming statutory guidance and/or regulations. We recommend that particular consideration is given to the structure, evaluation and reporting from these pilots to the Scottish Government to ensure this specific output.

Learning from the pilots can also inform:

- The local pathways, connections and resources required for ensuring a 'no wrong door' approach to prevention of homelessness.
- The range of services that are required at local level to ensure that those most at risk of homelessness are given the support they need.
- Alignment of the services, resource, and local decision-making strategies to implement 'Ask and Act' duties fully.
- The mechanisms and organisations necessary to sequence, cost, target, and time the local actions needed to implement these responsibilities.
- Key local or national policy changes that would mitigate the risk of homelessness.



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