

Issue 118 June 2017

What's new?	1
Article	2
LGBT+ housing and advice services	
Article	4
Estate regeneration	
Feature	7
London Councils' STAR partnership	
Feature	8
Housing First Manchester	
Leaflet	10
Prisoners: housing on release	

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Housing matters

Housing matters is produced by Shelter for the NHAS and aims to provide a source of up-to-date housing and homelessness news, focus on important case law, cover key legal issues, and produce information for public use.

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Housing matters welcomes contributions from NHAS members. If you would like to provide an article or update for *Housing matters* please email

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National Homelessness Advice Service

The National Homelessness Advice Service (NHAS) is a partnership between Shelter and Citizens Advice funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

The service aims to prevent homelessness and remedy other housing problems through increasing public access to high-quality housing advice in England, including online information on the NHAS website at www.nhas.org.uk

The NHAS provides the following to local authorities, local citizens advice and around 100 other advice agencies in England:

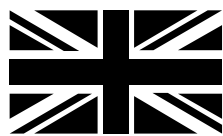
- a national telephone housing advice consultancy service for local authorities, local citizens advice and around 100 other advice agencies in England. Call **0300 330 0517** 9am–6pm, Monday to Friday, or send in an enquiry using the online enquiry form available on the members' areas of www.nhas.org.uk
- housing debt casework - specialist support for cases relating to mortgage arrears and other problems with housing affordability, including welfare benefits issues. Call **0300 330 0517** or use the online enquiries form (see above for details)
- free basic housing advice training courses to develop housing advice skills, covering the main housing advice presenting issues and how to advise households effectively on homelessness prevention options
- written briefings, articles in *Housing matters* and *Adviser*, information on housing issues and other written materials
- support in the implementation of new homeless prevention initiatives.

Contact details

For more information about NHAS training, please email JoanneK@shelter.org.uk or call **0344 515 1676**.

For general enquiries about the NHAS service, please email nhas@shelter.org.uk or call **0344 515 2268**.

Alternatively, please use the 'contact us' page at www.nhas.org.uk



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What's new?

Children and Social Work Act 2017

The Children and Social Work Act 2017, which received Royal Assent on 27 April 2017, provides a legislative framework to support reforms in children's social care set out in the 2016 Government policy paper [Putting Children First](#). Once implemented, the new Act, amongst other changes, will:

- introduce seven key needs (collectively known as corporate parenting principles) which local authorities must have regard to when they carry out any function in relation to looked after children and care leavers. They include encouraging looked after children and care leavers to express their views, and promoting high aspirations
- require local authorities to publish information about services for care leavers and any other local authority services in relation to health, relationships and accommodation (to be known as a 'local offer for care leavers')
- extend the duty to prepare a pathway plan and provide a personal adviser to include care leavers who are 'former relevant children' even if they do not want to follow a course of education or training
- bring in a new regulator for social work in England as part of a number of reforms to the training and professional standards of social work professionals.

The legislation and explanatory notes are available on legislation.gov.uk

Support for mortgage interest (SMI)

From from 18 June 2017, the standard interest rate used to calculate SMI and the housing costs element of universal credit for owner occupiers will be 2.61 per cent, reduced from 3.12 per cent.

Details can be found on Gov.uk

Welfare Reform Act regulations

On 26 April 2017, the Government published a [page on Gov.uk](#) containing links and brief explanations of every regulation and order relating to the Welfare Reform Act 2012.

The information is grouped according to the subject matter of the secondary legislation – for example, disability benefits, housing costs, fraud and overpayments.

Shared ownership – new charter

On 26 April 2017, the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) launched a new [shared ownership charter](#). CIH says that the charter is 'a flexible framework' for housing associations that aims to improve procedures around buying, owning and selling a shared ownership home. It also aims to raise the profile of shared ownership and use clearer language to allow 'customers' to make more informed decisions.

Supported housing – future funding

Following a joint inquiry by the House of Commons Select Committees for Work and Pensions, and the Department for Communities and Local Government into the future funding of supported housing, the concluding [report](#) expresses concern that current funding proposals are unlikely to achieve the Government's objective of protecting and boosting the supply of supported housing. Recommendations in the report include creating a separate funding mechanism for refugees.

East London Womens Project (ELWP)

ELWP provides shared, supported accommodation for single women survivors of domestic abuse who can't live in a main-stream refuge due to their support needs. ELWP is delivered by St Mungo's, Praxis and AVA and is located in East London. One bedspace is reserved for women with no recourse to public funds. Referrals are welcome for lesbian, bisexual and trans women. For details, email margaret.williams@elhp.org.uk

Homelessness Reduction Act: free webinars

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 will introduce new homelessness prevention duties on local authorities in England, similar to those already in force in Wales. The Act is expected to come into force in April 2018. The Homelessness Code of Guidance will also be updated.

Homeless Link ran a webinar to give an overview of the key provisions in the Act, and to discuss what the changes will mean specifically for single homeless people. A recording of the webinar can be found on [Homeless Link's website](#)

NHAS has scheduled a number of webinars on the Act between July to September 2017. Details of these and other NHAS webinars, can be found on the [NHAS website](#)

Housing advice and services for LGBT+

In this article, Michael Nastari explains the need for LGBT+ specific housing advice and services, and reviews the work that Stonewall Housing is doing in this area.

Michael Nastari is Director of Services at Stonewall Housing.

Stonewall Housing is a specialist housing advice and support provider working with and for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans¹ people as well as those who identify as another gender or sexual minority (LGBT+).

With legislative changes around equality, some people may argue there is no longer a need for LGBT+ specific services. However, two out of three people who approach Stonewall Housing for advice state that their housing problem is directly related to their sexual orientation or gender identity. For example, LGBT+ people often have housing needs arising from issues including family breakdown, community safety, landlord harassment and antisocial behaviour.

Stonewall Housing services

Mainstream agencies tend not to have an in-depth understanding of LGBT+ needs and how to make service users feel safe and accepted regarding their sexual orientation or gender identity. For these reasons, therefore, LGBT+ people might not make the most of these services, or avoid them altogether.

Stonewall Housing is uniquely placed to work with LGBT+ people in housing need. We work with a broad range of users from young people to families and older people.

We provide, either alone or in partnership with other agencies:²

- housing support for LGBT+ people in their own homes
- supported housing for young LGBT+ people
- mental health support and advocacy for young LGBT+ people
- free, confidential housing advice for LGBT+ people of all ages through a telephone advice line and drop-ins
- extensive advocacy work to improve the experiences of older people in care homes and other residential settings.

We also research and campaign for LGBT+ housing rights, so that all LGBT+ people can feel safe and secure in their homes.

Mental health

Poor mental health is a significant and increasing issue for LGBT+ people. Almost a quarter of our service users describe themselves as having a mental health disability (as a primary disability). Many more describe themselves as depressed, anxious and isolated or lonely. Suicidal thoughts and attempts are common as is self-harm through cutting, over/under-eating or other self-destructive behaviours. LGBT+ people often have strained family dynamics meaning that there is a lack of a support structure for them to fall back on. Benefit sanctions, debt, and food/fuel poverty are key stress issues for LGBT+ communities.

Young people

Over the past four years the number of young people approaching us for support with a wide range of often complex issues has more than doubled. Of the young people who used our service during the previous quarter:

- 40% were sofa surfing
- 20% were rough sleeping.
- 27% had local safety issues
- 59% had a health and/or wellbeing issue
- 73% had relationship or family issues
- 13% were fleeing domestic violence
- 81% were from a minority ethnic background
- 100% had at least three protected characteristics.³

Stonewall Housing provides supported accommodation for 41 young LGBT+ people in England.⁴

We support young people in their homes, and help them through statutory services such as making a homeless application.

Older people

For a number of years now Stonewall Housing has been working with older LGBT+ people. A report by the LGBT Foundation into housing for older people in Manchester⁵ indicated higher levels of loneliness, fear and isolation amongst LGBT older people.

Discrimination in existing accommodation has highlighted a desire among some for affordable and accessible LGBT+ specific accommodation where people can be open about their identity in later life.

There are still no specialist housing schemes for older LGBT+ people.⁶ Despite some providers improving their practice, older LGBT+ people are still uncertain about what they can expect from providers and fear they may have to conceal their sexuality or gender identity in order to feel safe.

In February 2017, Manchester City Council, with the support of Stonewall Housing, the LGBT Foundation, and the Homes and Communities Agency announced their intention to respond to this need, whilst learning from similar projects across the world. They will be building the first LGBT+ majority (minimum 51%), extra care housing scheme for older people.

Trans people

Trans people face a number of specific issues in terms of housing. Many trans people, especially transfeminine⁷ identifying people, face economic disadvantage through issues such as discrimination in the employment market. As such, many of the trans people who access our services rely on the welfare system, and as the majority are under 35 years old they are subject to the local housing allowance (LHA) shared accommodation rate. Living in shared housing presents significant challenges in terms of safety.

Stonewall Housing runs a trans-specific advice service with [CliniQ](#), the sexual health and well-being service for trans people, their partners and friends. We also run a trans-specific housing project in partnership with St Mungo's. Contact us for details.

Asylum Seekers

LGBT+ people are at a significant risk in many areas of the world⁸ and this may lead to more LGBT+ people applying for asylum in the UK. A recent report highlighted some concerns for LGBT+ people in our asylum system, focusing on those being held in detention.⁹ UK detention offers little sanctuary for LGBT+ people from abuse.

LGBT+ detainees are often denied access to medication, such as HIV drugs, and staff are ill-equipped to meet the needs of LGBT+ people or to protect them from harassment from fellow detainees. We would like to expand our work in this area.

Partnership work

Stonewall Housing has long recognised that there is a lot to do and that we can't do it alone. Strong partnerships are at the heart of our work. In order to effectively tackle homelessness, we need to be able to find a solution to the wider issues – such as domestic abuse, family breakdown, debt and/or unemployment.

Partnerships allow LGBT+ specific services to be embedded into mainstream provision. Service users win by receiving a holistic service and the partners win by recognising and playing to each other's strengths.

L&Q Housing Association

With the landscape for housing, advice and support changing rapidly, Stonewall Housing has undergone a remodelling programme. By working in partnership with L&Q we have secured the investment we need to put our organisation on a more stable footing.

LGBT Jigsaw/ London Youth Gateway

We have worked for a number of years with partners such as Galop and the Albert Kennedy Trust to support homeless LGBT+ young people facing issues such as family rejection and mental health-related issues through our [LGBT Jigsaw](#) project. This is now integrated into a wider partnership called the [London Youth Gateway](#) led by New Horizon Youth Centre.

London Councils STAR

We work with Shelter, St Mungo's and Thames Reach providing LGBT+ housing advice and support through the STAR partnership (see page 7 of this HOMAT issue).

Domestic abuse partnership

We are very proud of our work as a partner of the [London LGBT Domestic Abuse Partnership](#) (DAP), a simple but effective approach that carries a user from a free phone helpline¹⁰ through to a range of support services such as advocacy, counselling, and accommodation services.

Both LGBT Jigsaw and the DAP were recently recognised as models of best practice in a report by Trust for London¹¹ which explored unmet needs of LGBT Londoners.

Contact us

For more information on anything in this article, contact Michael Nastari, Director of Services, Michael@stonewallhousing.org

Footnotes

¹ Trans is a term used to include all transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming identities.

² Advice line **020 7359 5767** open Monday to Friday, 10am-1pm and 2-5pm; for drop-in surgeries see [Stonewall Housing website](#)

³ As defined under the Equality Act 2010.

⁴ See [Supported housing services](#) on the Stonewall Housing website

⁵ '[The State of the City Report](#)', LGBT Foundation, May 2015.

⁶ '[Building safe choices](#)', Stonewall Housing, June 2016.

⁷ Transfeminine is a term used to describe trans people who were assigned male at birth, but identify with femininity to a greater extent than with masculinity.

⁸ eg see a report of the [persecution of LGBT+ people in Chechnya](#) in the Independent newspaper

⁹ '[No safe refuge](#)', Stonewall, 2016.

¹⁰ [National LGBT Domestic Abuse Helpline 0800 999 5428](#).

¹¹ '[Still Out There: An exploration of LGBT Londoners' unmet needs](#)', Trust for London, July 2016.

Estate regeneration

In this article, Steve White gives an overview of the process a social housing landlord must go through when it wants to redevelop an estate, and the compensation and rehousing entitlement of residents.

Steve White is a trainer with the NHAS.

Much social housing is concentrated in areas of high density housing, such as blocks of flats next to each other. Typically, a local authority or housing association owns the buildings and the land in between and around. Residents' tenure may be mixed, usually between tenants and leaseholders where the right to buy has been exercised by one or more tenants in a block of flats. In addition, leaseholders may sublet to private assured shorthold tenants.

Why regenerate an estate?

Social housing estates vary enormously. Many contain property that is expensive to maintain or energy inefficient, because of its age, condition or design. Demolition and replacement may be a cheaper option in the long run than continual repairs.

Sometimes social housing estates consist of housing in low demand. Redesigning an estate of mostly one-bedroom flats could increase the number of properties and provide more units of accommodation for families, or homes that have been adapted for disabled people.

The Government has suggested that living on an estate may be a problem in itself, or lead to crime, and has earmarked £32 million in grant, and £140 million in loans to help regenerate [105 estates across England and Greater London](#).

What is regeneration?

Regeneration has been defined as the 'process of physical renewal of social housing estates through various combinations of refurbishment, investment, intensification, demolition and rebuilding'.¹

A social housing landlord will employ a private sector partner to carry out the development and building work and will work alongside the following:

- local authority (who may be the social housing provider),
- Homes and Communities Agency²
- in London, the Mayor and Greater London Authority (GLA).

To save public sector money, the partners may agree that the private sector partner is

allowed to keep and sell some of the new stock after the estate has been rebuilt. Where this happens, social and private housing may be segregated after regeneration, and social housing occupiers may not be allowed to use all the facilities, typically to avoid high service charges.

Powers to instigate regeneration of social housing estates come mainly from Part 9 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Part 7 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and/or section 17 of the Housing Act 1985.

Consultation

A social housing landlord must go through a process of consultation with residents on whether regeneration is needed, and, if so, what plans to follow.

The consultation must take place when proposals are still at a formative stage. There must be sufficient proposals for residents to consider, and adequate time must be given to allow them to respond in a meaningful way.³ Regard must be had to the public sector equality duty,⁴ [Government guidance](#)⁵ and (in London) [GLA guidance](#).⁶

It is unlawful for a social housing landlord to conduct a consultation based on several options, and then unilaterally withdraw any of the options later on.⁷

The consultation process may include:

- carrying out an equalities impact assessment
- employing consultants to increase resident engagement with the consultation process
- commissioning a stock condition survey to assess the condition of the estate
- explaining compensation and rehousing options following regeneration.

Residents may find it helpful to contact representatives of tenants' or leaseholders' associations, and attend meetings called by residents' associations to discuss the consultation process. Any challenge to the lawfulness of the consultation process, or objection to proposed redevelopment, is more likely to succeed if backed by a large group of residents.

The decision

Once consultation has ended, the social housing landlord will make a decision on redevelopment. It must 'conscientiously' take into account the views of residents.⁸ A decision which fails to do so could be challenged by way of judicial review.

Where regeneration will involve demolishing an estate or part of it, the social housing landlord will want everyone to move out. This can be achieved through, for example:

- a negotiated deal in which occupiers are offered compensation and/or rehousing in return for voluntarily moving out
- seeking possession against tenants followed by eviction
- compulsory purchase and repossession from leaseholders.

Compulsory purchase

Compulsory purchase powers allow an 'acquiring authority' (usually a local authority in estate regeneration projects) to compulsorily purchase land/interests in land where this would be in the public interest.⁹ The Secretary of State must approve a compulsory purchase order (CPO).¹⁰

A CPO must be made in accordance with statutory procedures.¹¹ The local authority must give notice of the proposals in local newspapers, and serve a prescribed form of notice (known as a 'section 12 notice') on all occupiers on the estate.¹² Objections can be made to the Secretary of State or ultimately to the High Court. If no objection is made, or the appeals fail, the CPO will be confirmed.

Following compulsory purchase, anyone remaining in occupation at the end of the process is a trespasser and can be evicted.

The process from issuing a CPO to enforcement and eviction is highly complex, but a summary can be found in the government's [Compulsory purchase and compensation booklet 1](#) on Gov.uk.

The acquiring authority must act fairly and reasonably in implementing a CPO. There is a three-year time limit in which to exercise the CPO powers, but this can be extended if the validity of the CPO is challenged.

Avoiding compulsory purchase

Social landlords usually prefer to negotiate settlements with estate residents if this can avoid them having to use compulsory purchase procedures.

The [Royal Institution of Chartered](#)

[Surveyors](#) compulsory purchase helpline on **02476 868 555** provides up to 30 minutes' free advice from an experienced chartered surveyor to a person threatened with a CPO.

Financial compensation

A residential occupier (see below for details) who is permanently displaced as a result of regeneration work may be entitled to a:¹³

- home loss payment – a fixed amount to compensate for the loss of the home that is periodically reset by the government
- disturbance payment - to cover the reasonable expenses of moving home.

Claims for compensation must be made to the social housing landlord in writing.¹⁴ The resident must have lived in the property as their only or principal home for 12 months prior to being displaced.¹⁵ Following compulsory purchase, compensation is payable by the acquiring local authority.

Outstanding rent arrears can be deducted from the total compensation due.¹⁶

An element of home loss payment can be made before the final move.

A disturbance payment may cover removal costs, legal fees, survey fees, disconnection and reconnection of utilities, the alteration of soft furnishings to fit the new property, and the cost of adapting a new home. As long as expenses are 'reasonable', there is no upper limit on the amount payable.

Occupiers are under a duty to mitigate their losses when moving, so it is advisable to get three written quotes from reliable removal companies and engage the cheapest, and keep receipts/quotes as evidence when claiming a disturbance payment.

Alternatively, use a service recommended by the local authority. Disputes about compensation are heard in the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber).

A private landlord is entitled to the market value of their property plus a 'basic loss' payment of 7.5% of the market value.

Rehousing

A social landlord only has a duty to help occupiers acquire a new home where:

- they have to move out following a CPO
- a ground for eviction that requires suitable alternative accommodation to be available is used.

AdviserNet

11.12.20.8 Compensation for clients who lose their home because of public development

Footnotes

¹ [Homes for Londoners: Draft good practice guide to estate regeneration](#), Mayor of London, December 2016.

² The HCA is the Government body that oversees social housing in England.

³ *R (Moseley) v LB Haringey* [2014] UKSC 56.

⁴ Under s.149 Equality Act 2010.

⁵ Estate regeneration – resident engagement and protection.

⁶ Draft Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration, Mayor of London December 2016.

⁷ *Bokrosova v LB Lambeth* [2015] EWHC 3386 (Admin).

⁸ *R (Moseley) v LB Haringey* [2014] UKSC 56.

⁹ The Acquisition of Land Act of 1981 and the Compulsory Purchase Act 1965.

¹⁰ under Part 9 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Part 7 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2016 or the Housing Act 1985.

¹¹ Laid down in the Compulsory Purchase Act 1965, the Acquisition of Land Act 1981 and the Housing and Planning Act 2016.

¹² ss11 and 12 Acquisition of Land Act 1981.

¹³ Part 3 Land Compensation Act 1973.

¹⁴ s.32 Land Compensation Act 1973.

¹⁵ s.29(2) Land Compensation Act 1973.

¹⁶ *Khan v LB Islington* 2000, 30 HLR 534.

¹⁷ s.39 Land Compensation Act 1973.

¹⁸ R v Bristol Corporation ex p Hendy [1974] 1 All ER 1047 CA.

¹⁹ s.41 Land Compensation Act 1973.

²⁰ s4(4) Land Compensation Act 1973; s.5 Land Compensation Act 1961.

²¹ Schedule 2 Housing Act 1988.

²² s.29(1)(d) and s.32(6) Land Compensation Act 1973.

²³ s.11 Housing Act 1988.

²⁴ Housing Act 1985.

²⁵ [‘Social housing: the end of ‘lifetime’ tenancies in England?’](#) House of Commons Library Briefing Paper, 27 May 2016.

²⁶ s.29(2)(b) Land Compensation Act 1973.

²⁷ s.29(4) Land Compensation Act 1973.

The local authority has a duty to rehouse an occupier (except someone who was a trespasser before the CPO took effect) who is permanently displaced from residential accommodation following a CPO, if suitable alternative accommodation on reasonable terms is not otherwise available.¹⁷

The rehousing duty – superficially similar to the full housing duty to homeless persons under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 - is to provide temporary accommodation, until suitable alternative housing becomes available, for example, through the waiting list or by assisting someone who can afford to buy to do so.¹⁸ There is no obligation on the local authority to modify its allocations criteria to prioritise such persons, but in practice this is common.

Social housing landlords often guarantee displaced persons the right to return to the re-developed estate, and house them in temporary accommodation until the new properties are ready, or until they accept an alternative offer of permanent housing.

Where a right to return to the estate after redevelopment is offered to a leaseholder, the social housing landlord may retain an equitable interest in the new property where its value will exceed the current value.

Local authorities may advance a loan to help an owner facing displacement to buy alternative housing;¹⁹ in this case the owner loses the right to be rehoused under the Land Compensation Act 1973.

The government has published a booklet on Gov.uk on [compulsory purchase and compensation for residential owners and occupiers](#).

Eviction and compensation by occupier’s security of tenure

The process of eviction and the amount of compensation varies by security of tenure:

Owner occupiers/long leaseholders

Where a home owner’s property is compulsorily acquired, s/he is entitled to:

- the market value of the property (the impact of regeneration on the value is disregarded)²⁰
- a home loss payment comprising 10% of the value of the home (up to a maximum £58,000)
- disturbance payment.

Compensation may also be agreed through a process of negotiation.

Assured tenants

Assured tenants of housing associations may be evicted following possession proceedings taken under:²¹

- Ground 9 (discretionary - suitable alternative accommodation must be available)
- Ground 6 (mandatory - where works require removal of occupiers). There is no duty to rehouse if ground 6 is used.

The amount of home loss payable to a qualifying assured tenant is £5,800 (split equally between joint tenants).²²

Tenants’ reasonable removal costs must be paid for if either ground for possession is used.²³ If an assured tenant is required to move out following a CPO, they are entitled to a disturbance payment instead.

Secure tenants

To evict a secure tenant, the local authority can use mandatory Grounds 10 or 10A both of which require that suitable alternative accommodation is available.²⁴ Where a ‘lifetime’ secure tenant is displaced, the government has indicated (but not legislated) that alternative accommodation will only be suitable if it offers the same lifetime security of tenure.²⁵

A qualifying secure tenant is entitled to a home loss payment of £5,800 (split equally between joint tenants). They are entitled to a disturbance payment where they have to move following a CPO, but not if evicted on Ground 10 or 10A.

Licensees

In general, licensees are not entitled to financial compensation.²⁶ But those in tied accommodation, or secure, introductory and, in some cases agricultural licensees, may qualify for a home loss payment.²⁷

Private tenants of leaseholders/owners

If a private landlord refuses to evict a tenant, or to sell their interest to the local authority, the local authority will need to use a CPO and may owe a duty to rehouse the tenant.

Conclusion

Estate regeneration can be a complex and lengthy process. Any occupier who is likely to be affected by regeneration should get advice on how they can make sure their views are taken into account, on any compensation they may be entitled to, and on their housing options if it goes ahead.

London Councils' STAR partnership

Feature

Shelter is leading a new London Councils' funded partnership providing specialist support for adults (25 and over) who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, whilst improving Londoners' resilience to sustain a safe, secure home.¹ People under 25 can get advice through the [London Youth Gateway](#) partnership led by New Horizon Youth Centre, which includes a Shelter adviser.²

The STAR partnership includes a range of services provided by four partner agencies: Shelter, Thames Reach, Stonewall Housing and St Mungo's.

STAR outcomes and partners

The STAR partnership aims to assist and enable service users to:

- obtain crisis or short-term housing
- find and sustain suitable settled housing
- resolve disputes affecting tenancy sustainment (eg deposits and repairs)
- resolve financial issues such as debt
- improve their physical and mental health
- find education, training and employment.

The four partners provide a range of expertise and specialist support through STAR:

Shelter

Shelter provides housing, welfare benefit and debt advice via telephone and face-to-face sessions in a range of locations across London, or through its information resource centre. Advisers can help clients find private rented housing and access other services for help with employment and training. Shelter's resilience worker also offers help to improve their mental and physical health.

Thames Reach

Thames Reach supports people with complex needs, including rough sleepers and those at risk of losing their tenancy. Thames Reach enables people to find training and employment, and to improve their physical and mental health. Mental health practitioners from Enabling Assessment Service London (EASL) work alongside Thames Reach staff to provide specialist mental health support.

Stonewall Housing

Stonewall Housing provides specialist housing advice and support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans people, and for those identifying as another gender or sexual minority (LGBT+). It offers a free, confidential housing advice and advocacy service for LGBT+ people of all ages as well as providing a small amount of supported accommodation for over 25s.

St Mungo's

St Mungo's provides advice and assistance to help people move into private rented sector (PRS) housing. St Mungo's finds landlords who offer suitable accommodation for service users (eg landlords who are prepared to accept clients on benefits), and matches potential tenants with landlords.

What is on offer?

The STAR partnership offers:

- face-to-face and telephone advice, support and guidance
- support to access the PRS or hostel accommodation
- outreach services direct to street homeless people
- safe and secure pathways into emergency accommodation
- intensive support, including skills training, money management and housing advice to enable families and individuals to maintain their tenancy.
- personal resilience and independence planning to secure a long-term, healthy and happy home.

STAR: how to access help

People in London aged 25 and over who need housing advice can ring the dedicated phone line: **0344 515 1540**.

Contact details

Contact Amy Nyemecz, Service Manager, at Amy_Nyemecz@shelter.org.uk or telephone **0344 515 1266** for details of the STAR partnership, and to discuss possible co-location opportunities.

In this feature, Amy Nyemecz introduces the STAR partnership, a Shelter-led partnership providing advice and support for adults at risk of, or experiencing homelessness

Amy Nyemecz is Service Manager with Shelter London.

Footnotes

¹ See Shelter's website for details of [Shelter's London advice service](#).

² Contact the London Youth Gateway on **0330 053 6091**.

Housing First Manchester

This article looks at a project which provides long-term housing to homeless people with complex needs and supports them to maintain it.

The article has been written by members of the Inspiring Change Manchester team.

Housing First (HF) is a model of housing that provides stable accommodation to homeless people with complex needs without the preconditions of requiring them to alter behaviours such as drinking or drug use, and to engage with support.¹

In contrast, traditional 'stepped' approaches involve homeless people only obtaining stable housing after moving through a series of insecure accommodation options such as night shelters, hostels and supported housing. These are usually offered conditional on compliance with preconditions such as abstinence, psychiatric stability and 'engagement' with support.

Research indicates that, where housing is conditional on changing behaviour, 40% of homeless people will sustain a tenancy for a year or more. For HF schemes in England, the success rate so far has been notably higher.² HF has shown that, even for those with multiple and complex needs, long-term tenancies can be an option from the outset.

HF principles

The core HF principles are:

- housing is a human right
- service users have choice and control over the support offered to them
- the right to housing is not conditional on treatment, and the provision of housing is separate from the provision of support
- support focuses on the person's strengths, allowing the service user to move forward on their own terms
- health treatment aims to reduce the harm that can result from behaviour such as drug use, instead of aiming to eliminate the behaviour
- service users develop their own support plans as and when they choose to
- support is flexible and open-ended.

HF Manchester

In April 2016, the Shelter-led partnership 'Inspiring Change Manchester' (ICM),³ and other partners in the area, began to pilot a housing project run on core HF principles.

The pilot will run for two years and aims to help around 30 people into stable housing.

To date, 12 tenancies have been established, in both the private and social rented sectors. A further six people have been approved for the scheme and are waiting for properties.

A project manager and team leader manage the project.

Eligibility and referral process

HF Manchester only accepts ICM clients, and ICM only accepts self-referrals or supported self-referrals.⁴ The project offers help with making a self-referral.

Potential clients must be aged 18 and over and not actively engaged with another housing support service.

They must be experiencing three or more of the following:

- homelessness or unsuitable and unsustainable accommodation
- problematic drug and/or alcohol use
- mental health or emotional well-being problems
- offending behaviour or involvement in the criminal justice system.

On receipt of a referral, an ICM engagement worker will contact and assess clients' eligibility and suitability for the HF project. If housing is not a core issue, they will not be considered suitable for HF but may still access other support provided through ICM.

If a person is nominated for HF, the nomination will be considered by a panel consisting of the project manager and team leader, someone with lived experience of complex needs and an external stakeholder.

When someone is accepted for the project, an engagement worker will begin to work with them while they wait for a suitable offer of accommodation. This could involve assistance with claiming benefits, booking health-related appointments or linking with other sources of support, as well as finding out the person's preferences for type and location of accommodation.

Relationships with landlords

It is important to broker relationships with landlords. Tenants and landlords are carefully matched, and both are part of the process of deciding who lives where. A development officer finds landlords who are willing to offer housing to HF clients, and tries to keep them involved with the scheme.

HF has a 'flexible fund' that is used to cover the cost of a deposit and rent in advance for a private sector tenancy.

Some landlords in the private rented sector have been keen to offer their support to the project for philanthropic reasons, and have been recruited onto the HF board.

Manchester's Housing Providers' Partnership, a body made up of 18 registered providers of social housing in the area, has pledged 15 properties to HF in line with the city-wide approach to tackling homelessness.⁵

Support team

HF Manchester employs two support workers, and a 'GROW' trainee⁶ to help clients set their own goals and decide how to achieve them.

In addition, ICM peer mentors provide supportive, non-judgmental relationships with HF clients. Peer mentors are recruited because of their 'lived experience' which enables them to relate on a personal level to HF clients.

HF partner agencies provide mental health support, help with getting back into education or employment, and other 'meaningful activity'.

Tenancy sustainment

HF provides support to its clients when they need it, and this can help them to sustain their tenancies through challenging periods. For example, one client went into custody following an assault. The support worker visited her in prison, negotiated with the landlord to keep the tenancy and continues to work with her. Another client's support was stopped after he seemed to be coping well in the property, but support was reinstated and peer mentoring visits increased when he began using drugs again.

Contact details

Please contact Sarah Walters on **0344 515 1649** or by email Sarah_Walters@shelter.org.uk for more information about Housing First Manchester.

Case study – Laura

Laura has several serious chronic health conditions as a result of longstanding alcohol and drug addiction. As well as problems with mobility, she suffers from schizophrenia, depression, anxiety and other emotional problems exacerbated by her drug use and stemming from childhood trauma.

Laura had a long history of failed accommodation. This was usually because she 'would not comply with the rules' for supported housing. These rules would, most often, be around abstinence from drugs and alcohol. Other times she'd lose her accommodation after disengaging from the support offered.

She's spent long periods of her life street homeless and relying on abusive relationships for a place to sleep and sometimes sofa surfing. Because of her entrenched homelessness and multiple needs, Laura could access a HF approach.

Laura worked with HF to enter into a tenancy with a private landlord in a flat in an area of her choice. She registered with a local GP and re-engaged with a homelessness Community Psychiatric Nurse.

Laura continues to sustain her tenancy and her health has now stabilised. She is engaging in a harm reduction plan and is no longer involved with criminal justice.

Case study – Chris

Chris, previously street homeless with convictions for drug offences, has been engaging with ICM for around 9 months. He came to ICM with nowhere to live after running out of sofas to stay on, bereaved following the suicide of his sister and with problematic drug use beginning to attract the attention of dealers and the police.

Michael, a peer mentor, helped him move in to a flat and helped him obtain white goods, a new TV, furniture and equipment from retailers and charities. Michael was apprehensive about giving Chris something new but, months later, the TV has pride of place in his flat, next to the pot plant Chris bought to make his house a home.

Michael also stayed with Chris at a residential conference for those recovering from drug addictions, where Chris was able to see a positive way forward. HF has given him that perspective and a chance for a different future.

Footnotes

¹ For general information about Housing First in England, see Homeless Link's [Housing First England website](#). See also 'Housing First' or 'Housing Led'? The current picture of Housing First in England', Homeless Link, June 2015; and also a [presentation on HF](#) made by Dr Sam Tsemberis, founder of Pathways to Housing, at Crisis's 2017 'Ending Homelessness' conference.

² 74% of people at five Housing First services in England had been housed for a year or more in 2015: 'Housing First in England', Pleace and Bretherton, Centre for Housing Policy, February 2015.

³ [ICM](#) supports people with multiple and complex needs, and is funded by the Big Lottery's 'fulfilling lives' fund.

⁴ Using the ['my referral' form](#) on the ICM website.

⁵ See [Manchester's Homelessness Charter](#).

⁶ GROW stands for Getting Real Opportunities of Work. The GROW programme enables individuals with lived experience of multiple and complex needs to access education, training and employment. GROW traineeships are paid employment.

Prisoners: housing on release

This leaflet looks at your housing options when you come out of prison

If you are still serving a sentence of 12 months or less, 'Through the Gate' services are available in prison and can advise you how to find housing on release from prison.

[NACRO's Resettlement Advice Service](#) on 0300 123 1999 can advise you on your housing options after leaving prison.

Family and friends

It is difficult to get housing on release from prison so this can be a good short-term option. If relationships with family or friends have broken down, you may need to show them that you have dealt with past issues.

Hostels and nightshelters

Hostel places are limited, and you may need to go on a waiting list. Some hostels are restricted to certain groups, eg people with mental health problems, or under 25s. You must claim benefits to pay the rent.

Nightshelters only offer a basic mattress and food, at no charge. They are run by churches and charities and are available in the winter.

Supported housing

Supported housing can help you address issues to assist you to live independently and adjust back into the community. Varying levels of support are provided, depending on the type of accommodation and your needs. You will probably need to be referred by someone like a support worker. Most projects have waiting lists.

Finding homelessness services

You can search for accommodation, advice and other services for homeless people at homeless.org.uk

Private renting

Private rented housing is expensive in many areas. You can claim benefits to help you pay the rent. The amount of benefits you can get depends on your age and the size and location of the property. If you are under 35, benefits will usually only pay the rent of a room in a shared house.

Landlords or letting agents will want references, a deposit, rent in advance, and proof that you can pay the rent.

Apply as homeless

The council only has to give you somewhere to live while it looks into your application as homeless if it believes you may be:

- homeless
- eligible (some people from abroad aren't eligible)
- in 'priority need'.

The council will only arrange longer-term accommodation if you pass these 'tests' and didn't make yourself intentionally homeless.

Priority need

Some people, such as pregnant women and those with dependent children, are automatically in priority need. Others have to be 'vulnerable'. Coming out of prison does not automatically make you vulnerable, though it can be a factor.

You could also be vulnerable because you are, for example, physically or mentally ill, or elderly, or were in care. The council will only decide you are vulnerable if it agrees you are significantly more at risk when homeless than an 'ordinary person' would be.

Not intentionally homeless

The council may say you made yourself homeless 'intentionally' if you lost your home because you went to prison after committing a crime.

Local connection

The council will check if you have a local connection with its area, for example if you have lived there for three out of the past five years (time in prison doesn't count), or have close family living there. If you don't have a local connection, then the council you apply to may ask another council to help you.

Further advice

You can get further advice from Shelter's free* housing advice helpline (0808 800 4444), a local Shelter advice service or local Citizens Advice office, or by visiting shelter.org.uk/advice or adviceguide.org.uk

*Calls are free from UK landlines and main mobile networks.



Note
Information contained in this leaflet is correct at the time of publication. Please check details before use.