

# Helping Homeless People

An Action Plan for Prevention and Effective Response  
Homelessness Task Force Final Report



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Making it work together

## Foreword



I am delighted to present the final report of the Homelessness Task Force and, on behalf of the Executive, to endorse its recommendations. This report represents the culmination of two and a half years of work by the Task Force and builds upon the foundation laid by their initial report, published in April 2000. That initial report had a major impact, resulting in the enactment of Part I of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 which strengthened the legal rights of homeless people, established a strategic framework for preventing and tackling homelessness and created a regulatory regime for homelessness services.

This report looks to the long term, setting out a ten-year programme of action. This is vital if we are to tackle homelessness in a strategic and sustainable manner. However the Task Force has emphasised the need to act quickly to counteract the severe hardship which many homeless people are currently facing. The Executive has already taken steps to address the needs of some of these people, through the Rough Sleepers Initiative, by funding alternatives to the use of Bed & Breakfast as temporary accommodation for homeless families, and by providing resources to support the implementation of the 2001 Act. But we recognise there is more to do and we are keen to ensure that preventative action is emphasised. I am confident that this report gives us a firm basis on which to build a comprehensive response to homelessness.

This report makes clear that homelessness is not just a housing problem. Wide ranging action, across a number of policy areas, is required if we are to prevent homelessness and to tackle it effectively where it does occur. We must, therefore, move forward in partnership - all sectors working together, and with homeless people themselves, to achieve effective solutions. This may require fundamental changes in practice and a more strategic use of resources. I believe the Task Force itself has been a useful model in joint working and hope that this approach can be replicated more widely in implementing this report. The Executive is committed to meeting the needs of *all* homeless people, taking account of their diverse circumstances and needs.

I would like to thank the members of the Task Force, my predecessor Jackie Baillie, who also chaired the Task Force, and the many contributors who have helped to shape this report.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Iain Gray". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line that extends to the right.

IAIN GRAY, MSP  
Chair, Homelessness Task Force  
Minister for Social Justice



**HOMELESSNESS:  
AN ACTION PLAN FOR PREVENTION AND EFFECTIVE RESPONSE**

**REPORT FROM THE HOMELESSNESS TASK FORCE  
TO SCOTTISH MINISTERS**

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**HOMELESSNESS:  
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TO SCOTTISH MINISTERS**

1. We were appointed by the Scottish Executive in August 1999 with the following terms of reference:-

"To review the causes and nature of homelessness in Scotland; to examine current practice in dealing with cases of homelessness; and to make recommendations on how homelessness in Scotland can best be prevented and, where it does occur, tackled effectively."

We have held thirty meetings between August 1999 and January 2002. This is our second and final report. Our membership is listed at Appendix A.

2. We take as our starting point the principle that everyone in Scotland should have dry, warm, affordable and secure housing. Not only is this desirable in itself, but good housing is also crucial to family life, physical and mental health, child development, employability and the creation of sustainable communities. The increase in homelessness over the last 25 years, and the emergence of a significant rough sleeping problem, are unacceptable. Our purpose is to achieve a step-reduction in the incidence of homelessness in Scotland.

3. We regard it as important to define what we mean by homelessness. Some 500 people are thought to sleep rough at least once in every fortnight in Scotland. More than 30,000 households are assessed as homeless every year by local authorities under the homelessness legislation. But the problem of homelessness goes wider than this. It extends to those who are living in insecure or intolerable accommodation simply because they have nowhere else to go, and to those who are threatened by homelessness even if they do not yet come within the statutory definition. We set out our definition of homelessness in Appendix B.

4. The housing dimension of homelessness is central. If homelessness is to be prevented, and to be tackled effectively when it does occur, we need to ensure that there is an adequate supply of reasonable quality, affordable housing in places where people want to live. We also need to ensure that other aspects of housing policy, including housing benefit policy, minimise the risk of homelessness and help to tackle it effectively when it does occur.

5. However, housing is not the only dimension which needs to be addressed. In many instances homelessness is the result of wider needs which have not been recognised, or have not been met effectively. People affected by homelessness have diverse needs, characteristics and experiences. This means that a 'one-size fits all' approach will not work. The action required to address the needs of one household or individual at a particular point in time is unlikely to be appropriate in other circumstances. A key theme of our recommendations in this report is that all the varying needs of people affected by homelessness must be assessed and

addressed individually, effectively and flexibly. If they are not, purely housing solutions are unlikely to be sustainable.

6. Our first report, published in April 2000, focused on amendments to the homelessness legislation. That report formed the basis for what has now been enacted by the Scottish Parliament as Part 1 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 (the 2001 Act). In this report we make some further recommendations for improving the legislative framework. These changes are important in defining the rights of those affected by homelessness and the duties and obligations which local authorities and others have towards them. But homelessness will not be solved by legislation alone. We recognise the need to extend, improve and co-ordinate the services available to those affected by homelessness, and the even more critical need to take effective early action to prevent homelessness. In this report we make a range of recommendations designed to improve action both to prevent and to respond to homelessness.

7. Our report is based on a fundamental review of the causes and nature of homelessness in Scotland. We have commissioned 13 research projects (summarised in Appendix C) and have been greatly assisted by the input of those affected by homelessness and by experts in various disciplines. Further details of our work and of our discussions can be found on the Scottish Executive website.

8. Homelessness will not be solved overnight or by single programme actions. Progress will require determined, co-ordinated and focused action over a period of years. It will require priority to be given to homelessness by a range of public agencies, including those who may not currently see homelessness as a particular pre-occupation. It will also require even greater efforts from voluntary sector agencies who are already doing a great deal. Our action plan seeks to achieve significant progress in reducing the incidence and impact of homelessness over a 10-year period to 2012. Delivery will be a critical indicator of whether or not the Executive's aspirations for social inclusion and social justice in Scotland can be realised.

## **HOMELESSNESS IN SCOTLAND**

9. Between 1989-90 and 1999-00, the number of applications from households to Scottish local authorities under the homelessness legislation rose from 29,068 to 46,023 (an increase of 58%). In the same period the number of households actually assessed as homeless or potentially homeless rose from 18,277 to 34,100 (an increase of 87%) - see Appendix D.

10. These figures have to be treated with caution because of differing recording practices among local authorities, and because of limitations in the information recorded. The Executive has put in hand, with our agreement, new improved arrangements for recording and reporting homelessness applications which should produce more reliable and meaningful statistics. The first results of these new arrangements will be published in the latter part of 2002 and it will be possible to establish more clearly who is becoming homeless, why, and how effective the response to their homelessness has been. But it will continue to be necessary to bear in mind that these are figures of homelessness applications to local

authorities, and that many homeless people - especially single homeless people - currently never make such an application. We anticipate that improvements in the rights of homeless people made by the 2001 Act will increase the number of people who apply as homeless. Nevertheless the figures for the number of people assessed as homeless by local authorities will always understate the actual incidence of homelessness.

11. With these caveats, the figures for homelessness applications show a steep increase over the last 15 years. The experience of local authorities and voluntary organisations, and the visible presence of rough sleepers on the streets of Scottish cities and towns, confirm that homelessness has greatly increased. Why - at a time of a general increase in prosperity - has this occurred?

12. The immediate causes of homelessness vary greatly from case to case. In individual instances they may include family or relationship breakdown as a result of domestic abuse, the inability of a family to cope with a teenager, unemployment leading to an inability to pay the rent or mortgage, drug or alcohol problems leading to a crisis, mental or physical health difficulties, discharge from prison, leaving residential care or the armed forces, or a simple breakdown of housing arrangements. In some instances a suitable house is all that is required, but in many others homelessness is a consequence of a range of social and economic problems. Some people in Scotland have not benefited from the general increase in prosperity and well-being, and the increased incidence of homelessness is a reflection of this.

13. Part of the answer to homelessness lies in reducing the social and economic divide between those who are prosperous and those who are disadvantaged. A stable and growing economy, employment opportunities and a reduction in poverty are key in tackling what has come to be known as social exclusion. Homelessness is a manifestation of social exclusion and one of the indicators of success in creating a more economically and socially just society would be a reduction in homelessness. We therefore wish to stress the importance of improving the economic and social conditions of those who are currently finding it difficult to cope. This is an essential pre-condition for reducing homelessness.

14. But other, more specific action should also be taken. We believe that there is scope for more effective prevention of homelessness, for the empowerment of people affected by homelessness by giving them opportunities and choices, and for more effective interventions by agencies when homelessness does occur. Accordingly, in this report we focus on:-

further improvements to the homelessness legislation;

housing supply and policy;

benefits issues;

action to prevent homelessness; and

action to deliver an effective response to homelessness.



15. We emphasise the need to increase homeless people's control and extend their choices, particularly in relation to housing, employment, care and support services, and to achieve the effective participation of people affected by homelessness in the development of future policy, practice and service delivery. These objectives should be widely promoted and given practical effect in all activities directed at tackling homelessness.

16. People experiencing homelessness say that they often feel judged and intimidated by statutory services and that they are frequently treated impersonally and without respect. This deters them from seeking the services they need. If these perceptions and experiences are to be changed and if homeless people are to be genuinely empowered, services must develop people-focused cultures. We strongly believe that people who experience homelessness should be given much greater choice and control over determining their own resettlement solutions and in pursuing these at a pace of their choosing. We see this as a prerequisite for helping homeless people help themselves. The key is to embed the concept of empowerment in the attitudes and behaviour of all organisations and staff involved in planning and delivering homelessness services.

17. Our recommendations throughout this report apply to everyone affected by homelessness, including people from black and minority ethnic communities. Current statistical returns on people applying to local authorities under the homelessness legislation do not include any information on ethnic status. We have therefore ensured that the new arrangements for recording and reporting on homelessness applications being introduced by the Executive will collect information on ethnic status. This information is expected to come on-stream during 2002. We recommend that, as soon as a sufficient bank of information is available, it should be analysed to assess whether any additional actions, focusing specifically on people from black and minority ethnic communities, are required. This statistical information should be complemented by a more qualitative study on the experience of homelessness among Scotland's black and minority ethnic communities, which we understand the Scottish Executive proposes to carry out.

## IMPROVING THE HOMELESSNESS LEGISLATION

18. In our first report we recommended a number of changes to the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (the 1987 Act) which places statutory duties on local authorities in respect of people assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness. We recommended that:-

- (i) additional duties should be placed on local authorities to draw up homelessness strategies and to secure that advice about housing and other services is available free of charge to any persons who consider themselves to be at risk from homelessness;
- (ii) new arrangements should be made for the monitoring and regulation of local authorities in carrying out their duties under the homelessness legislation;
- (iii) the legal rights of homeless people should be strengthened in a number of respects, and;
- (iv) specific legislative provision should be made to ensure that homeless people are not disadvantaged by the transfer of local authority housing into community ownership.

19. Our recommendations were included in the Housing Bill introduced into the Scottish Parliament by the Scottish Executive in December 2000 and, following careful consideration by the Social Justice Committee and the full Parliament, were enacted in what is now Part 1 of the 2001 Act.

20. That Act received Royal Assent in July 2001 and will be brought into effect progressively, as soon as the necessary preparations have been made. We have been consulted about the timetable for implementing Part 1 of the 2001 Act, the related subordinate legislation and guidance and proposals for allocating additional financial resources to local authorities.

21. In our earlier report we concentrated on changes which we could confidently recommend as the basis for early legislative action. We believe that Part 1 of the 2001 Act, based on our recommendations, significantly strengthens and improves the rights of homeless people and provides the basis for a concerted effort to prevent homelessness and to tackle it effectively whenever it does occur.

22. However, in framing our earlier recommendations we recognised that there were additional and more wide-ranging legislative proposals, which required further consideration before we could confidently recommend particular changes. Specifically, these proposals concern the concepts of priority need, intentionality and local connection which are central to the legislative framework in the 1987 Act. Having given careful consideration to possible changes in these areas, and their likely effects, we now wish to make recommendations which would significantly change the relevant aspects of the legislation.

23. As we noted in our earlier report, the 1987 Act created a hierarchy of duties placed on local authorities in respect of persons assessed as homeless. At the top of the hierarchy is a duty to provide accommodation in respect of persons who are assessed as being unintentionally homeless and in priority need. In the middle is a duty to provide temporary accommodation, and advice and assistance, in respect of persons assessed as being intentionally homeless and in priority need. At the bottom of the hierarchy is a duty to provide advice and assistance in respect of persons assessed as not being in priority need.

24. In our earlier report we recommended that these duties be adjusted and improved. We recommended that the accommodation offered to people assessed as being in priority need and unintentionally homeless should always be permanent accommodation. We also recommended that the advice and assistance to be provided to those assessed as intentionally homeless or not in priority need should be specified by way of statutory instrument; and that local authorities should be placed under a duty to secure temporary accommodation for all those assessed as homeless but not in priority need. These changes were enacted in section 3 of the 2001 Act and will be implemented during 2002. In this report we focus on further improvements to the duties under the 1987 Act.

#### (a) Priority need

25. As regards priority need, we see a strong case, in principle, for extending the rights currently possessed by those assessed as being in priority need to all those assessed as homeless. At present priority need is defined by section 25(1) of the 1987 Act (as read with the Homeless Persons (Priority Need) (Scotland) Order 1997) as meaning:-

any pregnant woman, regardless of the stage of her pregnancy or her age, together with anyone who normally resides with her or might reasonably be expected to reside with her;

a person with whom dependent children are living or might reasonably be expected to live;

a person who has been made homeless as a result of an emergency such as fire or flood or other disaster;

a person who has not yet attained twenty one years of age and was looked after by a local authority, in the care of a local authority or subject to a supervision requirement at the time when he ceased to be of school leaving age but is no longer so looked after, in such care, or subject to such a requirement; or

a person who is vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or mental handicap or physical disability, or other special reason.

26. The Code of Guidance on Homelessness issued in December 1998 offers the following advice on what circumstances may bring a person within the "other special reason" element of this definition:-

Young people of 16 or 17 years old or younger are likely to be at risk of sexual or financial exploitation or involvement in drug or solvent abuse, if they have left home without moving to stable accommodation elsewhere, and hence vulnerable.

Young people may be otherwise at risk of sexual or financial exploitation or involvement in serious drug, alcohol, or solvent abuse (even if they are over 17) because of the circumstances in which they are living. The upper age limit for a young person is not fixed, and local authorities are advised to use their discretion.

Young people who were previously looked after by a local authority (previously termed in care) may well be vulnerable and hence in priority need.

Chronically sick people, including people with AIDS or HIV related illnesses, may be vulnerable not only because their illness has progressed to the point of physical or mental disability but because the manifestations of their illness, or common attitudes to it, make it very difficult for them to find stable or suitable accommodation, and they may also be subject to harassment.

People recently discharged from institutions may be vulnerable if they are in need of support and assistance and they have no-one to provide this.

Women suffering, or in fear of, violence may be vulnerable even if they have no children.

People at risk of harassment or violence on account of race, colour, illness, sexuality, or ethnic or national origins may be vulnerable.

Women suffering a miscarriage, or an abortion, may be expected to be vulnerable because of the distress caused by the event or the surrounding circumstances.

Refugees and other eligible persons subject to immigration control forced to leave their country may be vulnerable because of continuing physical or psychological effects of persecution or other harm suffered before entering the United Kingdom.

27. Our view is that, over time, the rights possessed by those assessed as being in priority need under the 1987 Act should be extended to all those assessed as homeless and that therefore the priority need distinction should be eliminated. This will however need to be managed and phased so that accommodation and services are made available to those who do not currently come within the

definition of priority need and so that those who are in the greatest need are not disadvantaged.

28. We recommend that the definition of priority need should be gradually expanded as services and accommodation are provided and that the target should be to eliminate the priority need distinction within a decade (i.e. by 2012). As a first step the statutory definition of priority need should be expanded to include all those assessed as homeless who:

- (a) have not reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, or
- (b) have experienced domestic abuse, or
- (c) are otherwise vulnerable within the terms of the current Code of Guidance as quoted in para 26 above.

29. As a second step the definition of priority need should be further expanded to include any other people who may be deemed to be vulnerable. Additionally, at this stage all those assessed as homeless who are less than a specified age (perhaps 25) and all those who are above a specified age (perhaps 55) should be brought within the priority need definition. The target should be to implement this second stage around 2007/8, although the precise timing will need to be decided in the light of progress made and an assessment of local authorities' ability to cope with this further expansion. Finally, by 2012, the priority need distinction should be abolished by extending the relevant duties to all those assessed as homeless.

30. We recognise that this course of action will require careful planning and monitoring, that additional services and accommodation will need to be put in place, and that local authorities will require additional resources for this purpose. For these reasons we strongly recommend that action is phased and that the definition of priority need is expanded at a pace which is in line with the ability of local authorities and other agencies to cope.

#### (b) Intentionality

31. The 1987 Act also draws a distinction between those who become homeless intentionally and those who do not. Those who are assessed as unintentionally homeless and in priority need have an entitlement to permanent accommodation, whereas those who are assessed as intentionally homeless and in priority need only have an entitlement to temporary accommodation, and advice and assistance. A person is defined as becoming homeless intentionally if he (or she) "deliberately does or fails to do anything in consequence of which he ceases to occupy accommodation which is available for his occupation and which it would have been reasonable for him to continue to occupy".

32. In our view it is right to distinguish between the case of a person who has become homeless through no fault of their own, and the case of a person, who through deliberate action or inaction, has contributed to their homelessness. If the intentionality criterion was abolished it would mean that the local authority would always be under an obligation to find permanent accommodation for a

household whatever the reasons for their homelessness and this would undermine housing management. We therefore support retention of the intentionality criterion. However, we recommend a number of significant changes in its application.

33. Our objective is twofold. First, so far as the intentionally homeless household is concerned we wish to construct an escalator which provides every opportunity for the problems which led to homelessness to be resolved. In most cases the current arrangements provide only a trapdoor through which the intentionally homeless household descends into the equivalent of a no-man's land. This is not sufficient in the 21<sup>st</sup> century if homelessness is to be addressed effectively. Second, so far as the local authority is concerned, under our proposals there will always be an obligation to offer some form of accommodation. We see this as emphasising the local authority's continuing responsibility for dealing with cases of intentional homelessness. At present the legislative framework encourages a reactive approach to episodes of homelessness and makes it possible for difficult cases to be discarded. We believe that the approach we suggest will encourage a more long-term effort to resolve the problems which underlie cases of intentional homelessness. Some local authorities are already doing useful work in this direction; we believe that our proposals will help to reinforce and stimulate this.

34. Against this background, we recommend that:-

- (i) The duty placed on local authorities to investigate intentionality should be replaced by a power to do so; this will reduce the burden on local authorities and still give them all the discretion they need.
- (ii) Instead of, as at present, being under a duty only to provide temporary accommodation, advice and assistance to an intentionally homeless household in priority need, the local authority should be placed under a duty to ensure that such a household is offered a short Scottish secure tenancy, with appropriate support. At present, where an anti-social behaviour order exists, or there has been a prior eviction on the grounds of anti-social behaviour, the 2001 Act places the landlord under a duty to provide, or ensure the provision of, such housing support services as it considers appropriate with a view to enabling the conversion of a short tenancy to a Scottish secure tenancy. We recommend that the local authority should be placed under a similar duty to provide, or ensure the provision of, such housing support services in respect of all short Scottish secure tenancies offered to intentionally homeless households. This new duty should be placed on local authorities corporately.
- (iii) The terms of the short tenancy should outline the support which will be offered to the tenant and the action the tenant will take, with a view to converting the tenancy to a Scottish secure tenancy. Progress should be reviewed regularly. The prospective tenant should have access to independent advice and advocacy throughout the process of agreeing the terms of the tenancy and during reviews of

progress. Where the landlord is not the local authority, the terms of the tenancy should be agreed between the prospective tenant, the landlord and the local authority.

- (iv) If, on review, the terms of the short tenancy have been satisfied, the local authority should be under a duty to ensure that the household is offered permanent accommodation in the form of a Scottish secure tenancy. Households which have been unable to sustain a short tenancy - anticipated to be a small minority of cases - should have their entitlement to a short Scottish secure tenancy suspended until such time as progress can be demonstrated. Local authorities should however remain under a statutory obligation to make an offer of accommodation, with suitable support, during this suspension. Through their homelessness strategies, local authorities should make provision for households falling into this category. New and innovative approaches may be required in such circumstances. One such example is the Dundee Families Project, but we recognise that other situations will need other approaches.
- (v) In order to avoid splitting up families, the duties proposed at (ii) and (iv) above should include a requirement to offer accommodation which can house the entire household.

#### (c) Local connection

35. Under the 1987 Act, local authorities can refer a homeless household to another local authority where they are of the opinion that the household has a local connection with that other authority and not with them. The local authority may not however make such a referral where this would result in a situation where a member of the household would “run the risk of domestic violence”.

36. In general we believe that an application should be dealt with by the local authority to whom it is made and should not be referred elsewhere. Most homeless people apply to their local council and those who apply to another council usually have a very good reason for doing so - for example because they wish to get away from an abusive partner. We would like homeless people to have as much choice as possible, including choice in respect of the council to whom they apply. This would point to the abolition of the power to refer a homeless applicant to another local authority.

37. There is however a risk that removal of the local connection qualification could lead to an increased and unmanageable flow of homeless applicants into a few local authorities where housing is in limited supply. Accordingly we recommend that the provisions in the 1987 Act which enable one local authority to refer a homeless applicant to another authority should be suspended; but that the Scottish Parliament should have power, by way of statutory instrument, to re-activate them, either for Scotland as a whole or for particular local authorities, in case demand pressures prove intolerable.

## HOUSING POLICY

### Housing supply

38. Across Scotland throughout the 1990s the number of dwellings (including both rented and owner-occupied housing) exceeded the number of households. In December 2000 there were 2.325m dwellings and an estimated 2.205m households. But these national figures conceal important local variations. In some areas - both rural and urban - there are acute shortages of affordable housing for rent. In others there is plenty of housing but it is of poor quality, of the wrong size, or in places where people do not want to live. In this connection the situation in Glasgow, which has the largest homelessness problem in Scotland, is particularly striking.

39. If the housing dimension of homelessness is to be tackled effectively then it will be necessary to address the very different problems of high demand and low demand areas. In high demand areas - notably areas of economic growth and pressured rural areas - an absolute increase in supply of affordable housing is required. In low demand areas the priority should be to build reasonable quality housing in places where people want to live, to re-create demand through improvements in the quality of existing housing and neighbourhood renewal, and to demolish housing for which there is no demand. In both types of area our recommendation for the gradual expansion of the priority need category will give rise to additional pressures over the next decade as the duty to provide permanent accommodation is extended.

40. These pressures will require improvements in the supply and quality of affordable housing. Under the 2001 Act, local authorities will be required to produce local housing strategies, based on current and predicted needs, which will serve as a basis for investment decisions. In these strategies, local authorities should set out proposals to tackle issues of housing supply and quality where they occur. Local authorities should also identify in their housing strategies what is required in their areas to make possible the phased extension of the priority need definition, and to implement our proposals on intentionality and local connection. Communities Scotland should support local authorities in making accurate assessments of what is required and assist in responding to these requirements. We recommend therefore that the guidance on the preparation of local housing strategies should make homelessness a priority and that this should be reflected in the allocation of resources by Scottish Ministers.

41. In addition to stressing this linkage between homelessness and housing strategies, we wish to flag up three particular aspects of housing supply where improvements should be sought. First, there is a need for more affordable, entry level, ready access housing for young people seeking their own accommodation for the first time. In some other countries this need is met by the private rented sector, but in Scotland this sector is not strong. A stronger private rented sector, with security for tenants, could play a role in providing housing for young people. During the 1990s Scottish Homes experimented with lead tenancies under which registered social landlords were funded to enter into arrangements with private



sector landlords to provide reasonable quality housing for rent. These arrangements worked well in some areas, but not in others.

42. We understand that the Scottish Executive is undertaking research to examine the further potential of lead tenancies. We recommend that, if the research confirms the usefulness of lead tenancies, this should be actively pursued by Communities Scotland using resources from their development programme. We also recommend that local authorities should assess the local availability of affordable housing for young people seeking their own accommodation for the first time. Housing strategies should include proposals to address any shortfall.

43. Secondly, we wish to emphasise the importance of rent guarantee/deposit schemes in enabling young people and others of limited means to obtain access to the private rented sector. A number of local rent guarantee/deposit schemes have been piloted under the Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI). We recommend that all local authorities should provide access to rent guarantee/deposit schemes by 2004. The Executive should issue national guidance on such schemes, based on lessons learned from local pilots; local authorities should also receive initial funding to enable schemes to be set up.

44. Thirdly, we wish to emphasise the importance of providing more furnished tenancies. For many homeless people the offer of an unfurnished tenancy is not enough because they lack the means to provide basic furniture. In these circumstances the tenancy is unlikely to be viable or sustainable. It is possible for homeless people in priority need to obtain community care grants for furniture from the Social Fund administered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), but these grants are not available to non-priority need applicants; moreover the Social Fund is subject to local cash-limits which can mean that those eligible for grant are unable to obtain it at the time they need it.

45. We have noted that Glasgow City Council has developed a furnished tenancy programme as part of its efforts to tackle rough sleeping and to de-commission large-scale hostels in the city. We believe that other authorities should adopt a similar approach, within a national framework. We recommend that such a framework should be drawn up, with appropriate funding, by Communities Scotland. The key elements of the framework should be:-

- (i) A furniture grant scheme under which housing providers could apply for grant if the accommodation is to be let to a homeless person. The grant should be sufficient to provide a bed, curtains, floor coverings, a cooker and a fridge and should be clawed back from the provider if the accommodation ceases to be let to a homeless person.
- (ii) Drawing on the experience of the UK based Furniture Recycling Network and the work of such projects as the Edinburgh Furniture Initiative, a Scottish furniture re-cycling network should be established with a national co-ordinator, support office and web-site.

Progress in increasing the number of furnished tenancies will depend on the resources which can be made available, but we propose a target of

1,000 additional furnished tenancies a year for 5 years, at which point further need should be assessed. Communities Scotland should have overall charge of the programme and should distribute resources to local authorities on the basis of assessments of need and proposals to meet need put forward in homelessness strategies.

### Housing allocations

46. We recognise the importance of ensuring that the priority given to homeless people in the allocation of permanent housing is balanced with the priority given to all other groups in housing need. At present, section 20(1) of the 1987 Act, as amended, places a duty upon local authorities and registered social landlords to give reasonable preference to homeless households in selecting their tenants. This reasonable preference also extends to those occupying houses which are overcrowded, below the tolerable standard or otherwise unsatisfactory, and to large families. Many homeless people not only have extremely urgent housing needs, but also long-standing ones, and are often very vulnerable. We strongly support the retention of the reasonable preference provision. This should ensure that homeless people continue to receive a high priority in accessing permanent accommodation.

47. The current Code of Guidance on Homelessness states that homeless people should be treated on the same basis as other housing applicants to local authorities in relation to the number of accommodation offers they receive. We strongly endorse this guidance. However it is not uncommon for housing applicants on the local authority mainstream waiting list to receive more than one offer of accommodation, while homeless people who are entitled to permanent accommodation under the homelessness legislation receive only one. We are keen to ensure that homeless people should be offered choices. We stress that offers of accommodation need to be reasonable and suitable if tenancies are to be accepted and sustained. We recommend that the number and quality of accommodation offers to homeless applicants should be monitored by Communities Scotland in the light of these comments.

48. We are aware of the growing interest in choice-based letting (CBL) schemes whereby local authorities or registered social landlords invite eligible applicants to select from a number of identified properties. Schemes of this kind may offer considerable benefits, but we are concerned to ensure that they do not operate in ways which deny homeless people the opportunity of participating, or in ways which restrict the stock of housing available for homeless people. We understand that the Chartered Institute of Housing is currently preparing proposals for the future development of CBL schemes in Scotland at the request of the Scottish Executive, and that guidance may be issued once the Institute has completed its work. We recommend that any such guidance should incorporate arrangements to prevent homeless people being disadvantaged.

## BENEFITS

### Benefits policy issues

49. The benefits system has an important part to play in helping people through the crisis of homelessness. Benefit matters are reserved and therefore outwith the scope of the Scottish Parliament and Executive. We have however had useful discussions with representatives of the DWP. We welcome the UK Government's efforts to improve the tax and benefits system overall and to increase benefits take-up rates. We also welcome the Government's recognition that reform of certain benefits - particularly housing benefit - is necessary. We are encouraged by the Government's drive to deliver more responsive and personalised services through the creation of the new DWP, Jobcentre Plus and new social policy roles for the Inland Revenue. However, we are concerned about the effects of various aspects of the benefits system on homeless people in Scotland, particularly young people. There is a general need for more information about the operation of the benefits system in Scotland and for research into the impact of benefits policy on homeless people in Scotland. We recommend that the Scottish Executive should pursue this with DWP. We also recommend that the following specific points should be pursued with the UK Government:-

- (i) Young people We have noted the explanations provided by the DWP for the different (and lower) benefit rates for young people. We also appreciate that current policy emphasises getting people into work as the main route out of poverty, and that increasing benefit rates for those out of work does not necessarily sit easily with that policy objective. Nevertheless, we propose that DWP should be asked to review the adequacy of welfare benefits payable to 16-24 year olds generally and to young homeless people specifically (who are often the most vulnerable) with a view to examining whether their particular needs are adequately met.
- (ii) Social Fund We have found that the Social Fund does not always meet the needs of homeless people, either because their needs are outside the scope of the fund, or because they are caught by priority setting within a cash-limited budget. We have three main concerns.

First, we believe that the circumstances in which community care grants can be made are not sufficiently understood or appreciated. We propose that DWP should be asked to pursue ways of making agencies involved in helping homeless people more aware of the full scope of community care grant provision.

Secondly, we are concerned that current procedures for community care grants mean that people can only apply for a grant once they have a home address. This can prevent people moving in to accommodation at the start date of a new tenancy. This in turn can delay the start of housing benefit and lead to a build up of rent arrears, with a consequent threat of eviction. We propose that DWP should be asked to consider making an adjustment to the regulations

to permit applications for community care grants to be made prior to the offer of a tenancy. This would help to ensure that funds are available to eligible applicants at the point their new tenancy commences.

Thirdly, we are concerned that delays in making severe hardship payments - particularly in the case of young people - result in people being forced to take out crisis loans to live on. Every effort should be made to eliminate delays in making severe hardship payments.

We propose that DWP should be asked to review whether the overall provision through the Social Fund is helping vulnerable and homeless people in the best way. This review should consider making homeless people, and people resettling from temporary into permanent accommodation, a priority for funding.

- (iii) Housing benefit - rent limitations in the private rented sector We understand that the arrangements for limiting the amount of rent payable are designed to prevent the benefits system from funding unreasonably high rents or over-large accommodation. We have also noted that the single room rent definition has recently been broadened to include shared accommodation with a shared living room. This is welcome but may not be enough. We therefore recommend that the Scottish Executive should play a full part in monitoring the operation of the broader definition and should provide evidence to DWP of any problems that persist, both in the single room rent arrangements and in the wider measures in place to restrict rents.
- (iv) Non-dependant deductions We have heard evidence that the deduction applied to benefit claimants with non-dependants can increase the risk of homelessness. If the non-dependant's income is sufficient, the amount deducted can be higher than the rent due. Three problems arise. First, where young people already have an uneasy relationship with other family members, the application of a financial penalty in the form of a non-dependant deduction can result in the young person being forced to leave the family home. Secondly, non-dependant deductions often result in housing benefit administration problems. This can lead to arrears and potential eviction. Thirdly, within the verification framework, where a claimant cannot immediately provide details of non-dependants' income, the relevant standard says that the highest deduction should be made. We propose that DWP should be asked to review non-dependant deductions in the light of these comments.

#### Housing benefit administration

50. A joint study by the Accounts Commission and Scottish Homes 'Managing Rent Arrears - getting the balance right' (June 2000) indicated that local authority performance on processing housing benefit claims had deteriorated since local

government reorganisation in the mid 1990s and that the performance of different local authorities in administering housing benefit varied widely. We are also concerned that the administration of housing benefit by Finance Departments of local authorities, without adequate connection to Housing and Social Work Departments, may have led to a service which is insensitive to the needs of homeless people and which runs counter to best housing management practice in helping to sustain tenancies. It is clear that the difficulties surrounding housing benefit administration are creating significant problems in Scotland for tenants and their landlords. Delays in housing benefit payments are causing hardship, anxiety, the threat of eviction for claimants and, in worst cases, are actually creating homelessness.

51. We recognise that improving housing benefit administration is a key priority for DWP and that reforms are under consideration. We welcome the continuing improvements which are being made. We also welcome the development of the Performance Framework, a set of national standards for the secure and effective delivery of housing benefit, and the expected launch of the standards package during 2002. We commend the joint DWP/local authority Help Team initiative currently supporting East Ayrshire in improving its housing benefit services. However, we consider it imperative that action should be taken to improve further the administration and delivery of housing benefit, to reinforce these measures. We believe that it is crucial that housing benefit is recognised as an important part of wider anti-poverty strategies, and that DWP promotes and facilitates effective administration by local authorities.

52. We therefore recommend that local authorities' homelessness strategies should incorporate standards for dealing with housing benefit claims and targets for improvements. Local authorities' performance in delivering these standards and targets should be monitored by Communities Scotland, in collaboration with Audit Scotland, DWP and the Benefits Fraud Inspectorate. When housing stock is transferred from a local authority to a registered social landlord, care should be taken to ensure that this does not have any adverse effect on housing benefit administration.

#### Administration of other benefits

53. The creation of the new organisation Jobcentre Plus provides an opportunity to improve the administration and delivery of social security benefits. There is a need for more pro-active benefits outreach - preferably delivered in partnership with voluntary sector homelessness agencies - and for clear service priorities for at risk/homeless groups. This requires to be addressed in the design of the new service.

## **ACTION TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS**

54. In line with a recommendation in our earlier report, the 2001 Act places a statutory duty on local authorities to draw up homelessness strategies for preventing and tackling homelessness. The Scottish Executive has issued guidance on how to conduct the local assessment of homelessness which will be the starting point for drawing up these strategies. Guidance on the preparation of the strategies themselves will follow shortly after the publication of this report. It will then be for local authorities, with their statutory, voluntary and private sector partners, to draw up their strategies to come into effect from 1 April 2003.

55. So far as the prevention of homelessness is concerned, the objective should be to avoid the crisis of homelessness wherever possible. We would emphasise the important role of housing support, and other forms of support, in achieving this objective. There are various critical points - for example the initial transition to independent living, the breakdown of a relationship or the onset of illness - where the provision of support can be particularly effective in preventing homelessness. We would therefore expect local homelessness strategies to review and, as necessary, make proposals for improvements in:-

- i) the arrangements for early identification of those getting into housing difficulties, across the full range of tenures and landlords;
- ii) the advice and support available for those getting into difficulties;
- iii) the advice and support available for those known to be at particular risk of homelessness, especially young people living on their own, those who may have difficulty managing their own affairs, those recently discharged from the armed services, prisons or long-stay hospitals, and those formerly in the care of local authorities; and
- iv) the provision of leaving home and housing education in schools and other youth services.

Strategies should take account of the differing and specific needs of families and single people living in urban and rural areas. They should ensure that they take account of the needs of people of differing age, race, disability, gender, sexual orientation and belief.

56. Depending on the circumstances of individual households, it may be necessary to ensure the provision of relationship counselling/mediation, financial/debt advice, drug/alcohol counselling, advocacy and proactive action to manage neighbour disputes and tackle harassment. We recommend that local authorities' homelessness strategies should review the availability, accessibility and quality of such services. In particular local authorities should act proactively to ensure that those at greatest risk of homelessness are made aware of the support available, and are helped to access this support.

## Evictions

57. Eviction invariably deepens a household's problems and should always be a last resort. It is often an indication of failure on the part of the landlord as well as the tenant. We recommend that homelessness strategies should provide for specific, concentrated support programmes for those threatened with eviction across all tenures. These programmes should include the provision of access to independent advice and representation.

58. In the case of council tenants, local authorities should ensure that, in potential eviction cases, not only the Housing Department but also the Social Work and Finance Departments pursue an agreed and co-ordinated programme of action in which the need to sustain tenancies is prioritised alongside income maximisation. In drawing up homelessness strategies, local authorities should review their policies for arrears management and anti-social behaviour to ensure that they do not lead to unnecessary or avoidable homelessness. Other landlords, including hostel landlords, should be asked to conduct similar reviews as part of their contribution to local homelessness strategies.

59. It has been suggested to us that local authorities are under particular pressure to reduce rent arrears because of the profile given to the relevant Accounts Commission Key Performance Indicator (KPI) by Audit Scotland. We recommend that the Accounts Commission, Audit Scotland and Communities Scotland, in consultation with local authorities, should review the appropriateness of the "Current tenants' arrears as a percentage of net rent due" KPI to determine whether an alternative approach could assist in reducing homelessness by reducing the number of households evicted for rent arrears.

60. We are also concerned to ensure that private tenants are given maximum protection from illegal eviction and harassment. While criminal liability (under the Rent (Scotland) Act 1984) and civil penalties (under the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988) attach to such actions, legal action rarely results; 15 people were prosecuted for unlawful eviction between 1995 and 1999 and 10 charges were proven. However, we believe from information from voluntary organisations that many cases are not formally reported. We recommend that the Scottish Executive should discuss this with the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland, the Crown Office and local authorities with a view to tackling the problems of illegal eviction and harassment.

61. We also recommend that:-

- (i) Before issuing a re-possession order in respect of a private sector tenant or an owner-occupier, courts should be placed under a requirement, along the lines of section 16(3)(b) of the 2001 Act, to have regard to the extent to which the conduct of third parties is a contributory factor. Among other things this would enable the court to take into account situations in which there had been a delay in dealing with a housing benefit claim.

- (ii) Any landlord (other than a local authority landlord) or other person applying to the court for a re-possession order against a tenant or owner-occupier should be required to notify the relevant local authority of the application. This would enable the local authority to consider what assistance could be provided to prevent the eviction and avoid homelessness.

### People leaving institutions

62. There is ample evidence that those leaving prison, residential care, long-stay hospitals or the armed forces are particularly vulnerable to homelessness. Special action needs to be taken to reduce the risk of homelessness among those making the transition from institutional life. The development of high quality housing and homelessness advice services within these institutions should be a priority. We recommend that those responsible for the care of prisoners, looked after children and young people, long-stay hospital patients and the armed forces should develop high quality housing and homelessness advice services with support from Communities Scotland. Standards for these services should be set and monitored within the appropriate regulatory regime for each type of institution. In their homelessness strategies local authorities should ensure that appropriate linkages are being made between services in institutions and services in the community. We make the following specific recommendations as regards careleavers, prisoners and armed forces personnel.

#### (a) Careleavers

63. It has long been recognised that young people looked after by local authorities require special support when the time comes for them to leave care. Local authorities are legally obliged by the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 (the 1995 Act) to provide throughcare (that is to say advice and assistance with a view to preparing the child for when he or she is no longer looked after) to all children looked after by them. They are also obliged by the 1995 Act to provide aftercare for all young people who were looked after by a local authority at the time they ceased to be of school age, or if they were looked after subsequently; this aftercare must be provided until the young person reaches the age of 19 and can be provided until 21 if requested.

64. We do not doubt that local authorities do their best to fulfil these statutory requirements. We are also aware that the delivery of throughcare and aftercare is currently being reviewed in preparation for the transfer of DWP resources for 16-17 year old careleavers to local authorities. Nonetheless we remain concerned that many young careleavers do become homeless and find themselves on the streets. Apart from the immediate consequences, this frequently means that they become detached from services which are seeking to address their often complex needs. A survey of homeless people living in hostels or sleeping rough in Glasgow in 1999 found that 19% had spent time in local authority care as a child. In Edinburgh, a survey of those who had been in care found that 40% had experienced homelessness at some subsequent point. More needs to be done to reduce the risk of homelessness among young people leaving local authority care.



65. We welcome the fact that one of the 29 milestones in the Executive's Social Justice Strategy sets the target that:-

“All our young people leaving local authority care will have achieved at least English and Maths Standard Grades and have access to appropriate housing options.”

We wish to emphasise however that it will not be sufficient simply to provide initial housing options. Careleavers are likely to require continuing support for a significant period. If the initial housing arrangements break down, alternatives should be sought. Safety-net arrangements should be in place to deal with crisis situations while long-term solutions are discussed and agreed with the young person concerned.

66. We have considered what steps could usefully be taken to reduce the risk of homelessness among those with a care background. We make the following recommendations:-

- (i) The statutory obligation to provide aftercare under the 1995 Act does not apply where a young person has left care before reaching school-leaving age. These young people may well face similar housing problems to those who are still in care when they reach school-leaving age. We recommend that the statutory obligation to provide aftercare should extend to all young people who have spent six months or more in the care of the local authority between their twelfth birthday and school-leaving age.
- (ii) All looked after children and young people should receive appropriate housing advice, including advice on what to do in a crisis, before leaving care. The Looked After Children assessment and action records should be revised to check that this advice has been given and understood, and that future housing intentions have been thought through and are sustainable.
- (iii) Regular checks should be made on the housing circumstances of those leaving care for a period of at least 2 years. This could be done by the care co-ordinator recommended in the report of the Action Team on Better Integrated Working in Children's Services, but close liaison should be maintained with the local authority housing service. The emphasis should be on sustaining housing arrangements which meet the needs of the individual or on providing constructive alternatives where they do not.
- (iv) Contingency arrangements should be in place for dealing with emergencies or near emergencies and the careleaver should be aware of them. As a minimum these arrangements should include provision for immediate access to a person (perhaps the care co-ordinator) with whom the care-leaver has built up a relationship of trust, and the availability of suitable short-term accommodation so that the

care leaver does not end up on the streets or in unsuitable hostel accommodation.

- (v) There should be a standard national form for recording the initial and subsequent housing locations of care leavers for at least 2 years after leaving care. In order to promote good practice, the form should seek to identify actions which have helped to sustain housing and the circumstances which have contributed to housing breakdowns.

67. We recommend that local authorities' homelessness strategies should seek to identify measures which can be taken, in the light of our comments, to reduce the risk of homelessness among those with a care background. We are aware of innovative work being done in a number of areas - including Falkirk and Drumchapel - to try to address the housing and other needs of careleavers more effectively. We encourage those drawing up homelessness strategies to ensure that co-ordinated and imaginative programmes are in place to manage successfully the transition of young people from care into the community.

#### (b) Prisoners

68. Loss of housing is a frequent consequence of being sent to prison. Housing benefit ceases to be payable if a person is expected to be in prison for more than 13 weeks and those in prison for longer than this may well face homelessness on their release. 44% of the homeless people living in hostels or sleeping rough surveyed in Glasgow in 1999 had been in prison at least once. Many get caught in a vicious circle of prison - hostel - prison which needs to be broken.

69. Recently, some progress has been made by the Scottish Prison Service and others to reduce the risk of homelessness on discharge from prison. For example the Throughcare Centre now operating in Edinburgh prison provides a comprehensive range of services aimed at addressing all the prisoners' needs including those on discharge. Largely under the RSI, housing advice services are now being provided at prisons throughout Scotland. The formal evaluation of these services has not yet been completed, but the extent of the demand - in Edinburgh 40-50 prisoners are being seen every week - is an indicator of need. We wish to emphasise the importance of sustaining and developing housing advice services for prisoners and we recommend that, once the forthcoming evaluation has been completed, these services should be put on a permanent footing.

70. We also recommend that consideration should be given to a relaxation in the housing benefit rules. Benefit matters are reserved and therefore outwith the scope of the Scottish Parliament and Executive but we think there is a case for giving local authorities discretion to pay housing benefit to those expected to be in prison for more than 3 months if the prisoner agrees to a repayment plan in respect of the additional amount. We recommend that this should be considered by the DWP.

### (c) People leaving the armed forces

71. A study of people using RSI services has shown that 13% had served in the armed forces at some point in their lives. People leaving the forces are often unaccustomed to independent living and may face the threat of homelessness. This vulnerability may be compounded by underlying factors, particularly for compulsory and medical discharge cases. In addition particular difficulties may be faced by the spouses or partners of service personnel following a relationship breakdown. They may face similar problems to those who have served in the forces if, for example, they have become disconnected from their original community. We are aware that the UK Government is taking action to ensure that the issues facing all ex-service personnel are properly understood, appropriately prioritised and effectively addressed across government. This has resulted in the establishment of the Veterans Task Force, led by the Minister for Veterans Affairs and supported by the Veterans Forum. One of the Veterans Task Force's working groups is concentrating on developing improved Ministry of Defence (MoD) resettlement arrangements to address the needs of more vulnerable services leavers - including improving their likelihood of finding and sustaining accommodation.

72. Against this background we make the following recommendations:-

- (i) In preparing their homelessness strategies, local authorities should take full account of the needs of those leaving the armed forces for whatever reason, including the spouses or partners of service personnel. They should therefore consult, and form links with veterans' benevolent and charitable organisations. Strategies should also take account of the findings of the Resettlement Working Group of the Veterans Task Force.
- (ii) Guidance to local authorities should stress that people due to leave the armed forces should be classified as threatened with homelessness where their licence to occupy service accommodation is due to expire and they have no other accommodation. Services' welfare officers and individual service personnel should also be made aware of this in order that early action can be taken. This is particularly important where personnel are posted overseas immediately prior to discharge.
- (iii) As a basis for assessment of need and to ensure that ex-servicemen and women are connected with services best placed to offer them assistance, local authorities and other bodies (e.g. prisons, care institutions, employment services, voluntary organisations), who may come into contact with people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, should have procedures in place to identify ex-service men/women amongst this group and to signpost the assistance available to them.
- (iv) Following evaluation the MoD should extend the SPACES project (which provides a range of housing and other support services to

service leavers at the point of discharge) to parts of Scotland where there are significant numbers of service personnel.

- (v) As part of its work on improving resettlement, the MoD should consider establishing a network of accessible contact points providing resettlement advice and assistance to those who have left the services.

### Asylum seekers

73. Asylum seekers and refugees are also at particular risk of homelessness. We note that while the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) co-ordinates and funds the provision of housing for asylum seekers awaiting a decision by the Home Office, this terminates when a decision is made. There is a significant risk of homelessness among asylum seekers granted leave to remain in the UK by the Home Office.

74. We welcome the recent decision to increase from 14 to 28 days the period for which the NASS will continue to fund accommodation after an asylum decision has been taken. In some instances a person granted leave to remain in the UK may be offered a permanent tenancy in the house which they have been occupying under the NASS arrangements. In some cases this may be acceptable to the person concerned but in other cases there may be concerns about personal safety or the person concerned may wish to move closer to friends or relatives in another area. Where this is the case all reasonable efforts should be made to meet the preferences of the person concerned. We recommend, consistent with our comments at para 47, that those granted leave to remain in the UK following an asylum application should in future be offered alternative accommodation if they do not wish to remain in the accommodation funded under the NASS arrangements. Our recommendation for the suspension of the local connection qualification would mean that if an asylum seeker who is granted leave to remain in the UK wishes to apply under the homelessness legislation to a Scottish local authority, it would not be open to that authority to reject the application on the grounds that living in the NASS accommodation had established a local connection.

## **ACTION TO DELIVER AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO HOMELESSNESS**

75. Action to reduce the number of people who become homeless is critical. Over time it is essential to achieve a step-reduction in the number of people becoming homeless. But meanwhile many people still live in inappropriate and temporary accommodation - some for long periods - people still sleep rough, and too many people suffer homelessness on more than one occasion. This shows that for many the response to homelessness is inadequate. It also shows that insufficient emphasis is being placed on creating effective long-term pathways out of homelessness. We stress the following points:-

- (i) The response should be based on a thorough assessment of a homeless household's needs. This should always extend to an assessment of the household's support needs. Housing solutions will not work if wider needs are not addressed.
- (ii) The objective should be to find sustainable solutions which enable homeless people to be reintegrated into mainstream society or a supportive community. By sustainable we mean solutions that not only provide housing and income but also restore individual confidence and self-esteem, and lead to the development of positive social networks in the longer term.
- (iii) Action needs to be appropriate to the individual circumstances and needs of the household. In particular we are concerned that the specific needs of families and children are often overlooked. The scale of family homelessness is often underestimated, since it is unlikely that a family will be roofless. Those who have no choice but to live with relatives or friends are equally in need of assistance. We have stressed that homelessness cannot be solved through the provision of accommodation alone. This needs to be acknowledged for families as well as for other homeless people. Intensive interpersonal support should be available to parents and children, both on an individual basis and as a family.
- (iv) Joint working is crucial in addressing complex or multiple needs. However, in many areas the pattern of services available to people experiencing homelessness is a patchwork of fragmented provision, operating in the absence of any overall coherent, co-ordinated strategy. Local authorities, through their homelessness strategies, should provide the direction and create the framework within which all agencies can work together. Effective joint working requires high levels of communication and co-operation between local authorities and other statutory and voluntary sector agencies. A great deal needs to be done in many areas to develop and deliver the levels of communication, co-operation and integration necessary.

## Culture and training

76. All services - statutory and voluntary - with a role to play in preventing and tackling homelessness should ensure that they are promoting values, attitudes and behaviours which deliver responsive and personalised services. They should ensure that staff - many of whom are working in difficult and pressured circumstances - are supported and trained in serving people affected by homelessness.

77. Training should cover, as appropriate, the definition of homelessness, risk assessment techniques to help 'first-to know' agencies respond effectively, joint working with other agencies, support packages, consultation techniques, and how to help and empower people experiencing homelessness to find appropriate solutions. We strongly commend joint training approaches which involve all sectors and providers with a role to play in delivering local authority homelessness strategies. We also recommend that the training programmes run by the Scottish Training on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (STRADA) partnership should include coverage on serving homeless people.

## Crisis response

78. The immediate response to the needs of homeless people is key, especially where they face complex and multiple problems. We are clear that this crisis response should be based upon a comprehensive "fit-for-purpose" assessment of people's needs, and shared care and support management across services. This approach is not novel or radical. It has already been advocated strongly in several other recent reports - by the Glasgow Street Homelessness Review Team, the Joint Futures Group and the Social Work Services Inspectorate.

79. Some local authorities are now well advanced in developing services, based upon this co-ordinated approach, with their partner organisations. However, crisis response systems need to operate in all local authority areas to create effective responses to homelessness which will produce both short-term and long-term solutions. We recommend therefore that all local authorities, through their homelessness strategies, should develop a comprehensive crisis response system, and that, in due course, the effectiveness of these systems should be subject to inspection by Communities Scotland.

80. We envisage the crisis response system having several key features. It should :-

- (i) be flexible and provide individualised responses to the different experiences of homelessness and the different service requirements of people of differing age, family background, race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, and belief;
- (ii) ensure that all those without accommodation are able to access at least immediate emergency accommodation until appropriate assessment is carried out;

- (iii) be permanently available and accessible and perform a triage function, in other words, initial assessment, information, filter and correct referral across a full range of services;
- (iv) include joint protocols and procedures for needs assessment to ensure appropriate support for people with complex or multiple needs;
- (v) have effective referral arrangements in place with response staff responsible for ensuring linkage into the full range of relevant services;
- (vi) ensure that explicit exit strategies from the crisis response stage are devised immediately upon assessment as homeless, to ensure that the resettlement process begins immediately; and
- (vii) monitor and evaluate the outcomes of resettlement services and adjust and improve provision wherever appropriate.

81. We appreciate that integrating service responses to a high standard of effectiveness will require strong commitment, time and effort. We believe this process would be assisted if our expectations were set out clearly in guidance. We recommend therefore that the Executive, in its forthcoming guidance on homelessness strategies to local authorities, should provide advice on the development of crisis response services, drawing upon good practice elements already in place. We further recommend that, to support the operation of the local crisis response systems, a national database and website of homelessness services should be established.

### Resolving homelessness

82. We have investigated how people resolve homelessness. This has shown that there are many different routes out of homelessness. Some are largely independent of statutory or voluntary sector assistance. Other routes involve varying degrees of agency support. It is also evident that people's statutory homelessness status, their support needs and their personal efforts heavily influence the routes taken. However, several resources are common to helping people find effective routes out and achieve sustainable solutions. These fundamental resources are advice and information, accommodation and resettlement support, healthcare, work and related opportunities, and social or personal support.

#### (a) Advice and information

83. Access to information and advice is vital for successful resettlement. Finding routes out of homelessness depends on information about what to do if you are homeless, about the range of housing, employment and support options available, and about practical assistance in relation to rent deposits/guarantees, furnishings and decoration, benefits and form-filling. Yet several of our studies have, independently, confirmed that serious information deficits exist. This includes gaps in the information provided by local authorities to homeless applicants.

84. Section 2 of the 2001 Act requires local authorities to secure that information and advice relating to homelessness, the prevention of homelessness and relevant services is available free of charge in their area. Guidance on the form and content of this advice and information will be issued shortly by the Scottish Executive. This guidance will stress the need for local authorities to review access to information, advice and practical assistance for homeless people and new tenants, and to target information and advice to reach people who are vulnerable to homelessness, or who are moving on from homelessness.

85. The histories of many formerly homeless people have highlighted the important difference advocacy can make in accessing benefits - particularly community care grants - and sometimes in the quality of accommodation obtained. We recommend that local authorities, in providing advice and information on homelessness and the prevention of homelessness, should give priority to ensuring the availability of independent and informed advocacy services within their area and should ensure that these services are well publicised. We also recommend that advice and information should be made available in forms which are accessible by people of all ethnic groups and of all abilities.

#### (b) Accommodation and resettlement support

86. In considering resettlement, we start from two general premises. First, we believe that most of those experiencing homelessness have the potential to sustain long-term housing, providing the necessary supports are in place. For some people the need for support will be short-term and low in intensity. Others may need intensive and ongoing support or varying levels of support at different points in time. Secondly, the move towards a case-based approach should mean that, increasingly, people take appropriate assistance packages with them between dwellings or access assistance from one dwelling in which they have secure tenure. This should make it possible for people to use crisis assistance when they need it, and reduce its use over time, without their housing depending on the provision of support.

87. Most people given crisis assistance should move quickly into permanent accommodation. However, in addition to the need for improvements in the supply and quality of affordable mainstream housing, a sufficient range and supply of various other forms of accommodation is required in each local authority area. This may take a number of forms including hostels, foyers, Bed & Breakfast, refuges, night shelters, supported tenancies, independent tenancies with floating support, furnished accommodation, clustered accommodation, shared housing projects, mobile homes and private sector leasing arrangements. These may be linked to varying types and intensities of practical and emotional support. Some may be long-term specialist accommodation services and others may be permanent accommodation with fluctuating support. However, in most cases the accommodation will be interim in nature, where the main focus will be to move residents on to permanent housing with support as appropriate. In order to reduce the risk of repeat homelessness the number of moves from interim accommodation should be as few as necessary.



88. Section 1 of the 2001 Act obliges local authorities to carry out an assessment of homelessness in their area. Interim guidance issued by the Executive in September 2001 has requested local authorities to supply information on the range of temporary and supported accommodation available, its use and the client groups served. We recommend that local authorities should build upon this assessment and, through their housing and homelessness strategies, plan the delivery of a sufficient supply, range and location of temporary and supported accommodation. In so doing, local authorities should take account of the following points:-

- (i) Provision should be made for the (sometimes very different) needs of families, young people and groups who currently find it difficult to access or sustain any form of accommodation - such as people with problematic alcohol or drug use, people with mental health problems and people with challenging behaviour.
- (ii) The Glasgow Street Homelessness Review Team emphasised the unsuitability of large-scale hostels in Glasgow and recommended their replacement with alternative provision - human in scale and humane in approach. We strongly endorse this recommendation and consider it should be applied throughout Scotland.
- (iii) Bed and Breakfast provision is rarely the right option (though in some situations it may be unavoidable in the short-term). We recommend that homelessness strategies should include proposals to reduce the use of Bed and Breakfast to a minimum, and to eliminate its use for families.

89. In identifying permanent solutions, it is important to consider the formal and informal support arrangements which will help successful resettlement. Location is very important. Homeless people should be located in a community in which they feel comfortable and are likely to be integrated fully into community life. Wherever possible, they should have the opportunity to live near friends and family to maintain contact with them. Employment and education should be similarly accessible.

90. We have emphasised the need for support throughout this report. Through their homelessness strategies, local authorities should ensure that appropriate support packages are available for homeless people during their resettlement. We believe that programmes supporting reintegration, if they are to be meaningful and effective, must help those people affected by homelessness to identify and pursue their own solutions. This does not simply mean involving people affected by homelessness in the design and running of homeless services, important as this is. It means encouraging personal resourcefulness, agreeing with those receiving support services when and how to adjust individual support levels over time, and helping people to live as independently as possible. It also means that packages should be available in ways that enable homeless people to develop social networks through occupational activity and community involvement.

91. Local authorities' homelessness strategies should make specific provision for the accommodation and support of people with disabilities, and for people whose homelessness is a result of domestic abuse.

92. For people with disabilities, homelessness can mean being unable to occupy their present accommodation without excessive hardship or risk to personal safety. Examples include:-

- where the accommodation is not large enough to accommodate the individual and his/her personal assistant or carer;
- where the accommodation does not have a ground floor bathroom or shower or toilet, and the individual cannot climb stairs;
- where the nature of the disability requires equipment which cannot be installed or accommodated in the current house;
- where there is no method of emergency escape which can be accessed.

We recognise that people with disabilities have particular housing needs which can only be met by increasing the numbers of houses built or adapted to barrier-free standards. Links between homelessness and housing strategies should ensure that adequate provision is identified which can be made available to those homeless people with additional housing needs. Local authorities should plan the provision of barrier-free housing for varying needs and respond quickly to requirements for adaptations to housing stock which will prevent the occupier from becoming homeless.

93. Domestic abuse often leads to homelessness and is a key cause of repeat homelessness in Scotland. We also recognise that the threat of homelessness may compel those experiencing abuse to remain in a situation where they may be subject to further abuse. It is essential that local authorities' homelessness strategies should be dovetailed with domestic abuse strategies. We recommend that, in drawing up their homelessness strategies, local authorities should review:-

- (i) the information and advice available to those who are, or may become, homeless as a result of domestic abuse;
- (ii) the availability of safe, emergency, supported accommodation for those who have experienced domestic abuse, taking into account the diverse needs of disabled women/children, women/children from black and minority ethnic groups and those with addiction problems;
- (iii) the availability of suitable long-term accommodation and support packages within a framework which offers options and choice and minimises the risk of further incidents of abuse and/or homelessness; and

- (iv) the extent to which local arrangements recognise the needs of children involved in domestic abuse situations, given that the trauma and distress of being so involved is compounded and deepened by leaving the family home.

In undertaking this review, local authorities should take account of the work of the National Group to Address Domestic Abuse in Scotland which has established a working group to undertake a review of current recommendations on refuge provision.

94. As well as considering the needs of those who have experienced domestic abuse from their partners, it is important to bear in mind that young people may leave home due to violence, threats of violence or other abuse (including sexual abuse). Older people may also be the subject of abuse from their children, carers or partners. Local authorities' homelessness strategies should address the needs of all those who are, or may become, homeless as a result of abuse.

### (c) Healthcare

95. The link between unmet health needs and homelessness is well established. Homeless people experience higher levels of ill health than the general population. Many have drug and alcohol addiction problems and/or mental health problems and/or physical health problems. Their health needs are acute and many of these needs are unidentified and unaddressed. The NHS is largely, though not exclusively, a reactive service which depends on self-referral. Many people experiencing homelessness fail to recognise, or cannot prioritise, their own health needs. Many, especially those with substance misuse problems or chaotic behavioural patterns, find it difficult to cope with appointments systems and other aspects of complex NHS bureaucracy. Many use NHS services only when their health needs become critical, and then turn to Accident and Emergency Departments which, under their own pressures, find it difficult to cope.

96. Put simply, the range of health needs of the homeless population is not well met by the current health services. This means that the health of individuals suffers, not only directly, but also indirectly. Where homelessness results from complex personal issues involving health problems, it is hard for people to access a secure home and to sustain a tenancy. In these situations, sustaining "move-on" accommodation will not succeed without positive health service intervention, help with coping strategies and health support linked with housing and social care.

97. Amongst the problems we have identified are:-

- (i) Homeless people do not find it easy to register with a GP or continue to access GP services when they start to move on from temporary accommodation. GPs operate on the basis of registered patient lists. These lists identify people through their address, normally their permanent address. This presents particular problems for people without fixed accommodation. In rural areas, access difficulties may be compounded by the remoteness of health care service points.

- (ii) The continuity of care requires improvement. Health services may respond to an immediate problem but find it more difficult to provide continuing care where people move in and out of homelessness. In addition, some homeless people with complex problems find that not all GPs provide the full range of services which they may require.
- (iii) Negative self-images, lack of self-esteem and feelings of worthlessness - all part of the damage done by homelessness - mean that many homeless people lack the ability and confidence to seek out appropriate health care.
- (iv) It is difficult to tackle health problems effectively when people are living in poor accommodation and lack social support. This does not however change the fact that there is a lack of some vital services - especially services for substance misuse. Even where services are available, their success can be undermined if people are then discharged back into hostels or other inappropriate accommodation.

98. Significant steps are, however, now being taken to address these issues. Scottish Executive Guidance, issued to NHS Boards in September 2001, places a new requirement on Health Boards to produce Health and Homelessness Action Plans. These Plans will set out the action which Health Boards will take to address the needs of homeless people in local areas. They will take effect from April 2002. This timing means that NHS Boards should be well placed to dovetail their Action Plans with local authority homelessness strategies. To support the homelessness work of Health Boards, a Health and Homelessness Co-ordinator has been appointed by the Scottish Executive. A Health and Homelessness Steering Group, comprised of Scottish Executive, Health, local authority and voluntary sector representatives, is overseeing implementation of these new arrangements. This steering group will also play an important part in monitoring the delivery of our recommendations, where they relate to the health services.

99. We welcome these new measures. However, they are only the beginning. To ensure they achieve results, we recommend that a high priority be placed upon the monitoring of the quality and delivery of Health and Homelessness Action Plans. We also make the following further recommendations to address access, planning, co-ordination and health service delivery issues affecting homeless people.

- (i) Primary care Ensuring registration of homeless people and families with a GP practice is crucial. This is the gateway to primary care services. We recommend that the Health Department's Primary Care Modernisation Group should set out how the primary care needs of homeless people would best be met, within the context of its wider recommendations on improving access to primary health care across Scotland. We also recommend that all local authorities should record information about the GP registration of all those who are assessed as homeless, and should offer information about local health services to homeless people rehoused outwith their existing GP area.

- (ii) Planning Health Service planning has tended not to consider the needs of homeless people. For example, unplanned hospital discharges often contribute to a cycle of repeat presentations at Accident & Emergency Departments. We recommend therefore that NHS Boards should ensure their strategic planning embraces the current and future service needs of homeless people. We also recommend that Drug and Alcohol Action Teams should include, in their planning priorities, the service requirements of homeless people relating to substance misuse. Monitoring of the effectiveness of such processes should be undertaken through the Scottish Executive's assessment of local Health Plans and local drug and alcohol strategies and plans.
- (iii) Children's services We have strong concerns about the healthcare of children in families who are homeless. Where families are moving around temporary accommodation, it can be difficult to ensure that children are included in health screening and immunisation programmes and are able to access support from health visitors and GPs. We recommend that NHS Boards should ensure that all children in homeless families are able to access the full range of universal health services for children; and that the Health and Homelessness Co-ordinator, through Health and Homelessness Action Plans, should monitor this action.
- (iv) Mental health In some areas of Scotland there are mental health outreach services for homeless people. In other areas such services are lacking and the mental ill health of homeless people remains undiagnosed and untreated. There are also significant gaps in services for those with complex multiple needs, including personality disorders. This, combined with differing views about whether or not certain deep-rooted psychological problems can be treated, has led to fragmented and inconsistent approaches. Yet effective interventions can enable individuals to progress within a resettlement process. We therefore recommend that NHS Boards, through their Health and Homelessness Action Plans, should address the provision of mental health services to homeless people to minimise the barriers to access. We also consider that being free from substance misuse should not be an automatic pre-condition for access to services.
- (v) Drugs and alcohol Issues around substance misuse extend well beyond healthcare and apply across a wide range of prevention and support services required by vulnerable and homeless people. The Scottish Executive updated its Planning Framework for Drug Misuse services in 2001 and its Plan for Action on alcohol problems in 2002. Actions within these national approaches, which will prevent substance misuse contributing to homelessness and which will tackle homeless people's drug and alcohol problems, should be given high priority. Examples of such actions include prevention, treatment and care services for vulnerable young people, support for families affected by addictions, throughcare work with former prisoners with drug

problems, and the linking of training and employment opportunities. In addition to these wider actions, we make a number of specific recommendations:-

- Homelessness and substance misuse issues need to be addressed in parallel. New co-ordinated local action should be developed through homelessness strategies and Drug and Alcohol Action Team plans. Local authorities should set out in their homelessness strategies the links they have made with these plans.
  - The recommendations of the Glasgow Street Homelessness Review Team in relation to the development and provision of drug and alcohol services to people currently accommodated in hostels should be more widely applied.
  - The results of Scottish Executive work on effective interventions in tackling drug and alcohol problems should be disseminated to support commissioners and purchasers of services and service providers in both homelessness and drugs and alcohol agencies.
- (vi) Co-ordination We have already stressed the need for a single, co-ordinated assessment approach between statutory and voluntary agencies, particularly for vulnerable homeless people who have multiple needs. This approach should begin to address the many factors which lead to the exclusion of homeless people from health services.
- (vii) Service delivery There is a balance to strike between providing specific services directly to homeless people and ensuring that homeless people can access mainstream services. We see a danger that increasing the number of specific services will increase the exclusion of homeless people from mainstream services and society. We recognise the value of specialist provision for homeless people - particularly where this is integrated with housing and social work support, and in urban areas with concentrations of vulnerable homeless people. However, in the case of primary care services, we consider that specialist provision should be seen as transitional for all but a small number of homeless people. It should provide planned support over a reasonable period of time until individuals are re-housed and settled with access to their local GP practice and primary health care team. The general approach should be to support homeless people to maintain their current health networks or to establish new regular contact with mainstream health services. This approach will require mainstream health services to be both flexible and accessible. It will also necessitate attitudinal change within health services generally.
- (viii) Training We have already emphasised the importance of the training of staff involved in the provision of services to people affected by

homelessness. The Health and Homelessness Co-ordinator, whose remit includes setting standards for homelessness training programmes, should support training on homelessness for health professionals and ancillary staff.

#### (d) Employment opportunities

100. Services addressing homelessness have traditionally focused on finding housing, with little emphasis on employment, education or training. This must change. Employment is a route to social and economic inclusion and a key part of the solution to homelessness. Participation in employment may offer a permanent pathway out of homelessness for many people. It can enable people to make their own housing arrangements and choices. It can give structure and purpose to people's lives, as well as providing social and professional contacts. We believe that socially oriented services must focus also on supporting homeless people towards employability and employment. At the same time, traditional training providers and employment advisers must understand the problems faced by homeless people and their families.

101. We fully appreciate that some homeless people will require supported development before they are able to take up employment. We have examined the range of new approaches focused on developing employability being tested north and south of the Border and make recommendations about pre-vocational support below. We also recognise that, for some families, the disruption caused by their homelessness, along with the need to care for children in the family, makes accessing and sustaining employment even more difficult. In these and other cases employment may not be a realistic option in the medium term. Where this is the case the focus should be on supporting homeless people to engage in other rewarding activities which seek to develop skills and confidence.

102. We appreciate the considerable success of measures, such as the National Minimum Wage which have increased incentives to work, and the help for unemployed people, particularly unemployed young people, through the New Deal and Welfare to Work. We especially welcome the commitment in the Government's March 2001 Green Paper to extend employment, help and choices to those who have traditionally been neglected. However, we have very strong concerns about the difficulties homeless people face in accessing employment and related opportunities.

103. Foremost amongst these difficulties is the inflexibility of the benefits system. Homeless people face serious barriers and disincentives within the benefits system to moving into employment. The rapid withdrawal of benefits, particularly housing benefit, as income rises creates a strong disincentive to take up work. People may be worse off working once their social security entitlements are removed or significantly reduced, particularly if they have to pay full or near to full rent for their accommodation. This problem is particularly acute for those in supported accommodation. This is also impeding transitional employment programmes - programmes which would provide supportive environments and incentives to help unemployed homeless people move from benefits into permanent work over suitable transition periods. The new Supporting People

funding regime from April 2003 will offer a different approach to funding supported accommodation.

104. The creation of employment-led routes out of homelessness, along with the resolution of benefit traps, need to be a high priority. We also attach great importance to continuing the development of pre-vocational services for the most disadvantaged and excluded. We therefore recommend a range of actions. These aim to improve gateways for homeless people to access employment services, generate new employment opportunities for homeless people, pilot transitional employment programmes to overcome benefit traps, and evolve personal development services for the extremely vulnerable. We are particularly concerned that the actions we recommend are applicable to all homeless people/households. The extension of the New Deal to lone parents recognised the importance of assisting some of the most vulnerable families to move away from welfare dependency to economic independence. However sheltered employment, training and/or work placements are often designed to meet the needs of single people or those without childcare responsibilities. It is therefore important that the range of actions we recommend also addresses the needs of parents.

(i) Improved gateways

105. The new Working Age Agency, Jobcentre Plus, will be a key player in the provision of employment assistance. It is critical that it responds to homeless people in a focused and flexible manner. We recommend that Jobcentre Plus should, as a key priority, improve gateways for homeless people to access mainstream employment services and programmes. We consider it should do this by forging links with appropriate statutory and voluntary partners to ensure:-

- (i) systematic skills auditing of homeless people to assist rapid matching to suitable work opportunities. This could be achieved through linkages to homelessness assessments at key entry points to homelessness services.
- (ii) easy access to employment services for homeless people. Lack of knowledge of available employment programmes should not be a barrier to participation.
- (iii) connections between relevant employment initiatives to establish coherent systems for individual progression. A prime example would be closer working between New Deal Personal Advisers and resettlement officers involved in the delivery of the RSI to encourage a greater uptake of early entry eligibility to New Deal.



## (ii) New opportunities

106. We also look to Jobcentre Plus to generate an increased range of employment, intermediate labour market and voluntary work options. The strongest focus should be placed on expanding the range of paid employment opportunities available to homeless people. This would open up solutions for many people. We recommend that Jobcentre Plus should work with the Scottish Executive and the Scottish New Deal Task Force to engage employers to develop employment initiatives targeted at vulnerable and homeless people. This should include wider employer participation in relevant transitional employment programmes for homeless people.

107. Some major private Scottish companies are already involved in initiatives to employ homeless people, in partnership with support agencies. Their models provide examples that others could follow. We believe that this is the area in which the private sector should make its main contribution. We recommend that appropriate business networks should be enlisted to promote such initiatives, using the examples already successfully undertaken by Standard Life and the Bank of Scotland. We also recommend that Jobcentre Plus should examine ways of supporting employers who are willing to participate in such initiatives, particularly smaller employers who lack the resources of the large corporate organisations.

108. We recommend that public sector employers should also examine ways of creating and expanding work opportunities for homeless people. New approaches could draw upon the success of a small pilot scheme between Edinburgh Council and the Big Issue, which has successfully employed several homeless people. We further recommend that new public sector initiatives, should strive to employ homeless people in the provision of their services.

## (iii) Transitional employment programmes

109. We welcome the Government's commitment to pilot transitional employment programmes and the planned StepUp pilots in East Ayrshire and Dundee. StepUp is a new DWP initiative to help people who have been unable to find employment after passing through New Deal move into sustained work through guaranteed jobs. We have ample evidence that many individuals, and those supporting their rehabilitation, do not view participation in employment programmes such as New Deal as an attractive proposition. This is largely because entitlements to housing benefit would be jeopardised. This is setting individuals back in their development. Unless these disincentives are tackled, we are in no doubt that both the range and the success of employment and rehabilitation initiatives will be limited. We also think that the front-end cost of transitional employment programmes could be substantially offset by the value of work produced and benefit savings. There is encouraging evidence from such schemes in other countries suggesting this would be the case.

110. We recommend strongly that transitional employment programmes be piloted in Scotland to test the creation of new incentives to work for homeless people. Such pilots should test how flexibility around housing benefit payments could overcome the poverty trap faced by homeless people when trying to access

employment. We recommend that the DWP should aim to develop and test in 2002, a pilot scheme with The Big Issue in Scotland. We realise there are impediments in Social Security legislation which may prevent potentially effective schemes proceeding. We recommend that, if the DWP is unable to overcome these impediments, UK Ministers should consider amending the relevant legislation to remove these hurdles.

#### (iv) Pre-vocational support

111. In Scotland, the innovative New Futures Fund (NFF) programme is running from 1998 until 2005. This has already demonstrated that some of the most vulnerable and excluded people can, with the right support, begin to escape their cycle of disadvantage and move towards employment. Most participants in NFF projects are not expected to leave with a job or qualification. Increased confidence, better family relationships or the ability to work in a team are just as valued as outcomes. An interim evaluation of the programme has shown that 41% of people assisted by NFF projects have been homeless people. We wish to emphasise the importance of sustaining and developing such pre-vocational services for vulnerable and homeless people. We recommend that a clear action plan is developed to use the results of the ongoing evaluation of NFF services to transfer successful service elements onto a permanent footing over the next three years.

112. In England, several initiatives aimed at developing basic skills and employability are being piloted. One example is the Routeways initiative, which helps people with chaotic lifestyles prepare for access to New Deal. Another example is the concept of extending employment-based cultures within hostels and other accommodation. We recommend that, if proved successful, the relevance of these and other approaches are considered for application in Scotland.

#### (e) Positive social support

113. Many people who have experienced homelessness will have lost, or be deprived of, their social networks of families, friendships or work. The circumstances and trauma of homelessness frequently lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness before and after re-settlement. Ensuing depression and mental health problems are common. There is overwhelming evidence demonstrating that isolation and loneliness are major factors in resettlement breakdown.

114. Overcoming social isolation is therefore crucially important. Virtually all people who move on from homelessness successfully receive some form of positive help and social support, either from families, friends or support agencies. Informal support in particular offers a valuable additional resource, by providing practical and emotional help. Yet this dimension of successful resettlement has, historically, been seriously under-emphasised. We recommend therefore, that the strength of a homeless person's social networks should be an integral part of the assessment of their needs and of the support offered to them in temporary accommodation and during permanent resettlement.

115. We have stressed the importance of helping homeless people gain employment - not just for income, but for self-esteem and social connections. However, many homeless people, for various reasons, will not be able to gain paid employment for some time. Others may have difficulty sustaining employment. We therefore attach great importance to facilitating access to social connections through other means. We recommend that all projects serving homeless people should pursue strategies to promote and support opportunities for positive social interaction. Such opportunities may lie in training and education, in local community initiatives and in clubs, sports and recreational activities. Clearly, different forms of activity will be appropriate for different groups. Creating opportunities will require better information targeted towards people affected by homelessness, and skilful encouragement of personal motivation. It will also require awareness of barriers to participation such as illiteracy, disability or the need for childcare.

116. Many people affected by homelessness would welcome the opportunity to rebuild previous personal networks. In such situations, mediation may provide a forum for communication and positive discussion. Other homeless people may have no prior social networks or may have made a conscious decision not to re-engage with past contacts. In these circumstances, befriending and mentoring services could help in building new social bonds. The needs of children must not be overlooked - they too will have lost contact with friends and family members. Building the social confidence of children can also have a beneficial effect on parents who can access new social networks as a result.

117. We appreciate that there is a need for further testing and development of approaches for enabling social networks to be (re)built. We therefore recommend that a national co-ordination role is created to build and co-ordinate local mediation, befriending and mentoring services for people experiencing homelessness across Scotland. This role would also involve evaluating existing projects, disseminating good practice and facilitating information sharing.

118. We believe this action should be complemented by further effort at the local level. In some communities there are no real networks to tap into, while others may be hostile to formerly homeless people. We recommend that local authorities, through their homelessness strategies, should develop practical means of enabling people affected by homelessness to (re)build social networks. In some areas this may involve the use of new independent services, since too close a linkage with statutory services may undermine their purpose. In other areas it may be appropriate to review, with Social Inclusion Partnerships, how their practices might better support community and neighbourhood networks.

## DELIVERY

119. In this report we have set out a wide-ranging programme of actions to prevent and tackle homelessness over the next 10 years. The aim should be to achieve a step-reduction in the incidence of homelessness, and to ensure that those who nonetheless become homeless have all the support they need to resolve their problems.

120. The programme which we recommend will require action and continued support by national and local government, other public agencies and the voluntary and private sectors. Co-ordination and joint working will be crucial. We recommend that, building on the work of the Task Force, a monitoring group should be set up, with representation from the various interests, to take forward the action programme. We envisage that the monitoring group should:-

- (i) comment on proposals, and related guidance, for implementing the Task Force's recommendations;
- (ii) advise on the specific timing and arrangements for the phased extension and ultimate abolition of priority need;
- (iii) monitor the impact of the suspension of the local connection provision;
- (iv) monitor movements in statistical indicators at both all-Scotland and local levels;
- (v) promote and facilitate benchmarking across statutory services;
- (vi) support ongoing work to promote change and improvement in the performance and culture of all the various agencies providing services related to homelessness;
- (vii) submit periodic progress reports to Scottish Ministers.

The monitoring group should work closely with Communities Scotland as the body regulating local authorities in the performance of their homelessness functions and with other groups such as the Health and Homelessness Steering Group, who monitor service delivery to homeless people.

121. The new system for collecting data about homelessness applications will provide essential information for the monitoring group. We recommend that the group should pay particular (but not exclusive) attention to movements in the following indicators:-

- (i) the number of households applying under the homelessness legislation;
- (ii) the number of households assessed as homeless;

- (iii) the proportion of homeless households placed directly into permanent accommodation;
- (iv) the number of households experiencing repeat homelessness;
- (v) the number of homeless households - particularly families with children - in Bed & Breakfast;
- (vi) time spent in Bed & Breakfast;
- (vii) time taken by the local authority to deal with cases;
- (viii) customer satisfaction indices.

122. However, as previously noted, information about those applying to local authorities under the homelessness legislation only reveals part of the picture. The Scottish Household Survey (SHS), which continuously collects social and demographic information about Scottish households, has potential for monitoring experience of homelessness or potential homelessness across the entire population. From this year onwards, the SHS will gather new data on whether people have ever been homeless, and how many times they have been homeless over the last 5 years. To build on this initial data, we recommend that an expanded suite of questions relating to homelessness should be included in the SHS from 2003.

## LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

### Empowerment

(1) The objectives of increasing homeless people's control and extending their choices, and achieving the effective participation of people affected by homelessness in the development of future policy, practice and service delivery should be widely promoted and given practical effect in all activities directed at tackling homelessness (para 15).

### Homelessness amongst ethnic minorities

(2) Information on the ethnic status of homeless people should be analysed to assess whether any additional actions, focusing specifically on people from black and minority ethnic communities, are required. This should be complemented by a more qualitative study of the experience of homelessness amongst Scotland's black and minority ethnic communities (para 17).

### Improving the homelessness legislation

(3) (i) The definition of priority need should be gradually expanded as services and accommodation are provided and the target should be to eliminate the priority need definition within a decade (i.e. by 2012) (para 28).

(ii) As a first step the statutory definition of priority need should be expanded to include all those assessed as homeless who are less than 18, or who have experienced domestic abuse, or are otherwise vulnerable within the terms of the current Code of Guidance (para 28).

(iii) As a second step the definition of priority need should be further expanded to include any other people who may be deemed to be vulnerable. Additionally, at this stage all those assessed as homeless who are less than a specified age (perhaps 25) and all those who are above a specified age (perhaps 55) should be brought within the priority need definition. The target should be to implement this second stage around 2007/8, although the precise timing will need to be decided in the light of progress made and an assessment of local authorities' ability to cope with this further expansion (para 29).

(iv) Finally, by 2012, the priority need distinction should be abolished by extending the relevant duties to all those assessed as homeless (para 28-29).

(4) (i) The duty placed on local authorities to investigate intentionality should be replaced by a power to do so (para 34 (i)).

(ii) Instead of, as at present, being under a duty only to provide temporary accommodation and advice and assistance to an intentionally homeless household in priority need, the local authority should be placed under a

duty to ensure that such a household is offered a short Scottish secure tenancy with appropriate support (para 34(ii)).

(iii) Local authorities should be placed under a corporate duty to provide, or ensure provision of, such housing support services as are considered appropriate with a view to enabling the conversion of the tenancy to a Scottish secure tenancy (Para 34(ii)).

(iv) The terms of the short tenancy should outline the support which will be offered to the tenant and the action the tenant will take (Para 34 (iii)).

(v) Progress should be reviewed regularly. The prospective tenant should have access to independent advice and advocacy throughout the process of agreeing the terms of the tenancy and during reviews of progress (Para 34 (iii)).

(vi) Where the landlord is not the local authority, the terms of the tenancy should be agreed between the prospective tenant, the landlord and the local authority. If on review the terms of the short tenancy have been satisfied, the local authority should be under a duty to ensure that the household is offered permanent accommodation in the form of a Scottish secure tenancy (Paras 34(iii) and (iv)).

(vii) Households which have been unable to sustain a short tenancy should have their entitlement to a short Scottish secure tenancy suspended until such time as progress can be demonstrated. Local authorities should however remain under a statutory obligation to make an offer of accommodation, with suitable support, during this suspension (Para 34(iv)).

(viii) Through their homelessness strategies, local authorities should make provision for households falling into this category. New approaches may be required in such circumstances (Para 34(iv)).

(ix) In order to avoid splitting up families local authorities should be required to offer accommodation which can house the entire household (Paras 34(v)).

(5) (i) Action should be taken to suspend the provisions in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 which enable a local authority to refer a homeless household to another local authority where they are of the opinion that the household has a local connection with that other authority and not with them (Para 37).

(ii) However, the Scottish Parliament should have power, by way of statutory instrument, to re-activate these provisions either for Scotland as a whole or for particular local authorities in case demand pressures prove intolerable (Para 37).

## Housing policy

(6) Guidance on the preparation of local housing strategies under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 should make homelessness a priority, and this should be reflected in the allocation of resources by Scottish Ministers (para 40).

(7) If current research confirms the usefulness of lead tenancies, this should be actively pursued by Communities Scotland using resources from their development programme (para 42).

(8) Local authorities should assess the local availability of affordable housing for young people seeking their own accommodation for the first time. Housing strategies should include proposals to address any shortfall (para 42).

(9) All local authorities should provide access to rent guarantee/deposit schemes by 2004. The Executive should issue national guidance on such schemes based on lessons learned from local pilots; local authorities should also receive initial funding to enable schemes to be set up (para 43).

(10) A national framework for furnished tenancies should be drawn up, with appropriate funding, by Communities Scotland. A national furniture grant scheme and furniture re-cycling network should be established. We propose a target of 1,000 additional furnished tenancies a year for 5 years, at which point further need should be assessed (para 45).

(11) The number and quality of accommodation offers to homeless applicants should be monitored by Communities Scotland (para 47).

(12) Future guidance on choice-based letting schemes should incorporate arrangements to prevent homeless people being disadvantaged (para 48).

## Benefits

(13) The Scottish Executive should pursue with the Department for Work and Pensions how to meet the general need for more information about the operation of the benefits system in Scotland and for research into the impact of benefits policy on homeless people in Scotland (para 49).

(14) The Department for Work and Pensions should be asked (a) to review the adequacy of welfare benefits payable to 16-24 year olds generally and to young homeless people specifically, (b) to pursue ways of making agencies involved in helping homeless people more aware of the full scope of community care grant provision, (c) to consider making an adjustment to the regulations to permit applications for community care grants to be made prior to the offer of a tenancy, (d) to review whether the overall provision through the Social Fund is helping vulnerable and homeless people in the best way, (e) to consider making homeless people, and people resettling from temporary into permanent accommodation, a priority for funding, and (f) to review non-dependant deductions (para 49(i), (ii) and (iv)).



(15) The Scottish Executive should play a full part in monitoring the operation of the broader definition of single room rent and should provide evidence to the DWP of any problems that persist, both in the single room rent arrangements and in the wider measures in place to restrict rents (para 49(iii)).

(16) Local authorities' homelessness strategies should incorporate standards for dealing with housing benefit claims and targets for improvements. Local authorities' performance in delivering these standards and targets should be monitored by Communities Scotland, in collaboration with Audit Scotland, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Benefits Fraud Inspectorate. When housing stock is transferred from a local authority to a registered social landlord, care should be taken to ensure that this does not have any adverse effect on housing benefit administration (para 52).

(17) The need for more pro-active benefits outreach and for clear service priorities for at risk/homeless groups should be addressed in the design of the new Jobcentre Plus service (para 53).

#### Action to prevent homelessness

(18) Local homelessness strategies should review and, as necessary, make proposals for improvements in (i) the arrangements for early identification of those getting into housing difficulties, (ii) the advice and support available for those getting into difficulties, (iii) the advice and support available for those known to be at particular risk of homelessness and (iv) the provision of leaving home and housing education in schools and other youth services. Strategies should take account of the differing and specific needs of families and single people living in urban and rural areas. They should ensure that they take account of the needs of people of differing age, race, disability, gender, sexual orientation and belief (para 55).

(19) Homelessness strategies should review the availability, accessibility and quality of services such as relationship counselling/mediation, financial/debt advice, drug/alcohol counselling, advocacy and proactive action to manage neighbour disputes and tackle harassment. Local authorities should act proactively to ensure that those at greatest risk of homelessness are made aware of the support available, and are helped to access this support (para 56).

(20) Homelessness strategies should provide for specific, concentrated support programmes for those threatened with eviction. These programmes should include the provision of access to independent advice and representation (para 57).

(21) Local authorities should review their policies for arrears management and anti-social behaviour to ensure that they do not lead to unnecessary or avoidable homelessness. Other social landlords should be asked to conduct similar reviews as part of their contribution to local homelessness strategies (para 58).

(22) The Accounts Commission, Audit Scotland and Communities Scotland, in consultation with local authorities, should review the appropriateness of the "Current tenants' arrears as a percentage of net rent due" Key Performance Indicator to determine whether an alternative approach could assist in reducing homelessness by reducing the number of households evicted for rent arrears (para 59).

(23) The Scottish Executive should discuss the issue of illegal eviction and harassment with the police, the Crown Office and local authorities (para 60).

(24) Before issuing a re-possession order in respect of a private sector tenant or an owner-occupier, courts should be placed under a requirement to have regard to the extent to which the conduct of third parties is a contributory factor (para 61(i)).

(25) Any landlord (other than a local authority landlord) or other person applying to the court for a re-possession order against a tenant or owner-occupier should be required to notify the relevant local authority of the application (para 61(ii)).

(26) Those responsible for prisoners, looked after children, long-stay hospital patients and the armed forces should develop high quality housing and homelessness advice services with support from Communities Scotland. Standards for these advice services should be set and monitored within the appropriate regulatory regime for each type of institution. Local authorities should ensure that appropriate linkages are being made between services in institutions and services in the community (para 62).

(27) The statutory obligation to provide aftercare should extend to all children who have spent 6 months or more in the care of the local authority between their twelfth birthday and school leaving age. All looked after children should receive appropriate housing advice, including advice on what to do in a crisis, before leaving care. The Looked After Children assessment and action records should be revised to check that this advice has been given and understood, and that future housing intentions are sustainable. Regular checks should be made on the housing circumstances of those leaving care for a period of at least 2 years. Contingency arrangements should be in place for dealing with emergencies or near emergencies and the careleaver should be aware of them. There should be a standard national form for recording the initial and subsequent housing locations of care leavers for at least 2 years after leaving care. Local authorities' homelessness strategies should seek to identify measures which can be taken, in the light of our comments, to reduce the risk of homelessness among those with a care background (paras 66-67).

(28) On completion of the forthcoming evaluation, housing advice services currently provided in prisons should be put on a permanent footing (para 69).

(29) The Department for Work and Pensions should consider granting local authorities discretion to pay housing benefit to those expected to be in prison for more than 3 months if the prisoner agrees to a repayment plan in respect of the additional amount (para 70).

(30) In preparing their homelessness strategies, local authorities should take full account of the needs of those leaving the armed forces and their spouses or partners. Guidance to local authorities should stress that people due to leave the armed forces should be classified as threatened with homelessness where their licence to occupy service accommodation is due to expire and they have no other accommodation. Local authorities and other bodies which may come into contact with people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, should have procedures in place to identify ex-servicemen/women amongst this group and to signpost the assistance available to them. Following evaluation the Ministry of Defence should extend the SPACES project to parts of Scotland where there are significant numbers of service personnel. The Ministry of Defence should consider establishing a network of accessible contact points providing resettlement advice and assistance to those who have left the services (para 72).

(31) Asylum seekers granted leave to remain in the UK should be offered alternative accommodation if they do not wish to stay in the accommodation funded under NASS arrangements (para 74).

#### Action to deliver an effective response to homelessness

(32) Local authorities, through their homelessness strategies, should provide the direction and create the framework within which all agencies join up to bring together a range of accessible options that open up genuine opportunities for homeless people (para 75(iv)).

(33) All service providers, statutory and voluntary, should ensure that they are promoting values, attitudes and behaviour which deliver responsive and personalised services. They should ensure that staff are supported and trained in serving people affected by homelessness. Training should cover, as appropriate, the definition of homelessness, risk assessment techniques to help 'first-to know' agencies respond effectively, joint working with other agencies, support packages, consultation techniques and how to help and empower people experiencing homelessness to find appropriate solutions. Joint training approaches should be pursued. The training programmes run by the Scottish Training on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (STRADA) partnership should include coverage on serving homeless people (paras 76-77).

(34) Local authorities should establish crisis response systems which are flexible and provide individualised responses; ensure that all those without accommodation are able to access at least immediate emergency accommodation until appropriate assessment is carried out; are permanently available and accessible and perform a triage function; include joint protocols and procedures for needs assessment to ensure appropriate support for people with complex or multiple needs; have effective referral arrangements in place; ensure that explicit exit strategies are devised; and monitor and evaluate the outcomes of resettlement services and adjust and improve provision wherever appropriate. The effectiveness of these systems should be subject to inspection by Communities Scotland (paras 79 and 80).

(35) The Executive should provide advice on the development of crisis response services and a national database and web-site of homelessness services should be established (para 81).

(36) Local authorities should give priority to ensuring the availability of independent and informed advocacy services within their area and ensure that these services are well publicised. Advice and information should be made available in forms which are accessible by people of all ethnic groups and of all abilities (para 85).

(37) Local authorities should plan the delivery of a sufficient supply, range and location of temporary and supported accommodation. Provision should be made for the (sometimes very different) needs of families, young people and groups who currently find it difficult to access or sustain any form of accommodation. Large-scale hostels should be replaced by alternative provision. Homelessness strategies should include proposals to reduce the use of Bed & Breakfast to a minimum, and to eliminate its use for families (para 88).

(38) Homeless people should, wherever possible, be located in a community in which they feel comfortable and are likely to be fully integrated into community life. Wherever possible they should have the opportunity to live near friends and family and their workplace/school or higher/further education institution (para 89).

(39) Local authorities should ensure that appropriate support packages are available for homeless people during their resettlement (Para 90).

(40) Local authorities should plan the provision of barrier-free housing for varying needs and respond quickly to requirements for adaptations to housing stock which will prevent the occupier from becoming homeless (para 92).

(41) Local authorities' homelessness strategies should be dovetailed with domestic abuse strategies. In drawing up their homelessness strategies, local authorities should review the information and advice available to those who are, or may become, homeless as a result of domestic abuse, the availability of safe emergency supported accommodation, the availability of suitable long-term accommodation and support packages, and the extent to which local arrangements recognise the needs of children. Homelessness strategies should address the needs of all those who are or may become homeless as a result of domestic abuse, including young people and older people (para 93-94).

(42) A high priority should be placed upon monitoring of quality and delivery of Health and Homelessness Action Plans. The Health Department's Primary Care Modernisation Group should set out how the primary care needs of homeless people would best be met (para 99(i)).

(43) All local authorities should record information about the GP registration of all those who register as homeless, and should offer information about local health services to homeless people rehoused outwith their existing GP area (para 99(i)).

(44) NHS Boards should ensure their strategic planning embraces the current and future service needs of homeless people. Drug and Alcohol Action Teams should include, in their planning priorities, the service requirements of homeless people relating to substance misuse. Monitoring of the effectiveness of such processes should be undertaken through the Scottish Executive's assessment of Local Health Plans and Corporate Action Plans on Substance Misuse (para 99(ii)).

(45) NHS Boards should ensure that all children in homeless families are able to access the full range of universal health services for children; and the Health and Homelessness Co-ordinator should monitor this action (para 99(iii)).

(46) NHS Boards should address the provision of mental health services to homeless people to minimise the barriers to access. Being free from substance-misuse should not be an automatic pre-condition for access to services (para 99(iv)).

(47) Actions within the national drugs and alcohol plans which will prevent addictions contributing to homelessness and which will tackle substance misuse amongst homeless people, should be given high priority. The recommendations of the Glasgow Street Homelessness Team in relation to the development and provision of drug and alcohol services to hostel dwellers should be more widely applied. Local action to tackle substance misuse and homelessness in parallel should be developed through homelessness strategies and Drug and Alcohol Action Team plans. The results of Scottish Executive work on effective interventions in tackling substance misuse should be disseminated to support commissioners and purchasers of services and service providers in both homelessness and drugs and alcohol agencies (para 99(v)).

(48) In the case of primary care services, specialist provision should be seen as transitional for all but a small number of homeless people. It should provide planned support over a reasonable period of time until individuals are re-housed and settled with access to their local GP practice and primary health care team. The general approach should be to support homeless people to maintain their current health networks or to establish new regular contact with mainstream health services (para 99(vii)).

(49) The Health and Homelessness Co-ordinator, whose remit includes setting standards for homelessness training programmes, should support training on homelessness for health professionals and ancillary staff (para 99 (viii)).

(50) Jobcentre Plus should, as a key priority, improve gateways for homeless people to access mainstream employment services and programmes. This should include systematic skills auditing of homeless people, ensuring easy access to employment services for homeless people and linking relevant employment initiatives to establish coherent systems for individual progression (para 105).

(51) Jobcentre Plus should work with the Scottish Executive and the Scottish New Deal Task Force to engage employers to develop employment initiatives targeted at vulnerable and homeless people. This should include wider employer

participation in relevant transitional employment programmes for homeless people. Jobcentre Plus should examine ways of supporting employers who are willing to participate in initiatives to employ homeless people, particularly smaller employers who lack the resources of the large corporate organisations. Appropriate business networks should be enlisted to promote such initiatives. (paras 106-107).

(52) Public sector employers should also examine ways of creating and expanding work opportunities for homeless people. New public sector initiatives should strive to employ homeless people in the provision of their services (para 108).

(53) Transitional employment programmes should be piloted in Scotland to test the creation of new incentives to work for homeless people. Such pilots should test how flexibility around housing benefit payments could overcome the poverty trap faced by homeless people when trying to access employment. The Department for Work and Pensions should aim to develop and test in 2002 a pilot scheme with The Big Issue in Scotland. If the Department for Work and Pensions is unable to overcome impediments in Social Security legislation which may prevent potentially effective schemes, UK Ministers should consider amending the relevant legislation to remove these hurdles (para 110).

(54) A clear action plan should be developed to use the results of the ongoing evaluation of New Futures Fund services to transfer successful service elements onto a permanent footing over the next 3 years. If proved successful, the relevance of the Routeways initiative and other similar approaches should be considered for application in Scotland (paras 111-112).

(55) The strength of a homeless person's social networks should be an integral part of the assessment of their needs and of the support offered to them in temporary accommodation and during permanent resettlement. All projects serving homeless people should pursue strategies to promote and support opportunities for positive social interaction (paras 114-115).

(56) A national co-ordination role should be created to build and co-ordinate local mediation, befriending and mentoring services for homeless people across Scotland. This role would also evaluate existing projects, disseminate good practice and facilitate information sharing (para 117).

(57) Local authorities, through their homelessness strategies, should develop practical means of enabling people affected by homelessness to (re)build social networks. This may involve the use of new independent services or a review, with Social Inclusion Partnerships, of current practice (para 118).

## Delivery

(58) A monitoring group should be set up to take forward the action programme. The group should pay particular (but not exclusive) attention to movement in the number of households applying under the homelessness legislation; the number of households assessed as homeless; the proportion of homeless households placed directly into permanent accommodation; the number of households experiencing repeat homelessness; the number of homeless households - particularly families with children - in Bed & Breakfast; time spent in Bed & Breakfast; time taken by the local authority to deal with cases, and customer satisfaction indices (paras 120-121).

(59) An expanded suite of questions relating to homelessness should be included in the Scottish Household Survey from 2003 (para 122).

## Membership of the Homelessness Task Force

### Chair

Jackie Baillie MSP	Minister for Social Justice (until November 2001)
Iain Gray MSP	Minister for Social Justice (from December 2001)

### Members

Robert Aldridge	Scottish Council for Single Homeless
David Alexander	Scottish Federation of Housing Associations
Pat Bagot	Communities Scotland (formerly Scottish Homes)
David Belfall	Development Department, Scottish Executive
Suzanne Fitzpatrick	Department of Urban Studies, University of Glasgow
Paul Howarth	Department for Work and Pensions (from February 2001)
Councillor Rita Miller	CoSLA
Liz Nicholson	Shelter Scotland
Catriona Renfrew	Greater Glasgow Health Board
Bill Robertson	Association of Directors of Social Work
Margaret Taylor	Glasgow Council for Single Homeless
Mark Turley	CoSLA
Mel Young	The Big Issue in Scotland

### Secretariat

Lindsay Manson, Homelessness Team	)
Isabel Drummond-Murray, Homelessness Team)	)
Brad Gilbert, Homelessness Team	) Scottish Executive
Anna Donald, Homelessness Team	)
Sue Irving, Health and Homelessness Co-ordinator	)



### Definition of Homelessness

We identified a range of housing situations that defined the meaning of homelessness for the purposes of our work. This definition embraces the following categories<sup>1</sup>, which are not mutually exclusive, but all have been specified in the interests of clarity.

1. Persons defined in current legislation as homeless persons and persons threatened with homelessness - i.e. those:-
  - without any accommodation in which they can live with their families.
  - who can't gain access to their accommodation or would risk domestic violence by living there.
  - whose accommodation is "unreasonable"; or is overcrowded and a danger to health.
  - whose accommodation is a caravan or boat and they have nowhere to park it.
2. Those persons experiencing one or more of the following situations, even if these situations are not covered by the legislation:-
  - **Roofless:** Those persons without shelter of any kind. This includes people who are sleeping rough, victims of fire and flood, and newly-arrived immigrants<sup>2</sup>.
  - **Houseless:** Those persons living in emergency and temporary accommodation provided for homeless people. Examples of such accommodation are night shelters, hostels and refuges.
  - Households residing in accommodation, such as Bed & Breakfast premises, which is unsuitable as long-stay accommodation because they have no where else to stay.
  - Those persons staying in institutions only because they have nowhere else to stay.
  - **Insecure accommodation:** Those persons in accommodation that is insecure in reality rather than simply, or necessarily, held on an impermanent tenure. This group includes:-
    - tenants or owner-occupiers likely to be evicted (whether lawfully or unlawfully).
    - persons with no legal rights or permission to remain in accommodation, such as squatters or young people asked to leave the family home.
    - persons with only a short-term permission to stay, such as those moving around friends' and relatives' houses with no stable base.
  - **Involuntary Sharing of Housing in Unreasonable Circumstances:** Those persons who are involuntarily sharing accommodation with another household on a long-term basis in housing circumstances deemed to be unreasonable.

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<sup>1</sup> Beyond the above specific categories of persons in situations of homelessness or 'near' homelessness, we have, in our recommendations, recognised a range of other vulnerable persons at particular risk of homelessness, who are the subject of proposed preventative action

<sup>2</sup> The responses to newly arrived immigrants are governed by separate UK legislation and rules administered by the Immigration Service.

## HOMELESSNESS TASK FORCE RESEARCH PROGRAMME

The Task Force research programme comprised thirteen projects, with two main streams of work. The first stream focused on gaps in our understanding of the nature, scope and scale of homelessness. The second stream examined a range of models and approaches to help establish what works in preventing or responding to homelessness. The projects undertaken were:

### Understanding homelessness:

- a quantitative analysis of 'structural' trends and their impact on homelessness;
- a profile of homelessness in Scotland, based on further analysis of HL1 data;
- a review of evidence on people's 'pathways' into and through homelessness;
- a study of 'routes out' of homelessness; and
- a study of repeat homelessness applicants to local authorities.

### 'What works':

- good practice towards homeless drug users;
- hostels for homeless people in the future;
- good practice in joint working on homelessness;
- the role of housing management in homelessness prevention;
- the role of family mediation in homelessness prevention;
- models of intermediate accommodation;
- the lifeskills of homeless people; and
- a review of the eligibility criteria under the homeless persons legislation.

A summary of the findings and conclusions of the Task Force research programme is contained in a separate document accompanying this report.

## Appendix D

### Number of households applying to local authorities under the homelessness legislation

April 1989 to March 2000

Period	Number of applications	Assessed as homeless or potentially homeless		Assessed as homeless or potentially homeless and in priority need	
		Number	% of all applications	Number	% of all applications
1989-90	29,068	18,277	63	14,237	49
1990-91	35,061	23,500	67	16,800	48
1991-92	40,623	27,800	68	18,400	45
1992-93	42,822	30,100	70	19,800	46
1993-94	43,038	30,900	72	18,200	42
1994-95	41,495	31,600	76	17,500	42
1995-96	40,936	30,300	74	16,900	41
1996-97	40,989	30,700	75	16,800	41
1997-98	43,135	32,500	75	17,600	41
1998-99	45,723	34,200	75	18,900	41
1999-00	46,023	34,100	74	20,400	44