

# Improving outcomes for children and young people in housing need

A benchmarking guide for joint working between services



Shelter

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To protect the identity of Shelter clients,  
models have been used in photographs.

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Tees Valley Housing Group.

All statutory guidance and legislation in this  
document continues to reflect the current legal  
position unless indicated otherwise, but may not  
reflect the new Coalition Government policy.

# Foreword



This revised version of our benchmarking guide reflects the changes in policy, guidance and law since the earlier edition was produced in November 2009. It comes at a time when changes brought about by the Welfare Reform Bill and the Localism Bill threaten the affordability and security of many families' homes.

Shelter's Children's Service has clearly demonstrated the impact that homelessness and bad housing have on children's life chances. The welfare changes proposed undermine the housing safety net that has existed and may condemn vulnerable families to frequent moves between poor quality and possibly overcrowded homes, disrupting the development, education and future achievements of their children.

There has never been a greater need for Housing Services, Children's Services and the third sector to work together to identify vulnerable families, prevent homelessness where possible, and mitigate its worst effects. This guide outlines the ways in which partnership working at all levels can help to achieve this and give children within those families hope for the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Campbell Robb". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**Campbell Robb**  
Chief Executive, Shelter

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# Glossary of acronyms

<b>ALMO</b>	Arm's-length management organisation
<b>CAF</b>	Common Assessment Framework
<b>CTB</b>	Children's Trust Board
<b>CYPP</b>	Children and Young People's Plan
<b>DCLG</b>	Department for Communities and Local Government
<b>DfE</b>	Department for Education
<b>ECM</b>	Every Child Matters
<b>HMO</b>	House(s) in Multiple Occupation
<b>JSNA</b>	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
<b>LA</b>	Local authority
<b>LHA</b>	Local Housing Allowance
<b>LPSA</b>	Local Public Service Agreement
<b>LSCB</b>	Local Safeguarding Children's Board
<b>LSP</b>	Local Strategic Partnership
<b>NCAS</b>	National Care Advisory Service
<b>RSL</b>	Registered social landlord
<b>TYS</b>	Targeted youth support
<b>YOT</b>	Youth Offending Team

# Summary and recommendations

Government legislation enshrined within the Children Act 2004, the Homelessness Act 2002, and the Child Poverty Act 2010, have brought about a step change in the way services respond to and address the issue of child, family and youth homelessness. This legislation and its duties provide opportunities for services to work together more effectively. In May 2008, the then Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Government's Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) published *Joint working between Housing and Children's Services: Preventing homelessness and tackling its effects on children and young people* which set out their commitment to work together to achieve key strategic objectives.

Shelter's model of working together in this guide demonstrates how you can achieve some of these objectives at governance, strategic and frontline delivery level within your local authority. We also explore processes that can be used to improve joint working.

Below are our key recommendations for effective joint working between Housing and Children's Services.

## Through governance

- Directors and lead members of local authority (LA) Housing and Children's Services demonstrate a commitment to meeting the needs of homeless children and young people.
- All related agencies – Children's Trust Boards (CTBs), Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCBs), Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) etc – include appropriate and active representation from both Housing and Children's Services.
- Housing and Children's Services understand each other's roles and the legal framework and government directives for each of the services.
- Children's Trusts include a representative from the local housing authority on their boards, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
- Housing Services are represented and actively involved in the LSCBs.

## Through strategy

- Plans or strategies include targets concerning the welfare of homeless children and young people.
- Funding is aligned, and services for homeless children and young people (and those at risk of homelessness) are jointly planned and commissioned.
- Joint policies and protocols are in place for assessing the needs of homeless children and young people, and joint responsibility for meeting these needs is accepted and agreed.
- Children and Young People's Plans (CYPPs), or similar, ensure that housing is given due importance across all of the LAs' plans and strategies aimed at helping children to achieve more.
- LAs use information on homelessness and its effects on children and young people to inform their CYPPs and Homelessness Strategies.

## Through processes

- LAs introduce joint-working strategies, policies, and processes to act as an effective safety net<sup>1</sup> for children, young people and families found to be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

## Through frontline delivery

- Housing and Children's Services are located together, share training and work jointly on prevention and support for homeless children and young people or those at risk of homelessness.
- Partnership working extends beyond the services traditionally considered as 'Children's Services', such as Education and Youth Services, to include Housing and Homelessness Services.
- Frontline housing staff are trained and supported to use the recognised Common Assessment Framework (CAF).
- Housing staff share all relevant information about children in housing need with Children's Services.

1 Safety net, preventing them from becoming homeless or meeting their homelessness needs.

# Introduction

Shelter believes that every child has the right to a secure, safe and decent home and we believe that the guidance and recommendations set out in this publication can help to achieve that. We know those of you working in Housing and Children's Services don't want to see a child's right to a happy and fulfilled life undermined by the effects of bad housing and homelessness. We propose a continuous partnership whereby we can share forward-thinking practices and develop innovative ways of joint working between Housing and Children's Services to secure significant changes in how we protect, support, and encourage the development and wellbeing of children and young people.

## The Need

The number of children in England who suffer due to a national shortage of decent and affordable homes is shocking. Children who live in housing that is overcrowded, temporary, run-down, damp or dangerous number 1.6. million.

- 'Children living in overcrowded housing are up to 10 times more likely to contract meningitis.'
- 'Children in deprived areas are three times more likely to be hit by a car.'
- 'Children in unfit and overcrowded homes miss school more frequently due to illnesses and infections.'
- 'Homeless children are more likely to show signs of behavioural problems such as aggression, hyperactivity and impulsivity.'
- 'The high costs of temporary accommodation can make it difficult to make working worthwhile financially, trapping homeless families in unemployment, which is strongly associated with poverty and reduced life chances.'

These are all research findings in the *Chance of a lifetime* report, commissioned by Shelter (2006). The research by child poverty expert Lisa Harker highlighted how bad housing and homelessness can seriously undermine the Every Child Matters outcomes for children.<sup>2</sup>

Shelter and the charitable Trust Eaga Partnership also commissioned research<sup>3</sup> by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) – a longitudinal study looking at the impact of living persistently in bad housing. It found that:

- an increased duration of living in overcrowded accommodation is significantly associated with children feeling unhappy about their own health
- an increased duration of living in accommodation in poor condition is significantly associated with being bullied in or out of school, getting in trouble with the police and having a longstanding illness, disability or infirmity.

Shelter believes that a stable home and surroundings are fundamental to the wellbeing of children and young people. Our research shows that outcomes are seriously undermined if we fail to recognise and put a child's need for a stable and decent home at the heart of any legislation, policy or practice.

2 The *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* agenda is a shared programme of change to improve outcomes for all children and young people through the 'joining up' of services. More information can be found at <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100418065544/http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/about/background/background/>

3 Barnes, M., Butt, S. and Tomaszewski, W. *What happens to children in persistently bad housing?*, NatCen, September 2008

## Action

There's growing recognition that Housing and Children's Services need to work together to support and address issues associated with child and youth homelessness. Two high profile House of Lords judgments (**R (M) v Hammersmith & Fulham LBC [2008]**<sup>4</sup> UKHL 14 and **R (G) v LB Southwark [2009]**<sup>5</sup> UKHL 26) have clarified the interpretation of the priority need category for homeless 16- and 17-year-olds and highlighted the primacy of the Children Act 1989 in responding to young single homelessness, meaning that most 16- and 17-year-olds presenting as homeless should be deemed 'children in need'.<sup>6</sup> More recently, a further Court of Appeal judgment **R (TG) v LB Lambeth [2011]**<sup>7</sup> again called on councils to take urgent steps to meet their obligations to homeless 16- and 17-year-olds. The judgment concluded that Lambeth Council had failed to meet its obligations to provide the young person with ongoing care and support when he presented to the council as a homeless teenager.

This highlights that there is still a lack of clarity among services about the support and duties owed to homeless and badly housed children and young people in spite of the previous Government's Every Child Matters agenda and the Children Act 2004 having both been instrumental in creating opportunities for joint working between Children's and Young People's Services and Housing departments. There are a number of local authorities (LAs) nationally that are responding to the needs of homeless and badly housed children and young people through the development of joint-working initiatives. However, much more needs to be done and, while progress has been made, recent Government policy changes in welfare reform threaten to put some of the most vulnerable families at risk of financial and housing hardship. Shelter believes that, by working together, we can go some way in preventing this, to ensure that all children can achieve more.

We have produced this revised guide to share, with you (our partners), some of the forward-thinking practices adopted by LAs in their efforts to alleviate the negative impact bad housing and homelessness have on children. Practical case studies throughout will show you how effective joint-working practices are in significantly improving the outcomes for homeless children, young people and their families. Joint-working practices can be carried out at every level of managing and delivering service provision – through four essential layers that envelop a child-centred, outcome-led vision at the heart of the 'onion' model (created to service a set reforms, supported by the Children's Act 2004, as part of the last Government's 'Every Child Matters' initiative):

- people working together in frontline delivery
- people working together with joint processes
- people working together in strategy
- people working together in governance.

Our guide is aimed at those of you who are professionals working in LA Children's Services and Housing departments, and is useful reference for your partners including registered social landlords (RSLs) and voluntary sector organisations working within the homelessness field. This guide with its benchmark indicators will support you to shape and develop first class services for homeless children and young people, and we hope you will share the progress you make with partner colleagues and with us here at Shelter.

- 4 The M case involved an application by a girl of 16 to the Housing department for assistance as homeless since she had been asked by her mother to leave their accommodation. The House of Lords challenge was that the Housing department, in processing the homelessness application, should have referred her to Children's Services for a 'child in need' assessment, and Children's Services should have accepted her as a child in need and accommodated her under s.20. The Housing department never made this referral to Children's Services. See <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200708/ldjudgmt/jd080227a/hammer.pdf>
- 5 The G case involved a 17-year-old who presented to the local Children's Services department as homeless once he'd been excluded from the family home by his mother. Children's Services concluded that his primary need was for accommodation and that G did not have any other additional needs (only needing help with accommodation). Children's Services recommended that he be housed by the council's Housing department under homelessness legislation, with referrals being made to support agencies. See briefing by NCAS on the Law Lords Judgment G v LB Southwark [May 2009] at: [http://england.shelter.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/231269/G-v-Southwark--ChildrenLegalService\\_briefing-Nov09.pdf](http://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/231269/G-v-Southwark--ChildrenLegalService_briefing-Nov09.pdf)
- 6 See *Shelter Children's Legal Service briefing: 'Responding to youth homelessness following the G v LB Southwark judgment'*, November 2009, available as a printed copy or a download pdf from Shelter. Also see <http://www.familylawweek.co.uk/site.aspx?i=ed36316>
- 7 <http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2011/526.html>



# Framework for achieving better outcomes

## The onion model

The 'onion' model<sup>8</sup> is a popular tool used by some local authority Children's Services to highlight the strategic overview of Children's Trusts. We use it to identify the levels of integration needed to improve joint working across Housing and Children's Services. We also illustrate, via examples, the joint-working opportunities available that will lead to positive results for children, young people and families you work with.

## Through the model's four layers, what influences joint working between Housing and Children's Services?

### People working together in governance:

- People working together in governance arrangements, in which shared ownership is coupled with clear accountability.
- Decision-making at director and senior management level across departments influences the level of priority that Children's Services give to housing matters, and vice versa.
- Director-level agreement and involvement ensure that top-level decisions to work together are made; that resources (both financial and in terms of individuals that need to be involved) are allocated to achieving better outcomes for homeless children, eg as would happen within a Children's Trust model.

### People working together in strategy:

A planning and commissioning framework which brings together agencies' planning, supported as appropriate by the pooling or alignment of resources, and ensures key priorities are identified and addressed.

- Policies and plans, targets and measures, all identify the needs of homeless children and work to ensure their needs are met, eg as within local authority CYPPs or similar strategies.

### People working together with joint processes:

Common processes that are designed to create and underpin joint working.

- Approaches, systems, and protocols embedded in practice ensure that Housing authorities or departments are involved in and jointly working with professionals from Children's Services across Education, Youth, 'Early Years' and Social Work.

### People working together in frontline delivery:

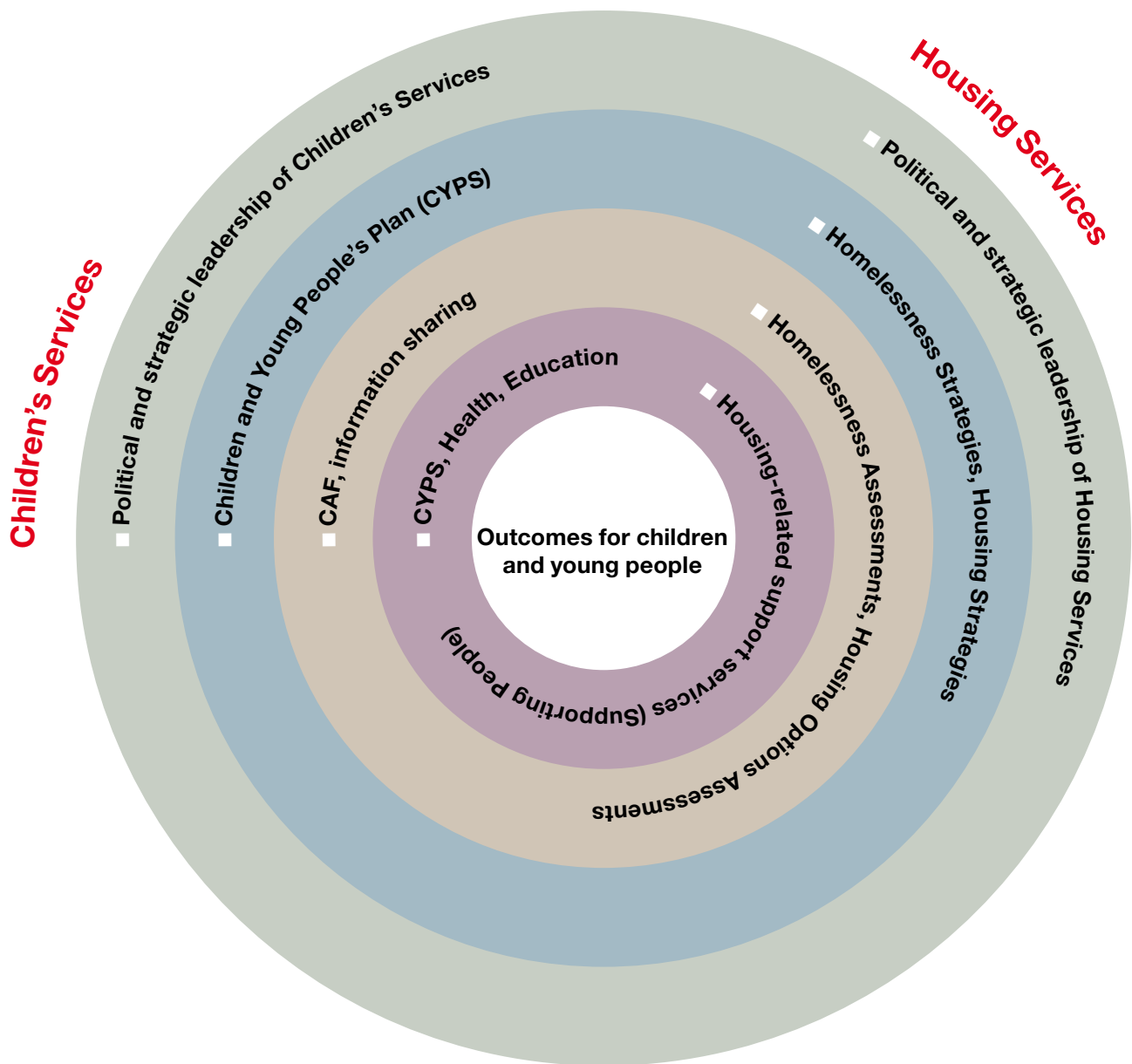
Professionals enabled and encouraged to work together in more integrated frontline services, built around the needs of children and young people.

- Housing and Children's Services' frontline professionals deliver services to children, young people and families that meet their needs, crossing boundaries previously existing between the two departments and working together instead.

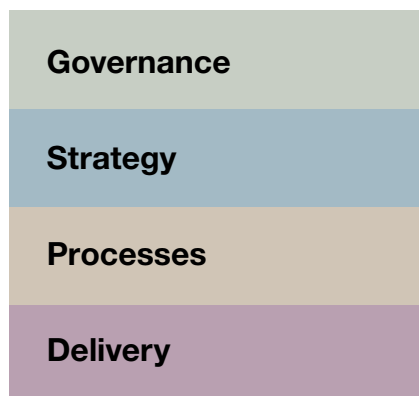
These measures we suggest for Housing and Children's Services derive from general principles which were outlined in *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*, DfES 2004 (ref 3.3, page 12), aimed at leading to better outcomes for children and young people, parents, families and community.

<sup>8</sup> More information about the 'onion model' can be found at <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100418065544/dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/about/aims/strategicoverview/strategicoverview/>

# Onion model



## 'Onion model' key



## Key drivers of life chances throughout childhood<sup>9</sup>



Enabling children to achieve more is at the heart of any professional working within Children Services. The above diagram is drawn from the Frank Field review which looks at poverty and life chances. Ensuring the key drivers of life chances throughout childhood are positive, ultimately determines the success of adulthood. Shelter's research on the following pages details how bad housing and homelessness can negatively impact upon this transition stage.

<sup>9</sup> Field, F. *The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults*, the Report of the Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances (2010), Figure 3.1, page 39.

## Impact of homelessness on children and young people's life chances – the facts

Shelter's research<sup>10</sup> shows how bad housing and homelessness can negatively impact upon children and young people, affecting their transition through to adulthood.

health	safety	education	contribution to society	working life
<p>Poor housing conditions increase the risk of severe ill-health or disability by up to 25% during childhood and early adulthood.</p> <p>Nearly 310,000 children in bad housing in Britain are suffering a long-term illness or disability.</p> <p>Children living in bad housing are significantly more likely to suffer respiratory problems (eg chest problems, breathing difficulties, asthma and bronchitis) than other children – 8% of children in bad housing, including 10% of those living in acutely bad housing, compared with 6% of other children.</p> <p>Children aged 11 to 15 who live in bad housing are more likely to be the victims of bullying than children who don't live in bad housing (40% of those living in bad housing and 43% in acutely bad housing, compared with 33% of other children).</p>	<p>Families living in a property that is in poor physical condition are more likely to experience a domestic fire and less likely to own a smoke alarm.</p> <p>Children living in acutely bad housing are more likely to attend the hospital's Accident and Emergency department (A&amp;E) than other children (in a year, 24% in acutely bad housing and 21% in bad housing compared with 20% of other children).</p> <p>Children living in bad housing are more likely to run away from home at least once during their childhood than other children (9% compared with 6% among other 11- to 15-year-olds).</p>	<p>Homeless children are two or three times more likely to be absent from school. Higher levels of absenteeism, and increased mobility between schools, seem to account for lower levels of academic achievement.</p> <p>One in four children living in bad housing gains no GCSEs, compared with around 1 in 10 children not living in bad housing.</p> <p>Only half of the children living in bad housing (53%) attain five or more A to C grades at GCSE, compared with 71% of other children.</p> <p>Children and teenagers aged 11 to 15 who live in bad housing are twice as likely as other children to have been excluded from school – that is, to be told not to attend school for a fixed period, or permanently – over the period of a year (5% of those in bad housing, compared with 2% of other children)..</p>	<p>Nearly half of young male offenders on remand and 42% of young female offenders sentenced have experienced homelessness.</p> <p>Parents of children living in acutely bad housing are three times more likely to be contacted by the police than the parents of other children.</p>	<p>Living in bad housing as a child results in a higher risk of low educational achievement. This, in turn, has long-term implications for economic wellbeing in adulthood due to an increased likelihood of unemployment or working in low-paid and insecure jobs.</p> <p>The high costs of temporary accommodation can make it difficult to make working worthwhile financially, trapping homeless families in unemployment, which is strongly associated with poverty and reduced life chances.</p>

<sup>10</sup> Harker, L. (2006) *Chance of a lifetime: the impact of bad housing on children's lives*, Shelter, London, and Rice, B. (2006) *Against the odds: an investigation comparing the lives of children on either side of Britain's housing divide*, Shelter, London

# Welfare reform and policy changes

## Policy changes – an overview

A range of policy changes within Housing and Children’s Services may bring many new opportunities for joint working and innovation. However, Shelter believes some of the proposed changes will threaten the income and homes of many families. Both the risk and opportunities posed require that effective joint-working strategies are implemented across local authorities, to ensure that children at risk of homelessness are identified and supported early in order that the negative impact bad housing and homelessness has on their outcomes can be avoided.

The table below timelines the changes that are being implemented and outlines the potential risk to a family’s financial and accommodation status.

## Welfare reform

Date	Reform	Potential risk
From April 2011	For new claimants – the separate Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate for 5-bedroom homes will be abolished so that the maximum rate that can be claimed will be for 4 bedrooms.	Financial strain on those existing large families who have previously been entitled to the 5-bed rate, with the strong possibility of forcing large families out of their current homes into smaller or substandard accommodation. Additional risk of increasing prevalence of overcrowding.
From April 2011	For new claimants – claimants will no longer be able to benefit from a £15 weekly excess if their rent is lower than the amount of LHA they receive.	Financial pressure on low-income families who were using the £15 excess to fund other necessities.
From April 2011	For new claimants – the percentile of market rents used to calculate LHA rates will be reduced, from the median to the 30th percentile of local rates.	The move to the 30th percentile will result in 774,970 households losing some element of rent nationally, resulting in financial hardship for many.
From April 2011	For new claimants – the maximum LHA payable for each property size will be capped so that LHA weekly rates cannot exceed: £250 for a 1-bedroom property £290 for a 2-bedroom property £340 for a 3-bedroom property £400 for a 4-bedroom property.	Financial strain on those existing large families who have previously been entitled to a 5-bed rate, with the possibility of forcing large families out of their current homes into smaller or substandard accommodation. Additional risk of increasing prevalence of overcrowding.
From April 2011	For existing claimants – existing claimants will be affected by the above changes up to nine months after the date of the anniversary of their claim. <sup>11</sup>	

<sup>11</sup> Existing claimants will be affected earlier if they move or their household size changes.

Date	Reform	Potential risk
From April 2011	<p>Non-dependant deductions (NDD) will be increased in stages over three years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ minimum deduction increases from £7.40 to £9.40</li> <li>■ maximum deduction increases from £47.75 to £60.60.</li> </ul>	<p>The increase in NDD is likely to have a major impact on families with older children living at home.</p> <p>Experience tells us that often the tenant, or parent, pays the NDD themselves. They will be less able to do so now, given the reductions in LHA and loss of the £15 excess.</p>
From January 2012	<p>The age threshold for claiming the Single Room Rate (now Shared Room Rate) will be increased from 25 to 35.</p>	<p>More than 62,500 single, 25- to 34-year-olds will be affected by this change as they currently live in self-contained accommodation. There is a lack of shared accommodation available, which creates a further risk that landlords will convert family-sized homes into HMOs (Houses of Multiple Occupation) with further impacts for low-income families.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 67% of young people under 25 who are currently on the Shared Room Rate will have an average shortfall to pay of £29 per week.</li> </ul> <p>The Government has noted that it may be inappropriate for some young people to share accommodation and has introduced concessions for care leavers up to the age of 22 and those in receipt of DLA (disability living allowance). Some ex-offenders are also exempt.</p> <p>There are also concerns about young people who are parents but have experienced relationship breakdown. The extension of the Shared Room Rate for those maintaining contact with their children, or having shared custody, may result in children not being able to visit the mother or father. A young parent's shared accommodation is an unsuitable environment for their young children.</p>
From April 2013	<p>Housing Benefit will be restricted for working-age claimants in the social rented sector who are occupying a larger property than their household size warrants. This is likely to apply to claimants with at least one spare bedroom.</p>	<p>We expect that this will affect about 32% of all Housing Benefit claimants in the social rented sector, the majority of whom are not under-occupying according to the conventional definition used by local authorities and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). For example, a family with a 9-year-old son and 8-year-old daughter would be classed as under-occupying if they each had their own bedroom, and thus be denied adequate Housing Benefit.</p> <p>Most under occupying occurs where there is a low supply of smaller properties, so there will not be the properties for the household to be rehoused into.</p>

Date	Reform	Potential risk
From April 2013	The maximum amount of benefits an out-of-work household can claim will be capped at approximately £500 per week for couples and lone parents, and £350 per week for single people.	Caps on the total amount of benefit payable to households are going to have an impact on families, particularly larger families, and it is expected that around 50,000 households will be affected by this household benefit cap. The caps will also affect families who need to access either temporary accommodation or accommodation with specialist support, where costs are expensive and will therefore leave families with little residual income.
From April 2013	Introduction of the Universal Credit, which will incorporate Housing Benefit for claimants in both the private and social rented sector.	<p>Universal Credit will be an integrated benefit in place of Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Housing Benefit, Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit.</p> <p>The amount of Universal Credit will depend on the level of income and other family circumstances.</p> <p>It will mean that all benefits will be paid in one lump sum, rather than by different agencies at different times. It could mean that, if there is a problem with one aspect of the benefits received, all payments could stop and this will cause potential difficulties with their housing situation.</p>
From 2013/14	LHA rates will be up-rated by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), rather than in reference to local rents.	Although the cost of rent is included in the CPI, it accounts for only 5.4% of the 'basket of goods' used to measure inflation. Historically, this means that CPI has not increased at the same rate as average rents. Between 1997/98 and 2007/08, average rents increased by 70%, while over the same period CPI increased by only 20%.
Localism Bill (to be enacted 2012)	<p>This will allow local authorities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ discharge their homelessness duty to the private rented sector</li> <li>■ remove the 'tenancy for life' in social rented accommodation, providing a new form of flexible tenure for social housing tenants.</li> </ul> <p>To keep up to date with this, please visit the policy section of Shelter's website.<sup>12</sup></p>	<p>This will result in households having to accept a property that is more expensive to rent, less secure in tenure, and may be of a poor quality.</p> <p>Fixed-term tenancies could act as a disincentive to work.</p>

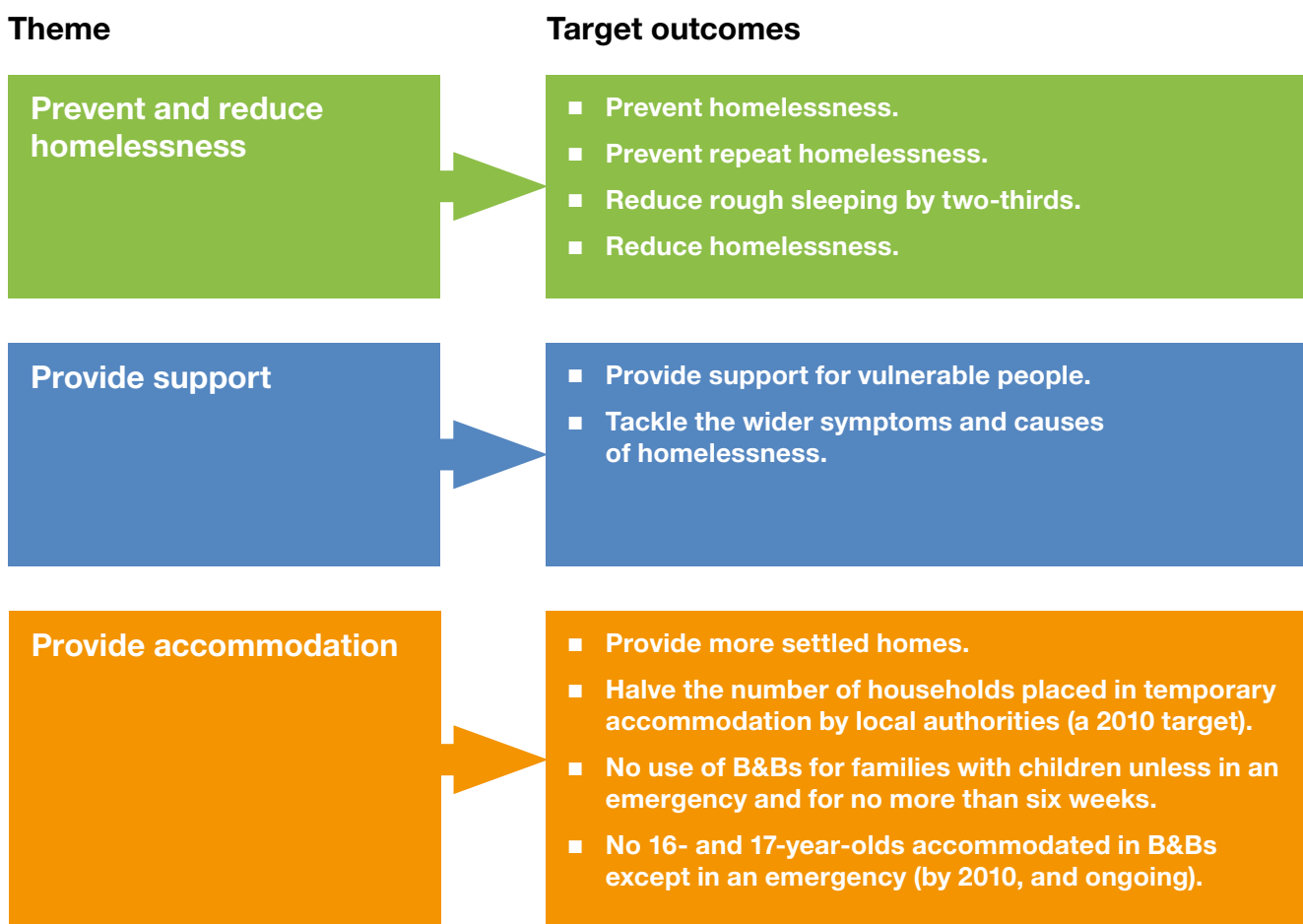
All of the above points mean a challenging time ahead for low-income families. Any reduction in income is difficult to adjust to for any person; but for vulnerable, low-income families, often with multiple and complex needs, Shelter believes that such reforms are likely to jeopardise positive outcomes for children.

<sup>12</sup> [http://england.shelter.org.uk/professional\\_resources/policy\\_and\\_research](http://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_and_research)

# Joint working

## Achieving Housing Services targets through joint working with Children's Services – making the link

The Government's homelessness strategy 'Sustainable Homes: settled homes; changing lives' (ODPM, London, 2005) set out plans for local authorities to continue to reduce homelessness, focusing specifically on preventing homelessness. It identified 10 key outcomes that housing authorities must work towards as a priority to achieve their overall reduction in homelessness. Here's how these outcomes fall within the three strategic themes your authority (LA) must consider in its local area:



You can deliver these outcomes by implementing each of Shelter's good practice measures. See our recommendations on how to on the following pages.

## Ways you can improve the life chances of homeless and badly housed children and young people, through:

### People working together in governance

Director of Children's Services demonstrates clear commitment to meeting the needs of homeless children and young people.



Director of Housing Services demonstrates clear commitment to meeting the needs of homeless children and young people.



Lead Members for 'housing' and 'children and young people' portfolios demonstrate a clear commitment to homeless children and young people.



Children's Trust Boards make clear goals and objectives relating to housing and homelessness.



Housing Services are involved with, and have clear roles and responsibilities on, Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCBs).



### People working together in strategy

Children's Services develop their Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) with appropriate targets relating to homeless children and young people.



Homeless children, young people and families are consulted and involved in the development of Homelessness Strategies and CYPPs.



Housing and Children's Services work together to collate data that will identify the scale and impact of homelessness and bad housing on children and young people's outcomes in the local authority area.



Housing Services develop their Homelessness Reviews and Strategies with appropriate targets that relate to homeless children and young people.



Housing and Children's Services pool or align funding to commission support services and prevention services for homeless children and young people.



Strategy Managers within Housing and Children's Services have a sound knowledge of each other's legislation and guidance frameworks.



## People working together with joint processes

Joint protocols are put in place for assessing and addressing the needs of children within intentionally homeless families.



When pursuing eviction proceedings, LAs take into account the children's need for a secure home and establish effective joint-working practices to ensure their support needs are met.



LAs develop and implement 'prevention' protocols to ensure families threatened with eviction are supported to maintain their tenancies.



LAs have joint protocols between Housing and Children's Services for 16- and 17-year-olds, to ensure adequate housing and support for them.



Children in families who present to Housing departments with housing needs are considered for a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) if additional needs are suspected.



Housing and Children's Services have joint policies and practices in place to ensure that the disruption to schooling for children from homeless families is minimised.



## People working together in frontline delivery

Children's Services ensure families can access specialist housing advice in Children's Centres.



Additional support for homeless children is available in schools, extended schools and Children's Centres.



Peer education methods are used in schools and other young people's settings, so all children learn of homelessness from peers with direct experience.



Staff from Housing and Children's Services are co-located<sup>13</sup> to support making joint assessments.



Housing and Children's Services identify shared training opportunities in their work to gain insight and clear understanding of each other's roles.



Through Supporting People, Housing and Children's Services jointly provide greater support for an intentionally homeless family to sustain a tenancy.



Needs of children from homeless families, and those found intentionally homeless, are assessed and met.



Housing and Children's Services develop 'outreach' support services delivered to homeless children in homeless settings, eg family hostels and B&Bs.



<sup>13</sup> Situated together. In this context, it is about making frontline services easily accessible for children, young people and families, so co-location will be both services having a presence at extended schools, libraries, Connexions, youth centres etc.

## Shelter's benchmark model – at a glance

If your organisation implements this 'best practice' framework as standard, you can expect to see improved results for, and impact on, homeless and badly housed children and young people, and you can clearly evidence your commitment to joint working while providing additional innovative frontline practices.

<b>Governance</b>	Director of Children's Services demonstrates clear commitment to meeting the housing needs of homeless children and young people.	Director of Housing Services demonstrates clear commitment to meeting the needs of homeless children and housing young people.	Children's Trust Boards have clear goals and objectives relating to housing and homelessness.	Lead Members for 'housing' and 'children and young people' portfolios demonstrate a clear commitment to homeless children and young people.	Housing Services are involved with, and have clear roles and responsibilities on, the LSCB.			
<b>Strategy</b>	Children's Services develop their CYPP with appropriate targets that relate to homeless children and young people.	Housing and Children's Services work together to collate data to identify the scale and impact of homelessness and bad housing on children and young people's outcomes in the local authority area.	Housing Services develop their Homelessness Reviews and Strategies with appropriate targets that relate to homeless children and young people.	Housing and Children's Services align funding to commission support and prevention services for children and young people concerning housing and homelessness, eg through Supporting People.	Housing and Children's Services' strategic management have, or work towards having, a sound knowledge base of each other's legislation and guidance frameworks.	Homeless children, young people and families are consulted and involved in the development of Homelessness Strategies and CYPPs.		
<b>Joint processes</b>	Housing and Children's Services have joint policies and practices in place to ensure that the disruption to schooling for children from homeless families is minimised.	LAs have joint protocols between Housing and Children's Services for 16- and 17-year-olds to ensure they have adequate housing and support.	LAs develop and implement 'prevention' protocols to ensure families threatened with eviction are supported to maintain tenancies.	When pursuing eviction proceedings, LAs take into account the children's need for a secure home and establish effective joint-working practices to ensure the support needs of children are met.	Children in families who present to Housing departments with housing needs are considered for a CAF if additional needs are suspected.	There are joint protocols in place for intentionally homeless families.		
<b>Frontline delivery</b>	The needs of children from homeless families, including those deemed intentionally homeless, are assessed and met.	Children's Services practitioners are co-located within Housing and Homelessness Services to support joint assessments.	Children's Centres provide access to specialist housing advice for families.	Greater provision of support and tenancy sustainment for families deemed intentionally homeless.	Shared training opportunities are identified across Housing and Children's Services to ensure that professionals have insight and understanding of each other's roles.	Housing and Children's Services develop outreach services to support homeless children, targeting these services in homeless settings, eg family hostels and B&Bs.	Additional support targeted at homeless children is organised through schools, extended schools and Children's Centres.	Adopt peer education methods in schools and other young people's settings, to prevent homelessness.



# Effective governance

**You will find this section useful if you are:**

- LA Chief Executives
- Directors of Children's Services
- Directors of Housing Services
- Lead Members for Housing and Children's Services
- RSL Directors or Board members.

Governance comprises procedures associated with the decision-making, performance and control of organisations. It provides structures to give overall direction to the organisation and to be accountable in satisfying the expectations of people outside it.

'Effective governance and strategic leadership at Local Authority level are fundamental to driving forward a joint working agenda.'<sup>14</sup>

## **Joint governance arrangements and improving outcomes – it's everybody's business**

We believe arrangements to improve joint working between Housing and Children's Services can take place at every level, and can be implemented by any professional who has the time, resources, commitment and passion to make it happen. However, for practices to be fully embedded, funded, resourced and acknowledged as 'critical' to the wellbeing and long-term positive outcomes for children, it is necessary for people working together in governance to take the lead in developing the overall direction the authority must take towards meeting the needs of homeless children.

There are a number of clear structural and legislative arrangements already in place that provide Housing and Children's Services with opportunities to work more effectively together. Here we outline what they are, and exactly why they are instrumental to the joint-working agenda.

<sup>14</sup> Hodges R., Wright M. and Keasey K (1996) 'Corporate governance in the public services: concepts and issues', *Public Money & Management* 16(2), 7-13

Legislation	Reason for joint working	Recommendations for further action / opportunities
<b>Children Act 1989</b>	The Children Act 1989 created a duty on local authorities to assess the needs of children and young people and provide appropriate services based on that assessment, including a care placement.	The Children Act 1989 promotes the concept of planning and delivering services for children and young people in a corporate manner. These principles of partnership also extend to working with children, parents, carers and extended families. Authorities must adhere to these principles when planning how to jointly deliver services for homeless and badly housed children and young people.
<b>Children Act 2004</b>	<p>The Children Act 2004 created an interagency duty to co-operate to improve the wellbeing of children and young people. The aim of emphasis on partnership working within the legislation is to ensure that most vulnerable children and young people are identified early and do not 'slip through the net', which can happen when agencies work in silo (don't share information).</p> <p>The creation of Children's Trusts, information-sharing systems and joint assessments are currently reinforced throughout this legislation. However, new Government policy seeks to remove the statutory requirement for LAs to have Children's Trusts.</p>	<p>Partnership working needs to extend beyond the traditional services considered as 'Children's Services'. In addition to Health, Social Services and Education working together, Housing and Homelessness Services should be included in strategic planning and service development.</p> <p>Shelter believes the Children's Trust model allows best practice for information sharing and priority setting.</p>
<b>The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000</b>	<p>The Act has two main aims: to ensure that young people do not leave care until they are ready, and to ensure they receive more effective support once they have left.</p> <p>Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 guidance states:</p> <p>'...because of the diverse needs of care leavers and the way in which these will change over time, local authorities are likely to require a range of accommodation options.'</p> <p>These options include training flats, supported lodgings, supported housing, foyers, independent accommodation, and floating support. Accommodation is one of the areas covered by the Pathway Plan that should be prepared by Social Services for each young person on how their needs can be met until the age of 21.</p>	<p>Care leavers are especially vulnerable to homelessness. In England, 16- and 17-year-olds and care leavers aged 18 to 20 make up 8% of the total homelessness acceptances. However, they are only 3% of the total population.<sup>16</sup></p> <p>Better joint working underpinned by this legislative framework can begin to address the severe disadvantages care leavers face with respect to homelessness.</p> <p>(Full list of recommendations in NCAS publication – see footnote below.)</p>

15 For further information about the policy and legislation presented, please follow up references at the back of this guide.

16 Statistics from National Care Advisory Service, *Journeys to home – care leavers' successful transition to independent accommodation*, 2009

Legislation	Reason for joint working	Recommendations for further action / opportunities
<b>Child Poverty Act 2010</b>	<p>This provides a statutory basis to the commitment made by the Government in 1999 to end child poverty by 2020. Part of this will define success in eradicating child poverty and provide a framework to measure progress at a national and local level.</p>	<p>Each LA can access non-statutory guidance issued by the Government to develop a strategy to tackle child poverty within its area. LAs will be able to address areas of child poverty that are most prevalent within the locality. Within the strategy, ‘housing’ and ‘neighbourhoods’ should feature heavily as considerations for LAs.</p>
<b>Homelessness Act 2002</b>	<p>All LAs are required to undertake a review of homelessness in their districts and publish a Homelessness Strategy that must be reviewed every five years.</p> <p>The Act introduced the priority need category for all 16- and 17-year-old young people presenting as homeless. This requires that all authorities’ Housing and Children’s Services have a framework for joint assessment of this age group.</p> <p>In light of the G v LB Southwark case, most 16- and 17-year-olds should be housed by Social Services.</p>	<p>Involvement from Children’s Services would ensure the needs of children, young people and families who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, are considered within the review and effective planning can follow to ensure these needs are met.</p> <p>Partnership working between Children’s Services, young people’s advice services, voluntary sector organisations and Housing departments ensures a joint protocol can be established to guarantee that vulnerable 16- and 17-year-olds receive the support they need when facing homelessness.</p>

## Guidance

Guidance	Reason for joint working	Action to be taken
<b>Homelessness Code of Guidance 2006</b>	The Homelessness Code of Guidance provides advice to LAs on discharging their statutory homelessness functions. It provides detailed guidance on interpreting the homelessness legislation set out in part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. Chapter 5 'Working with others' provides the guidance on joint working, to ensure homeless people or those at risk of homelessness can access an integrated and seamless service.	LAs introduce effective joint-working strategies, policies and processes (protocols) to ensure that children, young people and families are provided with an effective safety net if they are found homeless, or are at risk of becoming homeless or intentionally homeless.
<b>Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010 and Guidance</b>	Revised regulations and guidance, replacing the Care Leavers (England) regulations of 2001. This streamlines processes to increase the emphasis on more effective care planning, with a focus on the child. The revisions are designed to improve the quality and consistency of care planning, placement and case review for looked-after children. They also aim to improve the care and support provided to care leavers.	Guidance accompanying these regulations provides clarification on the 'sufficiency duty' placed on LAs under 22(G) of the Children Act 1989, to secure sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of their looked-after children. Although this duty lies with each individual LA, it can be implemented most effectively through a partnership between the authority and its Children's Trust partners. Each LA has a duty, under section 10 of the Children Act 2004, to make arrangements to promote co-operation with its relevant partners, with a view to improving the wellbeing of children. <sup>17</sup>
<b>Provision of accommodation for 16- and 17-year-old young people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation (2010) Guidance</b>	Revised guidance for local authority Housing and Children's Services concerning their respective duties under Part 3 of the Children Act 1989 and Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, to secure or provide accommodation for homeless 16- and 17-year-olds following the judgment by the House of Lords in the case of R (G) v London Borough of Southwark [2009].	Housing and Children's Services need to adopt the recommendations outlined – mainly the need for effective joint working, preventative work and rapid, fluid assessment procedures being in place, supported by a joint-working protocol in order to mitigate the negative effects of homelessness on young people's life chances.
<b>Joint working between Housing and Children's Services: Preventing homelessness and tackling its effects on children and young people, DCLG/DCSF Guidance 2008</b>	This guidance focuses on four groups of children and young people <sup>18</sup> who have been identified as being at particular risk of poor outcomes in the absence of effective joint working between Housing Services, Children's Services and their partners.	Housing and Children's Services are recommended to address the needs of the most vulnerable groups at risk of homelessness. LA services need to adopt this guidance and use it to meet local need.  The targets and recommendations in the guidance should be adopted in all levels of the local authority's services, from delivery through to strategy and governance.

<sup>17</sup> To find out more about Care Leavers Regulations and Guidance, and Sufficiency duty and guidance, go to: <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/childrenincare/a0065502/care-planning-for-looked-after-children-and-care-leavers>

<sup>18</sup> The four groups are: 16- and 17-year-olds who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, care leavers aged 18 to 21, children of families living in temporary accommodation, and children of families who have been or are at risk of being found intentionally homeless by a Housing authority.

## The future

Review	Reason for joint working	Action to be taken
<p><b>Frank Field, <i>The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults</i> (2010)</b></p>	<p>The review explores how a child's home environment affects their chances of being ready to take full advantage of their schooling and recommends potential action by government and other institutions to reduce poverty and enhance life chances for the least advantaged.</p> <p>It also suggests a reform of poverty measures, in particular the inclusion of non-financial elements.</p>	<p>Access to a secure, stable home has to be the first building block in ensuring children have positive life chances.</p> <p>Housing and Children's Services have a key role to play, working together and sharing information to ensure open lines of communication that will contribute to the success of tackling and eradicating poverty.</p>
<p><b>Graham Allen, <i>Early Intervention: The Next Steps</i> (2011)</b></p>	<p>The review's core message of an early intervention approach is designed to build the essential social and emotional bedrock for children from birth, to ensure that children from an early age up to 18 can become the 'excellent parents of tomorrow'.</p> <p>It raises awareness that influencing social and emotional capability is harder and more expensive the later it is attempted. A late reaction to social problems is more likely to fail. The early intervention culture is an essential shift to 'primary prevention', with the aim of achieving significant potential social and financial benefits.</p> <p>Graham Allen's second report <i>Early Intervention, Smart Investment, Massive Savings</i> (2011) highlights how investing in early intervention brings huge savings on crisis intervention.</p>	<p>Housing has to be a key indicator in any early-intervention strategy. Children need supportive, attentive and encouraging parents to thrive. However, material circumstances are equally important.</p> <p>There's much evidence to suggest that without a stable, decent and secure home, free from disrepair, parents often struggle to provide a stable and nurturing environment in which their children can develop and thrive.</p>
<p><b>The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report <i>A child-centred system</i> (2011)</b></p>	<p>This sets out recommendations that will help to reform the child protection system. With respect to serious case reviews (SCRs), it identifies that there should be a stronger focus on understanding the underlying issues that made professionals behave the way they did and what prevented them from being able to help and protect the children properly.</p> <p>It recommends the child protection system moves away from a compliance to the learning culture, giving practitioners more scope to exercise professional judgement in decisions on how best to help children and their families.</p>	<p>Housing has a key role in child protection. There needs to be representation, with housing professionals actively participating on Local Safeguarding Children's Boards.<sup>19</sup></p> <p>SCRs often highlight housing circumstance as a contributory factor in the child protection issues being examined.</p>

<sup>19</sup> See Shelter's *Good practice briefing: The role of housing services in safeguarding children*. 2011

Shortly available from [http://england.shelter.org.uk/professional\\_resources/childrens\\_service/childrens\\_service\\_publications](http://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/childrens_service/childrens_service_publications)

## Governance structures that lead to more joint working

Structures	Reason for joint working	Action to be taken
<b>Children's Trusts</b>	<p>The Children Act 2004 enshrined in legislation the need for all LAs to establish an integrated Children's Trust framework as the means of embedding integrated systems of working across Education, Social Services, Health and all other agencies involved with children.</p> <p>Though the Government has removed the statutory requirement for LAs to have a Children's Trust Board, many authorities will maintain the framework in recognition of the importance of joint working and clear lines of communication.</p>	<p>Children's Trust Boards include a representative from the local Housing authority, with a clearly defined role and responsibilities to ensure better outcomes for children, young people and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.</p>
<b>Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB)</b>	<p>Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children requires effective co-ordination. The LSCB is the key statutory mechanism for agreeing how the relevant organisations in each local area co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in that locality, and for ensuring the effectiveness of what they do. Housing authorities have a vital role to play in their effectiveness.</p>	<p>Housing Services represented and actively involved in LSCBs have better lines of communication and opportunities to address safeguarding issues for homeless and badly housed children and young people.</p>

## Shelter's benchmark indicators for opportunities

Shelter found many individual examples of Housing and Children's Services working effectively together at governance level. From this knowledge we have developed a set of benchmark indicators complete with practices (numbered and grouped below), which will aid successful implementation and help you monitor and map your progress.

### 1. Children's Trust Boards have clear objectives relating to homelessness.

- Housing and Homelessness Services are represented on Children's Trust Boards (CTBs), or similar strategic forums, at executive and strategic level.
- Remit of the 'Housing' representative is to improve outcomes for homeless and badly housed children and young people.
- The CTB and its Executive demonstrate a commitment to improving outcomes for homeless and badly housed children.
- The CTB ensures the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP), where it exists, contains sufficient priorities and measures for improving outcomes for homeless and badly housed children.
- The CTB ensures that homelessness prevention is a key priority for Housing and Children's Services.
- The CTB has ultimate responsibility for ensuring Housing and Children's Services work together effectively to improve outcomes and develop a shared ethos, actively removing barriers to joint working.
- The CTB ensures effective mechanisms are in place to link the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) and council leadership, to deliver better outcomes for homeless and badly housed children.
- In two-tier authorities, Housing and Children's Services have partnership arrangements in the locality to ensure effective engagement of district Housing authorities with county Children's Services.

### 2. Housing Services are involved with and have clear roles and responsibilities on Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCBs)

- Non-statutory agencies that undertake advocacy on behalf of homeless and badly housed families are represented on the LSCB to provide an independent housing perspective and legal context.
- Strategic Housing Services from the local authority are represented on the LSCB.
- LSCBs carry out authority-wide reviews of the impact homelessness has on the wellbeing of homeless and badly housed children and young people.
- As part of their serious case review (SCR) function, LSCBs measure and report on the extent to which homelessness and bad housing impacts on safeguarding issues within their authority and how this can be improved.
- SCRs undertaken by LSCBs are shared with Children's Trusts, Housing departments and Children's and Young People's Services to enable effective priority planning.

### 3. Lead Members for 'housing' and 'children and young people' portfolios demonstrate a clear commitment to homeless and badly housed children and young people.

- Lead Members for Housing and Children's Services are informed about the scale and impact of homelessness and bad housing on children and young people in their local authority area.
- Lead Members ensure there are appropriate priorities and measures in place to address problems and improve outcomes.
- All members of the Scrutiny Committee for housing and children and young people work together to measure the extent to which needs of homeless and badly housed children and young people are being met across the local authority area and how this can be improved.

#### 4. Director of Children's Services demonstrates clear commitment to meeting the needs of homeless and badly housed children and young people.

- Director is informed of the extent of homelessness and bad housing of children and young people in the local authority area, and what impact this has on their outcomes.
- Director understands the legislative and policy framework in which housing and homelessness operate.
- Director works with their counterpart in Housing Services to prioritise services in the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP), where it exists, that meet the needs of homeless and badly housed children and young people.
- Director is responsible for ensuring there is an ethos of joint working with Housing Services to meet the needs of homeless and badly housed children and young people – ensuring there are appropriate resources and plans in place to achieve this as well as remove barriers.
- Director ensures clear lines of accountability to enable joint working between Housing and Children's Services.

#### 5. Director of Housing Services demonstrates clear commitment to meeting the needs of homeless children and young people.

- Director is informed about what impacts on the wellbeing and outcomes of children and young people in the local authority area who are homeless or living in bad housing.
- Director understands the legislative and policy framework in which Children's and Young People's Services operate.
- Director works with their counterpart in Children's Services to identify service priorities in Homelessness and Housing Strategies, to meet the needs of homeless and badly housed children and young people.
- Director is responsible for ensuring an ethos of joint working with Children's Services to meet the needs of homeless and badly housed children and young people – making sure resources and plans are in place to ensure this as well as to remove any barriers.
- Director ensures clear lines of accountability to enable joint working between Housing and Children's Services.

### CASE STUDY

#### Involvement of Housing Services in Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB), Stockton-on-Tees BC

Stockton Borough Council was keen to work across agencies to create a network of support for children and young people. This was reflected in their approach to youth homelessness and driven by their commitment to safeguarding.

The council's 'Procedures for Working Together to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children in Stockton-on-Tees' contains a section on the roles and responsibilities of Housing Services, Housing authorities and RSLs (registered social landlords, such as housing associations). 'Housing' has been represented on the LSCB for many years. The Business Manager of Stockton's LSCB was a member of the group that led on a review of Stockton's youth homelessness policies and services, which in turn led to improved joint working between the Housing and Children, Education and Social Care services, in recognition that homelessness was a safeguarding issue for children and young people.

Through coming together on the LSCB, the Housing Service and the Children, Education and Social Care Services have fostered an open and effective joint-working relationship. They are better able to identify how and where they can work together, and what

training and awareness opportunities are useful. Raising awareness on child protection with Housing Officers has ensured quick referrals to Children's Services when necessary, and Housing Officers have been instrumental in providing advice through their expertise in housing legislation, to practitioners from Stockton's Children, Education and Social Care Service.

Resources across the authority are shared between services to meet the needs of children and young people. For example, Housing Options and RSLs allocate and provide suitable accommodation to the Children, Education and Social Care Service, specifically enabling them to carry out their duties to homeless 16- and 17-year-old young people as identified in the Children Act 1989. Joint assessments are carried out by practitioners from Housing and the Children, Education and Social Care Services to determine the specific needs of the young person. Support and accommodation offered is tailored to the individual's own needs.

Stockton Borough Council's commitment to improving joint-working practices has had many benefits. The presence of the Housing Service on the LSCB has led to practices that have reduced the number of young people presenting as homeless, reduced the number of young people experiencing repeat homelessness, and reduced the number of families with dependant children at risk of eviction becoming homeless.

# Effective strategy

## You will find this section useful if you are:

- Strategic Managers
- Commissioners (Housing, Health, Supporting People, Children’s Services).

Strategic arrangements and planning in LA Housing and Children Services are governed by a number of key plans and policies, and these provide opportunities for both services to align accountability and plan strategically to serve the interests of homeless and badly housed children and young people.

‘A commissioning framework which brings together agencies’ planning, supported as appropriate by the pooling of resources, and ensures key priorities are identified and addressed.’<sup>20</sup>

By identifying a number of opportunities at LA level through which both Housing and Children’s Services can interact, we highlight the ways in which they can develop joint strategies, policies and plans, targets, and measures that will address the specific needs of homeless or badly housed children, young people and their families. The opportunities to work effectively together at strategic level are outlined below.

Strategic arrangements	Reason for joint working	Recommendations for further action / opportunities
<b>Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP), or similar action plans</b>	The Government has withdrawn the requirement for LAs to produce a CYPP. However, some LAs will maintain this framework or will produce similar action and priority plans, which will enable them to identify the needs of children in their authority area, identifying a means of meeting those needs, and mapping these against an action plan. Homeless children are identified at this point, and strategies for working with the Housing department are identified.	Significant scope in CYPPs, or similar action plans, to include details about how Children’s Services support homeless children and how they work with their Housing partners to improve the wellbeing and life chances of these children.
<b>Homelessness Strategy</b>	Introduced by the Housing Act 2002, Homelessness Strategies are a statutory obligation on Housing departments to set out the nature of homelessness in the local area, the causes, the extent of it, and the approaches for tackling it. Authorities therefore have a strong incentive to work with Children’s Services to identify ways to tackle the problem together and draw on shared opportunities to prevent or mitigate the impact on children.	Children’s Services can contribute intelligence on the extent of homelessness and its effects on children, young people and families. An opportunity to find solutions to address the problems together.
<b>Youth Homelessness Strategy</b>	Youth Homelessness Strategies are seen as good practice, seeking to address the specific needs of a vulnerable group. The Housing authority works with Children’s Services and other local partners to meet their needs.	Housing and Children’s Services need to work together to develop the strategy and plan effectively for the prevention of youth homelessness.

<sup>20</sup> *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* 2004 at <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100418065544/http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/about/background/background/>

## Shelter's joint-working indicators

The following set of indicators and action points can help benchmark progress you make towards developing and implementing joint strategies.

### **1. Housing and Children's Services work together to collate data that identifies the scale and impact of homelessness and bad housing on children and young people's outcomes in the local authority area.**

- Record information on the number of young people who present as homeless and the number of children in families who present as homeless.
- Know how many children live in families who are on the housing register, and how many young people present as homeless who are on the housing register.
- Find out about young people and children in families whose tenancies or homes might be at risk, and those who have accessed tenancy relations services.
- Know about children in families who have been 'prevented' from becoming homeless by the Housing Options service, and have been supported to access accommodation in the private rented sector.
- Include the number of young people and families with children who present to voluntary agencies because of bad housing, homelessness or a risk of homelessness (collate through multi-agency monitoring). This information should feed into the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).
- Liaise with Health Services to identify the number of children attending primary or secondary health-care services due to accidents or illnesses resulting from their housing situation or circumstances. Feed into the JSNA.
- Gather information on the provision and support for these groups of young people and identify gaps in provision. Use Supporting People data and feed into the JSNA.

### **2. Children's Services develop Children and Young People's Plans (CYPPs) or similar action plans, with appropriate targets relating to homeless children and young people.**

- Take into account existing data on homeless children and young people in the development of action plans.
- Give due recognition in the plans and priorities to the impact housing and homelessness has on children's life chances.
- Work jointly with Housing Services to monitor and review the impact on children and young people's outcomes.
- Identify cross-cutting targets (particularly those that link in with homelessness strategies) to ensure joint delivery processes are developed.
- Have locality plans in two-tier authorities, eg to ensure effective engagement of district Housing authorities with county Children's Services.
- Include references in CYPP or similar action plans to four priority groups: 16- and 17-year-olds, care leavers, children of families in temporary accommodation, and those within intentionally homeless families.

### **3. Housing Services develop Homelessness Reviews and Strategies with appropriate targets relating to homeless children and young people.**

- Take account of existing data on homeless children and young people when developing the Homelessness Review and Strategy.
- Co-operate with Children's Services, including input from a representative to develop the Homelessness Review and Strategy.
- Recognise the impact that housing and homelessness has on children's life chances.
- Work jointly with Children's Services to monitor and review impact on children and young people's outcomes.
- Identify cross-cutting targets and ensure joint delivery processes are developed.
- Have locality plans in two-tier authorities to ensure effective engagement of district Housing authorities with county Children's Services.
- Share ownership of the Homelessness Reviews and Strategies with Children's Services.
- Chief Executive in unitary authorities takes responsibility to ensure Homelessness Review and Strategy is a cross-departmental priority.
- Include references in Homelessness Strategy and Housing Strategies to four priority groups: 16- and 17-year-olds, care leavers, children of families in temporary accommodation, and those within intentionally homeless families.

### **4. Housing and Children's Services pool funding to commission prevention and support services concerning the housing and homelessness of children and young people.**

- Identify where services can be delivered more effectively and efficiently by joint commissioning to address the 'prevention of homelessness' agenda.
- Develop targets that meet both departments' priorities.
- Ensure Supporting People budgets consider children of homeless families and homeless young people, and align funding with Children's Services to provide holistic services. Supporting People should be jointly commissioning with Children's Services for these groups.
- Homelessness prevention funds are negotiated with Children's Services to develop innovative services jointly addressing needs of homeless and badly housed children and young people.

### **5. Housing and Children's Services' strategic management have, or work towards having, a sound knowledge base of each other's legislation and guidance frameworks.**

- Understand and recognise the impact of children's housing and its importance to their wellbeing and outcomes.
- Develop 'learning and development' strategies for key staff to gain contextual knowledge of housing policy and service delivery.
- Actively share information about each other's plans and priorities.
- Introduce cross-departmental systems and allow strategic-level staff to undertake work shadowing, staff exchanges, secondments, joint training or seminars.

### **6. Homeless children, young people and families are consulted and involved in the development of Homelessness Strategies and CYPPs.**

- Develop and work with joint models of consultation to involve service users in strategic planning.
- Work with the voluntary and community sectors to facilitate consultation.
- Develop and extend service-user forums for homeless and badly housing children, young people and families.
- Involve homeless and badly housed children, young people and families at every level of reviewing and monitoring Homelessness Strategies, CYPPs (or similar plans) and Housing Strategies.

## CASE STUDY

### North East Regional Youth Homelessness Network, 2011

The Regional Youth Homeless Network (RYHN) is a collective of housing advice and support providers, local authorities, young homeless people and other organisations committed to working together to find solutions to youth homelessness in the region.

In 2009, the RYHN secured funding to appoint a Regional Development Co-ordinator to support the network in its development of a regional strategy aimed at preventing youth homelessness. The key objectives of the strategy are:

- to enable the voice of homeless young people to be heard and taken into account in relevant policy and service developments across the region
- to identify, promote and disseminate good practice across the region through the development of quality standards
- to identify gaps in service provision and suggest solutions to these gaps, based on feedback from young people
- to promote young-person-led research of key issues across the region
- to improve the quality of temporary and supported accommodation in line with 'Places of Change' standards
- to increase early intervention work in schools, plus with families, learning from best practice already existing within the region – prevention being a priority
- to strengthen partnership working at a regional level, through strategy and policy that sets targets and draws together capital and revenue funding streams, because a regional approach is necessary
- to explore local and regional solutions to obstacles posed by the transition to adulthood (eg discrepancies in Housing Benefit rates), thereby tackling age inequality
- to improve and make transparent the accountability of all providers (statutory, voluntary and community sector, and social landlords) for meeting the needs of young people.

In 2011, the RYHN is launching its Regional Youth Homeless Strategy alongside a two-year action research project that will see local authorities across the North East piloting actions and recommendations from the strategy in a bid to improve services and provision for young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The strategy aims to map and draw together current strengths in provision, examples of excellent and pioneering practice in working with young homeless people across commissioning, statutory service provision and the work done by service providers, where learning and expertise could be shared across the region on strategic and operational levels.

It provides a framework for turning priority solutions from principles into actual practice, and responsibility for implementing this strategy falls on all of those whose work impacts on young people – commissioners, policy and strategy makers and investors, operational service managers and providers, and young homeless people themselves.



# Effective processes

## You will find this section useful if you are:

- Professionals
- Operational members of staff
- Managers

working within

- LA Housing Services
- LA Children’s Services
- RSLs (registered social landlords)
- Voluntary sector organisations in the homelessness field.

Housing and Children Services each have their own procedural framework and standard tools for carrying out day-to-day tasks, eg processes to determine if individuals or families are eligible for assistance or the nature and level of assistance required. Identifying and meeting the needs of individuals and families can be achieved more effectively by using common processes and tools, and by sharing information between each other.

‘Integrated processes: the procedural framework and standard tools used by Housing and Children’s Services to work effectively together.’<sup>21</sup>

## The importance of shared processes

All Government guidance and legislation promotes joint processes that enable the delivery of more effective, integrated frontline services. We are interested to promote a framework that encourages joint working between Housing and Children’s Services, and you can use the indicators we provide (below) to benchmark your procedures.

Processes	Reason for joint working	Recommendations for further action / opportunities
<b>Common Assessment Framework (CAF)</b>	The CAF is a generic assessment for children with additional needs, which can be used by practitioners across all Children’s Services in all local areas in England. It aims to help early identification of need, promote co-ordinated service provision and reduce the number of assessments that some children and young people go through.	Frontline Housing staff that come into contact with vulnerable children are trained and supported to use the CAF.  Take a ‘Family CAF’ approach to arrive at a holistic, whole family needs assessment. <sup>22</sup>
<b>Information-sharing processes</b>	Information sharing helps agencies to collect and communicate relevant details about children and young people to enable early intervention and prevention work, for safeguarding and promoting welfare and for wider public protection.	Housing staff ensure that relevant information about children in housing need is shared with Children’s Services.
<b>Joint protocols</b>	A joint protocol will outline how all agencies work together to address the needs of service users who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.	Develop clear protocols that outline responsibilities of Housing and Children’s Services in meeting the needs of homeless families and young people. These protocols will ensure homeless people do not go through multiple assessments and there is a more holistic approach in services meeting all their support needs.

21 *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* 2004 at <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100418065544/http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/about/background/background/>

22 The Family CAF is a tool being used by many LAs to address families’ needs holistically. For examples, see <http://www.southtyneside.info/article/11632/Family-CAF-and-eCAF>

## Shelter's benchmark indicators for joint working

### 1. Housing and Children's Services have joint policies and practices in place to ensure that disruption to schooling is minimised for children from homeless families.

- Housing Services to share information with Children's Services, including Education, concerning families with children who move and need a new school place or measures taken to enable a child or young person to continue at their existing school. Where a family attends the Homelessness Service, but the children are not in school, a CAF is used to identify their additional needs to support them getting back into school.
- Education Services' staff check weekly with Housing Services to ensure they are aware of families moving into their area and the families that are considered to be intentionally homeless, making sure that additional support is provided for them to access schooling locally.

### 2. Housing and Children's Services have joint protocols to ensure adequate housing and support for 16- and 17-year-olds.

- Ensure that 16- and 17-year-olds presenting as homeless receive an assessment of their needs under the Children Act, as outlined in G v LB Southwark.
- Develop a protocol to identify how both services work together to meet the needs of this age group and clearly define the role of the CAF, Child in Need assessment, and Targeted Youth Support services.
- Come together to agree definitions and understand threshold of need with regards to 'Child in Need' assessment.
- Housing representatives attend and contribute to Multi-Agency Panel meetings regarding homeless and/or badly housed children and young people.
- In two-tier authorities, arrangements are made locally for Housing and Children Services' practitioners to work together.

### 3. LAs develop and implement 'prevention' protocols to ensure families threatened with eviction are supported to maintain tenancies.

- Families with children living in social housing or the private rented sector, when eviction is a risk, are offered tenancy-sustainment support to help them maintain their tenancy.
- Where antisocial behaviour by a young person in the household is a factor threatening the family tenancy, Housing and Children's Services collaborate to prevent eviction, eg using family interventions or Targeted Youth Support.
- Through Homelessness Strategies and CYPPs or similar plans, LAs agree a protocol with all major landlords in their area that ensures families are not evicted without being given adequate support from housing-related support services to help prevent the eviction.

### 4. When pursuing eviction proceedings, take into account the children's need for a secure home and establish effective joint-working practices to ensure their support needs are met.

- Housing Services notify Children's Services when families are threatened with eviction, to ensure support is provided. This measure is written into joint protocols.
- All landlords inform Housing and Children's Services when eviction is being considered.
- Where a family is being rehoused, due consideration is given to the suitability and quality of accommodation offered and accommodation is of a standard that meets the family's needs.

## 5. Children in families who present to Housing departments with housing needs are considered for a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) if additional needs are suspected.

- Where a family with children presents to the Housing Options or Homelessness departments, LAs arrange a housing needs assessment to determine additional needs.
- A CAF is used where additional needs are identified.
- LAs develop a Housing Lead Professional role (either internally or commissioned externally), to co-ordinate action with other professionals, where additional support needs have been identified for children of homeless families.
- Nominated frontline practitioners from Housing and Homelessness departments are trained in how to be the Lead Professional and in the use of CAF.
- Housing authorities get involved and participate, within CAF structures, to address the housing needs of children in families who present to any other service including Children's Centres.

## 6. Ensure there are joint protocols in place for 'intentionally homeless' families.

- CAF is used when additional needs are identified.
- Ensure both accommodation and support needs are met. Where a family is being rehoused or placed in temporary accommodation, due consideration is given to the suitability and quality of accommodation offered and accommodation is of a standard that meets the whole family's needs.
- Commission a Housing Lead Professional role, to co-ordinate delivery of services to children within 'intentionally homeless' families.
- Housing departments refer all families deemed 'intentionally homeless' to Children's Services for an assessment. Children's Services to respond within an agreed time frame.
- Families are not split up or threatened with being split up, when there is no child protection issue.
- Children's Services report regularly to the Chief Executive of the council, Housing departments and Children's Trusts, informing on the number of referrals of 'intentionally homeless' families and the action taken to support them.

## CASE STUDY

### Web-based information sharing, tracking temporary accommodation movements, NOTIFY London

NOTIFY is a web-based information and notification system for London's councils. It is a register of homeless, single people and households allocated accommodation (under the Homelessness Acts) when moving into another borough, and it supports continuity of Social Services, Education and NHS care.

The system aims to improve households' access to services by notifying relevant services of the placement or movement of statutorily homeless households living in temporary accommodation in London. This is particularly important in relation to movement of families with children and it enables, for example, the Children's Services' access to information.

London Councils supports the exchange of information, with the consent of the individuals directly involved, and encourages staff in Housing, Education and Children's Services to discuss how they will ensure the information is used effectively. London Councils is offering a course that sets out the duty of information sharing and how protocols can assist statutory and voluntary agencies to exchange information properly.

See <http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/services/notify/default.htm>

# Effective frontline delivery

## You will find this section useful if you are:

- Frontline practitioners in Housing Services
- Frontline practitioners in Children's Services
- Frontline practitioners from a voluntary sector organisation or RSL.

While effective governance, strategy and processes are all important factors in the joint-working agenda, people working together in frontline delivery is paramount. Frontline practitioners foster the relationships with families, children and young people and are often the ones who make those judgements and fundamental decisions about the advice and support needs of homeless and badly housed children, young people and families.

'Multi-agency working could involve anyone whose job or voluntary work puts them in contact with children, young people and their families. It is likely to include people from professional backgrounds including social work, health, education, Early Years, youth work, police and youth justice. Because children, young people and family's needs can be very different, the composition of a multi-agency team will differ from case to case. It is important each practitioner brings with them their own specialist skills, expertise and insight so that the child, young person and family gets the best support possible.'<sup>23</sup>

Clear lines of accountability, information sharing and communication between Housing and Children's Services will help you better address the needs of homeless children in your area and lead to improved outcomes. The short case studies and practice indicators that follow provide examples of how joint working between the services at a frontline level proves successful, and you can use this information to benchmark what you do.

## Shelter's indicators for joint working

### 1. The needs of children from homeless families, including those deemed 'intentionally homeless', are assessed and met.

- When a CAF is carried out, Housing Services are involved in the process and due weight is given to consider:
  - overcrowding
  - issues with the landlord
  - rent arrears, and
  - eviction risk.
- Housing Officers from Housing Options teams are given basic awareness training of the impact of bad housing on children's outcomes during their induction training.
- The team involved in meetings invites Housing professionals to attend for the assessments where a housing issue is identified.
- In assessments made, consideration is given to the distance travelled to school.

### 2. Staff from Housing and Children's Services are co-located or working closely together to support joint assessments.

- LA Housing teams or independent housing advice services deliver regular outreach advice sessions in Children's Services' arenas, such as extended schools and Children's Centres.
- Family Support Workers at Children's Centres know where families recently placed in temporary accommodation live, and they make contact with them through Housing Officers.
- Housing Options teams and Children's Services are co-located and jointly deliver commissioned services linked to Supporting People (SP) to address the needs of children in homeless households.
- Housing Services and the Youth Offending Service or Connexions, plus other targeted youth support, all work together to create solutions to prevent homeless young people, or those at risk of homelessness, from offending.

<sup>23</sup> See <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/strategy/integratedworking/a0069013/multi-agency-working>.

### **3. Children's Centres will provide access to specialist housing advice for families.**

- Children's Centres have a nominated member of staff who is trained in housing matters and able to give substantive support and advice to families in housing need.
- Induction processes for newly hired family support professionals includes basic housing and homelessness training.
- Families moving home are given support to register with a new GP and dental health services.

### **4. Housing and Children's Services work together to provide greater provision of support and tenancy sustainment for families deemed intentionally homeless.**

- Both Children's Services and Housing departments nominate a member of staff to ensure early identification and prevention of families at risk of being found 'intentionally homeless', due to antisocial behaviour or rent arrears in particular.

### **5. Identify opportunities for shared training across Housing and Children's Services to ensure professionals have clear insight and understanding of each other's roles.**

- Representatives of housing providers locally (ALMO, council or RSL) are included in Children's Centre steering groups or area-based steering groups.
- Staff from Housing departments deliver basic 'housing information' workshops to family support professionals to improve their knowledge on local housing procedures and homelessness issues.
- Managers of Children's Centres brief Housing staff about how their centres work, and Housing Options and Homelessness staff are given training on the LA's plans and frameworks for helping children achieve more.

### **6. Additional support for homeless children is arranged through schools, extended schools and Children's Centres.**

- Children's Centres work with families living in temporary accommodation (hostels, B&Bs and hotels).
- Primary and secondary schools ensure any child known to be living in temporary accommodation, overcrowded conditions or bad housing can receive free or subsidised access to Breakfast Clubs, Homework Clubs and after-school activities.
- Housing staff have a good knowledge of local Children's Services and activities, and can promote these to families living in bad housing and/or temporary accommodation.

### **7. Peer education methods are employed in schools and other young people's settings, to prevent homelessness.**

- Arrangements are made to organise homelessness prevention workshops in schools.
- Housing Services work with schools and in other youth settings to provide homelessness awareness and prevention information.

### **8. Housing and Children's Services go out to provide support for children in their homeless settings, eg family hostels and B&Bs.**

- A nominated person in Housing Services is responsible for developing and maintaining links with Children's Services.
- Free 'Early Years' provision for all two-year-olds living in temporary accommodation is available through Children's Centres.
- Children's Centres work with families living in hostels or B&Bs and temporary accommodation hotels.
- Housing departments update Family Support Workers monthly about where families with pre-school children recently placed into temporary accommodation live.
- Housing and Children's Services work together to ensure children are enrolled in school.

## CASE STUDY

### Peer Education, Shelter's Ricochet service

Peer education is an effective means of information sharing between young people, recognising the importance young people themselves put on learning from and being influenced by their peer group. In Rotherham, the Ricochet service has now become well-established and has developed solid links with local schools, colleges and a number of employers in the area. It has strong ties with Connexions and the council's Youth Service, allowing young people access to additional advice and presenting opportunities to deliver Peer Education sessions to other young people.

#### The story of one Peer Educator

Sally, originally from North Yorkshire and the eldest of three girls, moved with her family to Rotherham when she was 10 to be nearer her elderly grandmother. Shortly after this, Sally's dad lost his job due to time off work sick and unexplained absence, when in fact he was looking after her mother who was ill with depression and anxiety. Illness and a lack of money had a profound effect on the family. Her mother could no longer cope with three children, so the dad spent all his time trying to help while Sally, herself only a child, tried taking on the role of mother to keep some sense of normality intact for her siblings. Sally had to witness her mother's drinking and self-harming while she also refused to seek medical help, take her medication or keep appointments.

The girls became very insular, the situation worsening as they began to miss school, and this eventually resulted in Social Services getting involved to remedy things. All of them were placed in the care of their grandmother where arguments ensued and overcrowding was an issue with three young adolescents sharing one bedroom. Their school work suffered, and the grandmother then told them they all had to leave once they reached 16.

Sally left home on her sixteenth birthday and felt lost and confused, not really knowing where to go, what to do or who to ask for help. Her parents didn't want to help, as they were living under medical

supervision themselves at the time, so she found herself homeless without money. She walked round Sheffield's city centre for two days, sleeping in the park and living on a loaf of bread and some crisps. She came across the Connexions office and, not knowing what alternative she had, asked for their help. They referred her to the Roundabout Centre, a hostel for young people. It wasn't perfect, but it was better than sleeping rough and they made her welcome on arrival, providing her with a hot meal and a bed. Immediately after this, she was referred to the Action Housing Hostel in Rotherham where she was given a bedsit, helped to access benefits, and an action plan was drawn up to help her get back on her feet.

A major part of the plan was for her to engage with Shelter's Ricochet service, where she met other young people who had experienced similar problems, and she was able to share her fears or concerns and make friends to feel relatively 'normal' once again. In the year that followed, Sally completed her Peer Education qualifications, attending schools and delivering Homelessness Awareness sessions. Her confidence in class was second to none, and her sessions were fun and exciting. Her self-esteem soared and her future aspirations began taking shape.

Sally started her NVQ3 in Childcare at Rotherham College in 2009, successfully completed her first year and is now living in her own council flat and well on the way to completing her further education.

Ricochet gave her the confidence to have a go at further education, allowing her to work towards a qualification in a supportive atmosphere. She realised she had to stop thinking of herself as a victim and see her situation in a positive light. She is now actively seeking employment, which will allow her to complete the final year of her course and move on with her life. Sally still pops into the office to say 'hello' and continues to be an inspiration to new Peer Educators in the service. She's made a big difference in her own life as well as to the young people to whom she's delivered awareness sessions.

## CASE STUDY

### **Intentional homelessness: sharing information to improve outcomes, Shelter Keys to the Future, Knowsley**

Mr Abbott and his 11-year-old son Bradley were referred to the service provided by Shelter Keys to the Future, Knowsley from the LA's Homelessness Prevention team. The service works with families who are deemed to be 'intentionally homeless', or are at risk of becoming so.

Bradley was put into voluntary care by his mother. When Mr Abbott discovered this, he applied for and obtained parental responsibility, and began trying to establish a safe family home for them. Unfortunately, the only place they had to stay was with his own parents who were alcoholics. He took this option as a short-term measure and applied to the LA as homeless.

The LA accepted that Mr Abbott was homeless and in priority need, but declined to rehouse him because of substantial rent arrears accrued many years before when he lived with Bradley's mother. Bradley was the subject of a Child Protection Plan for emotional abuse suffered in the past, but there had been frequent changes of Social Worker and

Mr Abbott felt let down and reluctant to engage with Children's Services. These factors jeopardised Bradley's chance of a settled family life.

The Shelter worker assigned to support Bradley attended multi-agency meetings at the school and with Social Services, liaising with representatives from Education, Children's Services and Health. This enabled her to inform Children's Services about the family's housing situation, giving them a fuller picture of Bradley's circumstances and needs.

After intervention from Shelter, the rent arrears were written off, and the worker represented Mr Abbott at Knowsley MBC's High Priority Resettlement Panel. She was able to submit the feedback she'd had and a supporting letter from Children's Services, as well as making it clear that Bradley needed to be rehoused within walking distance of the school and in the community where he was currently receiving support. The family was accepted as high priority and subsequently rehoused in their preferred area.

Without the worker acting as the link between services, there would have been a risk of the family remaining in unsuitable accommodation and Bradley returning to the care system.

## CASE STUDY

### **Supported Accommodation for Care Leavers, the Fairway Project**

Tees Valley Housing Group's Fairway Project aims to provide young care leavers with supported accommodation that prepares them for independent living. The Fairway Project has six flats with communal living areas at its disposal.

Referrals to the project come from the local authority's Youth Leaving Care Team, to a multi-agency allocations panel. All providers at the panel discuss each referral and decide which young people would most benefit from the services at Fairway.

Once a young person secures accommodation at Fairway, project workers carry out an initial interview with them, a key worker from the Youth Leaving Care Team and a support worker from Fairway, to develop a support plan and identify goals for the future that will prepare the young person to live independently.

Joint working between frontline Social Workers and staff at Fairway is extremely positive. Regular communications between the two services and a mutual understanding of professional roles and boundaries enables the Youth Leaving Care Team and Housing Team from Fairway to provide the most effective support for the young person.

The key positive outcomes from the project have been identified as:

- improved working relationships between Housing and Social Care teams
- a reduction in failed tenancies among care leavers
- improved confidence and motivation among young people at Fairway.

## CASE STUDY

### Children's Centre 0–5 Services and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee function, LB Hackney.

In late 2008 to early 2009, Hackney's Overview and Scrutiny team regarding children and young people reviewed the borough's services for infants aged from 0 to 5. During the course of interviews with parents in Children's Centre settings, members of the Scrutiny Commission heard frequent requests for more input and advice on housing-related matters. Although the commission identified some examples of interaction between 'Early Years' providers and Housing Services, its final report included a recommendation that housing advice services should deliver surgeries in Children's Centres in the areas of highest need in the borough.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee also encountered consistent messages about the importance of practical and frequent interaction between the services at the Children's Centre and

the local housing provider, Hackney Homes. It recommended that a representative from the local ALMO be invited on to each of the six area steering groups for 'Early Years' services in order to foster mutually beneficial working relationships.

With support from Shelter, these recommendations were discussed at further meetings between the Children's Centre's 'Extended Services' team in Hackney and its Housing Services, and an action plan was developed to realise the recommendations by the commission's review date.

Following the General Election in 2010, MPs visited a number of services in the borough where previous overview and scrutiny work had made a real difference. This included a local Children's Centre, where staff talked about the success of working more closely with a variety of housing partners following the recommendations of the scrutiny review.

## CASE STUDY

### Preventing Evictions Protocol, Newcastle City Council

Newcastle City Council (NCC) has a multi-agency partnership agreement that brings support agencies together when an eviction is threatened. The protocol lays down actions to be taken at pre-tenancy stage, during the tenancy, and at the threat of eviction. Vulnerable households are identified as part of the housing application and allocations process, and the agreement ensures support is provided in the right place at the right time. Young people from the following groups are included in the agreement:

- Care leavers.
- People already receiving support.
- People leaving supported housing.
- People with drug or alcohol issues.
- People with disabilities.

Households that are not assessed but contain children are identified at the first sign of a problem. At this point, an Advice and Support Worker (ASW) is assigned to the family for assistance and support.

The ASW involvement is laid down in the rent arrears protocol, and support is available from an early stage. If eviction cannot be avoided, the ASW will make a referral to Social Care and assist in finding alternative accommodation. Support can include referrals to specialist agencies and in-house support planning by staff qualified in social work. In cases where a young person looks likely to fail in a tenancy, even with support, a move to a supported housing project can be offered. It is agreed that the young person will not be deemed intentionally homeless or punished for this failure in later years.

Over the years, this protocol to prevent evictions has successfully brought about a decline in numbers:

- 197 evictions in 2007
- 118 evictions in 2009
- 46 evictions in the first half of 2010.

With challenging financial times ahead, NCC and Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) are committed to continuing the support to prevent evictions.

## CASE STUDY

### Temporary Accommodation Play Service, LB Camden

Camden's Temporary Accommodation Play Service has been running for more than 20 years. It is funded entirely by Camden's Play Service and serves the most marginalised children and families experiencing social exclusion.

There are five part-time workers who run the mobile service. They visit temporary accommodation hotels and family hostels, in and outside the borough, to ensure children are accessing local services for children and have the opportunity to play.

One family hostel in Camden hosts the Play Service team from 3.30pm to 6pm, Monday to Thursday during term time (10.30am to 5.30pm in holiday times) when the whole downstairs communal area is converted into an after-school club for the children, providing opportunities to play games and do activities such as painting and drawing.

Some of Camden's Play Service team pick up other children from various schools and visit outside play areas, arranging out-of-doors activities such as themed walks on Hampstead Heath or in local parks.

Supporting around 40 school-age children per day, this service provides them with the opportunity to be among other school-age children living in the same circumstances as themselves. Families with younger children are referred to a dedicated Temporary Accommodation Support Worker who liaises closely with all Children's Centres in the borough.



## CASE STUDY

### Intensive Family Support, Shelter Bristol Housing Support Service

Shelter's Intensive Family Support Service in Bristol adopts a holistic approach when working with families who access their services. In one case, a family consisting of a single mother with six children, aged between three and 14 years, approached the housing support service when the mum was unsure about the security of her private rented tenancy.

After initial assessments and relationships were built between the mother and Shelter staff, it transpired that she had experienced domestic abuse from several partners over the years and the children had witnessed this abuse and also been hurt themselves. The family had moved 37 times. These moves were to escape the domestic abuse that was occurring.

The family had complex and multiple needs. The eldest child was not attending school and found it hard to socialise with peers. Other children in the family displayed below-average literacy and numeracy skills. The 11-year-old boy had severe anger-management issues and was often violent and aggressive, both at school and at home with his mum and siblings. Relationships between the siblings in the household were strained and physical fights occurred on a regular basis. Mum was not working, but was keen to get back to work. She was interested in volunteering, although didn't know where to start.

Shelter's Intensive Family Support Service were able to offer support to the whole family by facilitating multi-agency meetings and offering one-to-one support to the children as well as the mother.

The selection of support offered, included:

- emotional support
- confidence building and positive reinforcement of parenting skills
- support from advice services with tenancy-related issues
- support with the children's behaviour and educational issues
- encouraging the mum to attend Shelter's adult service-user consultation 'Have Your Say' group
- support to attend meetings with professionals
- offering family outings and trips
- educational support and additional tutoring for the children
- anger management for two of the children.

Since working with the Intensive Family Support service, the family have been in stable accommodation and have been managing the tenancy well (and progressively more independently from Shelter).

The mother has enrolled and is attending a support group for women who have experienced domestic abuse (the Freedom Programme), and she has also enrolled in a Parent Support Programme through her children's school that she is regularly attending.

The children are more settled in school and relationships between the siblings have vastly improved. The family are managing very well at the moment and are making improvements in the way they deal with situations that crop up in their lives.



# Conclusion

Cross departmental working, and the involvement of the voluntary and community sector at a local and national level, is imperative to developing strategies and practice that will successfully tackle the issue of homelessness and its effect on children's life chances. This guide demonstrates the importance of joint working between Housing and Children's Services and its effectiveness in mitigating the negative impact of bad housing and homelessness.

The emphasis placed on people working together to enable children to achieve more is rightly embedded within much of the Government policy and legislative framework. However, at a time of economic austerity, the challenge to reduce national expenditure, while ensuring the most vulnerable are supported and protected, has created some cause for concern. As highlighted earlier in the guide, welfare reform risks pushing vulnerable families into financial and housing hardship. With many services facing significant cuts or maybe closing altogether so that access to advice and support provision for families is greatly reduced, it is evermore important to make an early identification of families at risk.

The joint-working indicators we focus on throughout this guide will enable services to identify and support families before crisis point is reached. They allow for services that work with families at risk of homelessness to evolve their practices, towards a new culture of 'early intervention'. There is a growing consensus that this will bring financial benefits but, more importantly, improve children's opportunities and life chances.

# Appendix 1

## Opportunities for joint working between Housing and Children's Services checklist

Considerations and questioning in the following headed sections offer guidance to Children's Services and Housing professionals on the opportunities for improving joint working, and this can help you to benchmark your practices.

### Sure Start Children's Centres

With strong emphasis on early intervention and prevention, outreach services and family support, Children's Centres can be key to identifying and addressing the housing needs of families with very young children. Shelter provides a free advice line for Children's Services' professionals to access our specialist housing advice.

Does your Children's Centre have a member of staff with a particular interest in housing issues?

Could s/he be trained in housing matters, to be able to give substantive support and advice directly to families in housing need?

Can your Housing team or a local independent housing advice service deliver regular housing advice sessions in Children's Centres (or in 'extended schools')?

Can your Children's Centre allocate free 'Early Years' places to two-year-olds living in temporary accommodation?

Does your Children's Centre work with families who live in hostels/B&Bs and temporary accommodation hotels in the borough?

What more can be done to ensure that families in these places are reached?

Are local housing providers (ALMOs, council or RSL representatives) included in your Children's Centre or area-based steering groups?

What links has your Children's Centre to Housing Services, the local Housing department or office?

### Extended schools

Provision of activities and services to children and parents in the school building provides an opportunity to access information, advice and assistance on a wide range of issues from the school directly. Breakfast Clubs, Homework Clubs and after-school clubs/activities can provide a safe environment for children living in bad housing, temporary or overcrowded accommodation.

Can primary or secondary schools ensure that any child known by staff to be living in temporary accommodation (TA), overcrowded conditions or bad housing is particularly welcomed/targeted (with free or subsidised access) to Breakfast Clubs, Homework Clubs, after-school activities or weekend clubs?

Can Housing staff highlight these services to families moving into new TA?

### Family/Parent Support Workers

Huge investment has been allocated to the employment and development of Family Support Workers (FSWs), professionals who deal face-to-face with families every day and are in the best position to identify the housing needs of families with children.

Can staff in the Housing department deliver basic 'housing information' workshops to FSWs to improve their knowledge and understanding of local housing rules and homelessness issues?

Can Children's Centre managers give briefings to Housing staff about Children's Centres and how they work?

When hiring new FSWs, consider the benefits of someone with a background in housing advice. Can you justify hiring a FSW with a specialism in 'housing', to work across Children's Centres and co-ordinate work with the Housing department?

What about an outreach worker with a specific 'temporary accommodation' remit?

Do Children's Centre FSWs know where families recently given temporary accommodation live?

Can the Housing department provide regular, fortnightly or monthly, updates about where families with pre-school children have been placed, to enable FSWs to do home visits and check the family is settling in and has information about local services, including the Children's Centre?

## Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

The CAF is an ideal way of identifying how a child's housing situation may be an issue among his/her wider family support needs. Solutions can only be achieved if the right questions are always asked in the first place.

Is the family living in temporary accommodation?

Is the family overcrowded (statutorily or generally)?

Does the family have issues with their landlord?

Is the family up to date with rent, or is there a risk or fear of eviction?

Are Housing Officers in the Housing Options team trained in and expected to use a CAF to identify families with additional needs to housing?

Are policies, procedures and practices in place for this to happen?

Are relationships between Children's Services and Housing departments, in unitary or two-tier authorities, established for contacts to be made to take forward issues identified in a CAF?

Are policies, procedures and practices in place for this to happen?

## Information sharing

Information sharing is key to delivering co-ordinated services around the needs of the individual family or child. It is vital in enabling early intervention and prevention work to safeguard and promote their welfare, improving outcomes for all children including those in temporary accommodation who move often.

In supporting families with a move into temporary accommodation, can Housing Officers signpost those with pre-school children to their new local Children's Centre?

Can 'Welcome Packs' be given to families moving into temporary accommodation, and a home visit from a FSW arranged once the family completes a referral form that is returned to the relevant Children's Centre (or central liaison person)?

Is 'extended school' provision also highlighted?

## Team Around the Child/Every Child Matters/MAT Meetings

Team Around the Child (TAC) or Multi-Agency Team (MAT) meetings bring together multi-agency professionals to discuss issues relating to a child within a family, with a view to identifying a Lead Professional and to establish a range of support services to overcome any particular problems that child faces.

Where a housing issue is identified, is a Housing professional invited to attend the meeting?

Does the Housing professional always attend the meeting? It is useful for a person from Housing to provide 'the housing perspective' – an insight into the council's duties under housing law.

Are Housing professionals trained in 'Lead Professional' status?

Even if not taking on that role, do they know how to identify which children have a Lead Professional and how to contact them?

## NOTIFY (London only)

NOTIFY is a web-based information and notification system for London's councils that aims to ensure all movements into temporary accommodation, in/out of the borough, are recorded and communicated to relevant people in each borough. Notifying relevant services of the placement or movement of statutorily homeless households in London should help to improve these households' access to services.

Have your Housing and Children's Services discussed how to use this information effectively?

Who in 'Early Years' or 'extended services' is responsible for retrieving data from NOTIFY and acting upon it with relevant professionals in Children's Centres, schools and Health teams?

Do you regularly, at least weekly, upload up-to-date data to it concerning households moved into temporary accommodation?

## Intentionally homeless families

Families the council deems 'intentionally homeless' can be among the most vulnerable, since they are not owed a housing duty nor benefit from additional support families in temporary accommodation get and must find housing in the private rented sector.

How do you ensure early identification of families at risk, and prevent them being found intentionally homeless, particularly due to antisocial behaviour or rent arrears?

Can you provide intensive support, eg a Family Intervention Project or debt/welfare services?

Are there established protocols between Housing and Children's Services to identify these families and provide support?

Are you in touch with Children's Services well before a family is found 'intentionally homeless' (eg threatened with eviction due to rent arrears)?

Do you (Housing and Children's Services) convene a 'case conference' including the family, to promote positive action to prevent eviction?

Is support in place to ensure any disruption to a child's schooling is minimised?

## Youth homelessness – 16- and 17-year-olds in priority need

Since 2002, all 16- and 17-year-olds are classified as in priority need when homeless if they do not meet the criteria to become a 'child in need'. As a result, youth homelessness has risen significantly. The DCLG is committed to working with local authorities to help tackle youth homelessness and address its causes, while Housing and Children's Services work together.

Does your authority operate up-to-date protocols, to ensure seamless joint-working between Housing Officers and Social Workers and prevent young people being passed between them?

Are arrangements in place to provide workshops in schools to do with homelessness prevention?

Are high-risk schools and higher-risk groups of young people targeted?

We have not covered every situation regarding children here, just some of the ways Housing and Children's Services can work more effectively together to hopefully help you improve outcomes for children and families in housing difficulty.

# Appendix 2

## Contact details for case studies featured

Case study	Area	Contact
<b>Governance</b>		
Involvement of Housing Services in Local Safeguarding Children's Board	Stockton-on-Tees	<a href="mailto:regina.harrington@stockton.gov.uk">regina.harrington@stockton.gov.uk</a>
<b>Strategy</b>		
North East Regional Youth Homelessness Network	North East region	<a href="mailto:becky.elton@homelesslink.org.uk">becky.elton@homelesslink.org.uk</a>
<b>Joint processes</b>		
NOTIFY: web-based information sharing, tracking temporary accommodation movements	London	<a href="mailto:mark.brangwyn@londoncouncils.gov.uk">mark.brangwyn@londoncouncils.gov.uk</a>
<b>Frontline delivery</b>		
Intentional homelessness: sharing information to improve outcomes, Shelter Keys to the Future	Knowsley	<a href="mailto:claire.white@shelter.org.uk">claire.white@shelter.org.uk</a>
Supported Accommodation for Care Leavers, Fairway Project	Tees Valley	<a href="mailto:alan.carling@teesvalley.org">alan.carling@teesvalley.org</a>
Children's Centre 0–5 Services and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee function	Hackney, London	<a href="mailto:gareth.wall@hackney.gov.uk">gareth.wall@hackney.gov.uk</a>
Preventing Evictions Protocol	Newcastle City Council	<a href="mailto:yhn@yhn.org.uk">yhn@yhn.org.uk</a>
Temporary Accommodation Play Service	Camden, London	<a href="mailto:amanda.oba@camden.gov.uk">amanda.oba@camden.gov.uk</a>
Intensive Family Support, Shelter Bristol Housing Support Service	Bristol	<a href="mailto:karen_macvean@shelter.org.uk">karen_macvean@shelter.org.uk</a>
Peer Education, Shelter's Ricochet service	Rotherham	<a href="mailto:andrew_nutley@shelter.org.uk">andrew_nutley@shelter.org.uk</a>

# Appendix 3

## Resources and recommended reading

### Government reports, strategies and guidance

#### Children Act 1989

[http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1989/Ukpga\\_19890041\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1989/Ukpga_19890041_en_1)

#### Children Act 2004

[http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2004/ukpga\\_20040031\\_en\\_1.htm](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2004/ukpga_20040031_en_1.htm)

#### Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

[http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/ukpga\\_20000035\\_en\\_1.htm](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/ukpga_20000035_en_1.htm)

#### Child Poverty Act 2010

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/9/contents>

#### *Early Intervention: The Next Steps*, Graham Allen (2011)

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/early-intervention-next-steps.pdf>

#### *Early Intervention, Smart Investment, Massive Savings*, Graham Allen (2011)

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/earlyintervention-smartinvestment.pdf>

#### Homelessness Act 2002

[http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020007\\_en\\_1.htm](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020007_en_1.htm)

#### Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities (July 2006)

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/homelessnesscode>

#### *Joint working between Housing and Children's Services:*

#### *Preventing homelessness and tackling its effects on children and young people*, 2008

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/goodpracticeguide>

#### Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report. *A child-centred system*, 2011

[http://www.education.gov.uk/munroreview/downloads/8875\\_DfE\\_Munro\\_Report\\_TAGGED.pdf](http://www.education.gov.uk/munroreview/downloads/8875_DfE_Munro_Report_TAGGED.pdf)

#### *Provision of accommodation for 16- and 17-year-old young people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation*, 2010

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/homelessssixteenseventeen>

#### *The Foundation Years: Preventing Poor Children Becoming Poor Adults*

(report of the independent review on poverty and life chances, Frank Field), 2010

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110120090128/http://povertyreview.independent.gov.uk/media/20254/poverty-report.pdf>

## Non-government reports and guidance

**Cullen, S. *Back on track: A good practice guide to addressing antisocial behaviour*, Shelter, London, 2006**

[http://england.shelter.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/38680/22305.pdf](http://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/38680/22305.pdf)

**Cullen, S. *Youth housing strategies: A good practice guide*, Shelter, London, 2004**

[http://england.shelter.org.uk/professional\\_resources/policy\\_library/policy\\_library\\_folder/youth\\_housing\\_strategies/youth\\_housing\\_strategies.pdf](http://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_library/policy_library_folder/youth_housing_strategies/youth_housing_strategies.pdf)

**Harker, L. *Chance of a lifetime: The impact of bad housing on children's lives*, Shelter, London, 2006**

[http://england.shelter.org.uk/professional\\_resources/policy\\_library/policy\\_library\\_folder/chance\\_of\\_a\\_lifetime\\_-\\_the\\_impact\\_of\\_bad\\_housing\\_on\\_childrens\\_lives](http://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_library/policy_library_folder/chance_of_a_lifetime_-_the_impact_of_bad_housing_on_childrens_lives)

**NCAS (National Care Advisory Service) *Journeys to Home: care leaver's successful transition to independent accommodation*, 2009**

<http://www.leavingcare.org/data/tmp/5730-11765.pdf>

**Rice, B. *Against the odds: An investigation comparing the lives of children on either side of Britain's housing divide*, Shelter, London, 2006**

[http://england.shelter.org.uk/professional\\_resources/policy\\_library/policy\\_library\\_folder/against\\_the\\_odds](http://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_library/policy_library_folder/against_the_odds)

**Shelter Children's Legal Service briefing: 'Responding to youth homelessness following the G v LB Southwark judgment', November 2009**

[http://england.shelter.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/231269/G-v-Southwark--ChildrenLegalService\\_briefing-Nov09.pdf](http://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/231269/G-v-Southwark--ChildrenLegalService_briefing-Nov09.pdf)

(available as a download or contact Shelter Children's Legal Service on 0344 515 2156 for a printed copy)

**Shelter, *Good practice briefing*:**

**'Engaging with homeless children: guidance for children's centres', 2008**

[http://england.shelter.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/70529/1420\\_GPU\\_Engaging\\_Briefv7.pdf](http://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/70529/1420_GPU_Engaging_Briefv7.pdf)

**Shelter, *Good practice briefing*: 'Engaging with homeless children: guidance for education professionals', 2008**

[http://england.shelter.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/81010/Engaging\\_with\\_homeless\\_children\\_-\\_Guidance\\_for\\_education\\_professionals.pdf](http://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/81010/Engaging_with_homeless_children_-_Guidance_for_education_professionals.pdf)

**Shelter, *Good practice briefing*: 'Eviction, assessing and meeting the needs of children', 2010**

[http://england.shelter.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/357998/Good\\_practice\\_briefing\\_Eviction\\_assessing\\_and\\_meeting\\_the\\_needs\\_of\\_children.pdf](http://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/357998/Good_practice_briefing_Eviction_assessing_and_meeting_the_needs_of_children.pdf)

**Shelter, *Good practice briefing*: 'The role of housing services in safeguarding children', 2011**

Shortly available from:

[http://england.shelter.org.uk/professional\\_resources/childrens\\_service/childrens\\_service\\_publications](http://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/childrens_service/childrens_service_publications)

**Shelter, *Good practice briefing*: 'Working with families with complex needs', 2011**

Shortly available from:

[http://england.shelter.org.uk/professional\\_resources/childrens\\_service/childrens\\_service\\_publications](http://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/childrens_service/childrens_service_publications)

**Shelter, *In their own words: Shelter's Peer Education Services for Young People*, 2010**

[http://england.shelter.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/301278/In\\_their\\_own\\_words\\_peer\\_education\\_services\\_for\\_young\\_people.pdf](http://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/301278/In_their_own_words_peer_education_services_for_young_people.pdf)

**Shelter standards: *Peer education in housing and homelessness*, 2007**

You can download a copy of this from <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/483659.pdf>



## Until there's a home for everyone

In our affluent nation, tens of thousands of people wake up every day in housing that is run-down, overcrowded, or dangerous. Many others have lost their home altogether. The desperate lack of decent, affordable housing is robbing us of security, health, and a fair chance in life.

Shelter believes everyone should have a home.

More than one million people a year come to us for advice and support via our website, helplines and national network of services. We help people to find and keep a home in a place where they can thrive, and tackle the root causes of bad housing by campaigning for new laws, policies, and solutions.

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