



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Clive Betts MP
House of Commons
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The Rt James Brokenshire MP
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Dear Clive

I am writing to update you on the review of the Homelessness Reduction Act and to share the Terms of Reference for the review.

The Homelessness Reduction Act is the most ambitious reform to homelessness legislation in decades. It shifts the focus of local authority action to deal with homelessness from crisis intervention to prevention. Local authorities were provided with £72.7 million to implement the Act and have been helped by the Homelessness Advice and Support Team (HAST). The team is made up of experts from local authorities and homelessness organisations. They provide challenge and support to authorities.

As part of the implementation of the Act the Government has committed to review how it is working in practice, reporting back by March 2020. The Government wants to ensure that this new ambitious legislation is working for all, and that local government and its partners have the tools and support to effectively implement and operate the Act. The review will consider the implementation of the Act and how it is working in practice, including a review of new burdens funding. At the heart of the review will be input from relevant stakeholders including other government departments, local authorities and sector stakeholders. The review is an important step in providing early insight and will shape the Government's future plans in relation to homelessness.

Although it is too early to say how what impact the Act has had the first quarterly (3 April to 30 June 2018) experimental statistics are promising. Of the households who had a prevention duty ended, 64% had secured their existing or alternative accommodation for at least 6 months. Of the households who had a relief duty ended, 57% had secured accommodation for at least 6 months.

The Department will continue to work closely with the Committee throughout the review and would welcome any evidence you may have on how local authorities are implementing the Act. I know Minister Wheeler is looking forward to giving evidence to your Committee on 23 April 2019.

RT HON JAMES BROKESHIRE MP



Review of the Homelessness Reduction Act Terms of Reference

Context

The Government is committed to preventing homelessness and providing a strong safety net to support families and the most vulnerable. This is why the Government supported the Homelessness Reduction Act as it was progressing through Parliament.

The Government wants to ensure that this new ambitious legislation is working for all, and that local government and its partners have the tools and support to effectively implement and operate the Act. This is why the Government committed to reviewing the implementation of the Act and how it is working in practice, including a review of new burdens funding provided to ensure that the Act could be implemented successfully. The review will provide important insight and will shape the Government's future plans.

Objective

To understand how effectively the Act has been implemented and the appropriate level of new burdens funding, identifying lessons that can be learnt, issues that need to be addressed and best practice.

Scope

The review will look at:

- The impact the Act has had and the outcomes that are being achieved;
- How the Act has changed the approach of local authorities and their partners to tackling homelessness and supporting those in need of help;
- The experience of people approaching their local authority for help;
- How implementation of the Act has been resourced and the level of new burdens funding to assist this;
- What elements of the Act and processes that are working well and which might need adjustment;
- Reviewing other relevant homelessness and rough sleeping legislation, as set out in the Rough Sleeping Strategy.

How

The review will be run by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and have two complementary components running in parallel:

- External evaluation commissioned by MHCLG with field work predicted to start in May 2019 using a range of research techniques. A final report will be submitted to MHCLG by the end of 2019;



- Intensive engagement by the MHCLG with a wide range of stakeholders from local government and other sectors, including a call for evidence in summer 2019 and task and finish groups.

At the heart of the review will be input from relevant stakeholders and MHCLG will work closely with other government departments. The review will make recommendations in light of the evidence gathered. The Government will look to act on the recommendations at the earliest opportunity to better help those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

MHCLG will report the conclusion and recommendations from the review in March 2020, when MHCLG will publish a report.

Governance

An advisory group will be established to provide oversight of the delivery of the review ensuring regular challenge is brought to assessing the review's progress and emerging conclusions and recommendations. The group will comprise interested parties from the voluntary and local government sectors and we will be consulting with the Rough Sleeping Advisory Panel to establish whether this group should be a sub-group of the panel or constituted separately.

MHCLG officials will cover all secretariat functions, such as overseeing agendas and producing forward looks. External members will be able to nominate agenda items and bring topical papers and research to discussions.

The content of the sub-group meetings and papers will be confidential and thus their content will not be shared publicly.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
1 April 2019