



**DfC**

Department  
for Communities

[www.communities-ni.gov.uk](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk)



# Inter-Departmental Homelessness Action Plan

Priorities and Actions for 2017–2018

November 2017

# Introduction

1 This Inter-Departmental Homelessness Action Plan has been developed to complement the Northern Ireland Housing Executive’s new Homelessness Strategy<sup>1</sup>. It focuses on addressing gaps in those non-accommodation services that have the most impact, or have the potential to more positively impact, on the lives and life chances of people who are homeless and those who are most at risk of homelessness.

2 The development of the action plan will be an evolving process over the lifetime of the new Homelessness Strategy.

This first iteration of the action plan contains nine tangible actions, which have been identified as priorities for Government departments and their statutory partners following ongoing engagement with relevant stakeholders.

3 The aim is to build upon these initial actions over the five years of the Homelessness Strategy. Once actions within the first iteration of the action plan are completed, these will ‘drop off’ and/or be built upon and will be used to inform the identification of the next actions requiring inter-departmental cooperation.

---

Homelessness is about more than bricks and mortar and cannot be tackled in isolation by one agency.

---

<sup>1</sup> ‘Ending Homelessness Together – Homelessness Strategy for Northern Ireland, 2017–22’ (NIHE)

## Links to the draft Programme for Government

- 4 The draft Programme for Government (PfG) 2016–21 sets the direction of travel and overall priorities for the NI Executive for the next five years. This new PfG represents a step change in how the NI Executive assesses its impact as it has a focus on achieving positive outcomes, with an overarching outcome of improving wellbeing for all, rather than focusing on outputs such as the amount of money spent, or the number of programmes that have been introduced. Partnership working is also central to the delivery of the new PfG, with Government committing to work with its statutory partners, local government, the private sector and the voluntary and community sectors to tackle the biggest challenges facing society. A set of indicators has been produced to enable the Executive to monitor and demonstrate progress on achieving positive outcomes.
- 5 It is envisaged that the Action Plan will support the delivery of Outcome 8 (We care for others and we help those in need) within the draft PfG and, in particular, in our work to ‘turn the curve’ in reducing the number of households in housing stress in NI. In addition, given the Action Plan’s focus on addressing the broader spectrum of issues related to homelessness, it is also likely to impact on a broad number of the other PfG outcomes and indicators, in particular:
- **Outcome 3** – We have a more equal society.
  - **Outcome 4** – We enjoy long, healthy, active lives.
  - **Outcome 7** – We have a safe community where we respect the law and each other.
  - **Outcome 9** – We are a shared, welcoming and confident society that respects diversity.
  - **Outcome 12** – We give our children and young people the best start in life.

## Development of the Action Plan

6 A co-production approach has been adopted from the outset of the work to develop the action plan; this is in recognition that input from those who are experiencing or who have experienced homelessness during the development, implementation and evaluation of the action plan will be essential to its success. We will therefore seek to ensure that there are effective mechanisms in place for feedback that can be revisited on a regular basis to facilitate the evaluation of the actions; details of the monitoring and reporting arrangements are set out in Paragraphs 15 to 21.



7 An initial Homelessness Workshop was held on 14 December 2016 involving Government departments, statutory partners, homelessness service providers and service users. The main focus of the first workshop was to gain agreement on the priority areas for action and by the end of the session there was general agreement on 5 priority areas, namely:

- Health and wellbeing, including mental health and substance misuse.
- Education and awareness raising – children, young people, schools and providers.
- Support for those leaving places of care, including institutional care, children’s residential and foster care, prisons, hospitals, mental health facilities.
- Support for families including support for those experiencing domestic violence, and community support mechanisms.
- Employability, financial capability and access to benefits.

- 8 The feedback from both service users and providers was that difficulties faced by those who are homeless or who are on the cusp of homelessness in navigating their way through life challenges were exacerbated by the fact that it was not always clear what services and supports were available to them.
- 9 Following agreement on the 5 priority areas, a series of consultation meetings was undertaken amongst Government departments and statutory partners to identify any potential actions which could be taken forward to address the priority areas. These consultations resulted in the production of a long list of potential actions.
- 10 A second Homelessness Workshop was held on 21 March 2017 which again brought together a wide range of participants from Government departments and statutory bodies, homelessness service providers and service users. The main purpose of the workshop was to provide further explanation of the potential actions that had been identified and to obtain participants' feedback about whether these might be effective in addressing the 5 priority areas, and in making a measurable difference in our collective efforts to address homelessness.
- 11 At the second workshop, there was a general consensus regarding those actions that should be developed and prioritised for inclusion within the first iteration of the action plan. There followed a period of further consultation with policy owners from relevant Government departments and statutory agencies to refine and develop the agreed actions. The action plan for 2017–18 is attached at **Annex A**.
- 12 The actions address 'top down' actions as well as those required from the 'bottom up', ranging from strategic and policy matters to operational and service delivery issues. It has not been possible at this stage to agree all target completion dates. Where possible, dates have been specified but these will be considered and agreed as part of the implementation process.





## Early Actions

13 It is also worth highlighting that a number of work programmes that have the potential to be relevant to preventing and addressing homelessness have not been included in this iteration of the action plan. This is because the development work on these programmes is at too early a stage to translate meaningfully into the action plan format. This work includes the ‘refresh’ of the Volunteering Strategy for Northern Ireland so it has a focus on key strategic themes. A co-design group including representatives from the voluntary and community sector will take forward the ‘refresh’ of the strategy. The potential to include homelessness as a strategic theme for the strategy will be explored as part of this work. It is anticipated that the ‘refresh’ will be complete by the end of March 2018.

14 In the interim, we are exploring the potential for individual projects under the volunteering ‘umbrella’ to better deliver against the overall objective of our Homelessness Action Plan, namely to improve the lives and life chances of those who are homeless and those most at risk of homelessness. For instance, through encouraging Looked After Children to participate in the Northern Ireland National Citizen Service, which is a highly regarded personal development programme for young people aged 15–17.



## Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements

- 15 Our focus will be to evaluate how the action plan contributes to our overall objective of improving the lives and life chances of those who are homeless and those most at risk of homelessness. The action plan will remain a ‘living document’ throughout the lifetime of the Homelessness Strategy so that the Department for Communities (DfC), with input from partner organisations, service providers and service users, can keep it up-to-date and responsive.
- 16 The Homelessness Strategy Steering Group (HSSG), which is chaired by the DfC and includes representation from a number of Government departments, statutory agencies and the voluntary sector will have overall responsibility for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the action plan. This group which meets twice a year also has responsibility for monitoring the overall Homelessness Strategy. The HSSG will review quarterly progress reports on the action plan and will also be responsible for signing off an annual progress report and any future iterations of the action plan.
- 17 A responsible owner/policy lead has been allocated for each action within the action plan, and the partner organisations for each action have also been listed. There will be quarterly meetings of responsible owners/policy leads and quarterly progress reports will then be provided to the DfC prior to submission for HSSG review/approval.
- 18 To facilitate ongoing stakeholder engagement, an annual conference/workshop will be convened involving Government departments, statutory agencies, service providers and service users. The objective for this event will be to review the draft annual progress report, and specifically to:
- review the impact of the actions to date;
  - assist in the identification of available data to inform the monitoring and evaluation of impacts;
  - agree any actions that should carry forward to the following year, including any refinement or further development that is necessary; and
  - agree any new actions that should be added to the action plan.
- 19 The annual conference/workshop will be arranged prior to the HSSG’s review of the annual progress report to allow stakeholder feedback to be incorporated within the draft annual report.

20 Focus or consultation groups may also be convened during the year, again to facilitate continued service user and service provider involvement and to inform the monitoring and reporting process. This could include convening a focus group for a particular action or for a particular interest group for example, bringing together a group of young people to consider all those actions within the action plan relevant to them. Responsible owners/policy leads and their partner organisations will consult with service providers and service users to agree the appropriate representation on any such groups.

21 Finally, we will seek to ensure that the wide range of mechanisms which are already in existence are utilised to their full potential to promote the maximum impact in sharing learning and good practice and improving communication among and between all interests, for example the Regional Group on Health and Homelessness<sup>2</sup>. The HSSG will assume responsibility for ensuring that learning, best practice and any other relevant lessons or issues are disseminated to the relevant fora, representative groups etc.

**Figure 1.0: Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements**



---

<sup>2</sup> The Regional Group on Health and Homelessness was set up by the Public Health Agency to tackle the needs of people who are homeless and is made up of statutory, community and voluntary organisations



## Equality Considerations

- 22 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:
- Persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
  - Men and women generally;
  - Persons with a disability and persons without; and
  - Persons with dependants and persons without.
- 23 In addition, public authorities are required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.
- 24 The Department for Communities has set out in its interim Equality Scheme how it will fulfil those obligations. The Department’s vision of **‘empowering people, families and communities’** highlights the commitment to work with others to best achieve this objective. A copy of DfC’s interim Equality Scheme is available at [www.communities-ni.gov.uk](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk).
- 25 In accordance with the Department’s interim Equality Scheme, the Homelessness Action Plan has been equality screened. A copy of the screening form is available on the Department’s website. As detailed in the equality screening form for the Action Plan, individual actions will be subject to screening by the responsible lead departments in line with their respective Equality Scheme.

---

‘Empowering people,  
families and communities’

– The Department’s vision

---

---

Inter-Departmental Homelessness  
Action Plan 2017–18  
Annex A

---

Priority Area	Action(s)	Expected Outcomes/Outputs	Monitoring Arrangements	Responsible Owner and Partner Organisations
<p><b>Priority Area:</b> Health and wellbeing, including mental health and substance misuse.</p> <p><b>Link to discussion at first workshop:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on prevention/early intervention and harm reduction.</li> <li>• Focus on recovery.</li> <li>• Access to mental health and substance misuse services.</li> <li>• Greater integration of services in preventing/responding to homelessness.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Identify barriers faced by people who are homeless in accessing health and social care services, with a view to improving access to those services.</b></p> <p>Consider the findings from the Patient and Client Council (PCC) Report on ‘Issues Faced by People who are Homeless in Accessing Health and Social Care Services’, the Public Health Agency (PHA) research and homeless sector needs analysis and identify the barriers to people who are homeless accessing health and social care services.</p> <p>Consider the findings from the independent Review of Regional Children’s and Young People’s Facilities (including possible need for dual diagnosis safe spaces).</p>	<p><b>Outcome(s):</b> Improved access to health and social care services for people who are homeless.</p> <p><b>Output(s):</b> <b>By 30 November 2017</b>, Department of Health (DoH) to produce a report on findings, providing a basis for identifying measures to address barriers.</p>	<p><b>Monitoring/Evaluation:</b> Monitoring arrangements will be determined and informed in line with the outcome of the report.</p>	<p><b>Responsible Owner:</b> Chris Matthews, DoH</p> <p><b>Partner Organisations:</b> DoH (Looked After Children), Health and Social Care Board (HSCB), PHA.</p>

Priority Area	Action(s)	Expected Outcomes/Outputs	Monitoring Arrangements	Responsible Owner and Partner Organisations
<p><b>Priority Area:</b> Health and wellbeing, including mental health and substance misuse.</p> <p><b>Link to discussion at first workshop:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on prevention, early intervention and harm reduction.</li> <li>• Focus on recovery.</li> <li>• Emergency Department (ED) signposting and discharge protocol from health and social services.</li> <li>• Access to mental health and substance misuse services.</li> <li>• Greater integration of services in preventing/responding to homelessness.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Promote the use of the Hospital Discharge Protocol across Health and Social Care organisations.</b></p> <p>Monitor implementation of the Hospital Discharge Protocol and the effectiveness of discharge arrangements in respect of people who are homeless.</p>	<p><b>Outcome(s):</b> People who are homeless receive appropriate care after discharge from hospital settings, in accordance with the Hospital Discharge Protocol.</p> <p><b>Output(s):</b> <b>By June 2017</b>, establish agreed accountability mechanisms with the Health and Social Care Trusts (the Trusts) for the implementation of the Hospital Discharge Protocol.</p> <p><b>By Autumn 2017</b>, establish and implement arrangements for auditing how well the Hospital Discharge Protocol has been used in respect of people who are homeless being discharged from hospital.</p>	<p><b>Monitoring/Evaluation:</b> Once auditing arrangements are established, 6 monthly feedback reports to the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB)/DoH on implementation of the Protocol.</p> <p><b>By May 2018</b>, consider conducting a formal review of effectiveness of the Protocol.</p>	<p><b>Responsible Owner:</b> Chris Matthews, DoH</p> <p><b>Partner Organisations:</b> NIHE, Trusts, Health and Social Care Board, Public Health Agency, relevant community and voluntary organisations.</p>

Priority Area	Action(s)	Expected Outcomes/Outputs	Monitoring Arrangements	Responsible Owner and Partner Organisations
<p><b>Priority Area:</b> Education and awareness raising – children, young people, schools and providers.</p> <p><b>Link to discussion at first workshop:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early intervention during school and for school leavers.</li> <li>• Greater awareness of causes of homelessness and underlying issues.</li> <li>• Address myths and stigma around homelessness.</li> <li>• Guidance on homelessness triggers e.g. drugs/mental health.</li> </ul>	<p><b>“Learning in schools” – promotion of Homelessness Awareness and development/update of Skills Curriculum thematic units.</b></p> <p>Development/update of Active Citizenship/Skills Curriculum thematic units for Key Stages 1–4 to incorporate a homelessness focus and production of accompanying resources to support teachers. Will encompass issues such as, budgeting, health and wellbeing, employability, social justice and causes and effects of homelessness/risk factors.</p>	<p><b>Outcome(s):</b> Schools take responsibility for engaging learners in citizenship including homelessness. Young people have an increased awareness of social justice/equality issues and an enhanced capacity to make informed/responsible decisions.</p> <p><b>Output(s):</b> <b>By 31 March 2018,</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) will have liaised with partner organisations/other agencies to identify existing materials for use in schools and to explore possibilities for collaborative working; and</li> <li>2. Building on this work, CCEA will establish a database of useful resources/materials to be made available through the CCEA website for teachers to draw upon when teaching active citizenship.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Monitoring/Evaluation:</b> Progress on achieving outputs will be reported to DfC’s Housing, Urban Regeneration &amp; Local Government Group quarterly. Outcomes will be measured through an evaluation of the usefulness of resources over time using CCEA Research and Statistics questionnaires to provide quantitative and qualitative data.</p>	<p><b>Responsible Owners:</b> Dale Heaney, Department of Education Roisin Radcliffe, CCEA</p> <p><b>Partner Organisations:</b> Department for Communities (DfC), DoH, Department of Justice (DoJ), Youth Justice Agency (YJA), Homelessness Service Providers, Youth Organisations, Schools.</p>



Priority Area	Action(s)	Expected Outcomes/Outputs	Monitoring Arrangements	Responsible Owner and Partner Organisations
<p><b>Priority Area:</b> Support for those leaving places of care, including institutional care, children’s residential and foster care, prisons, hospitals, mental health facilities.</p> <p><b>Link to discussion at first workshop:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove barriers to access to benefits for care leavers/those leaving custody, and their families/job seekers/domestic violence cases/Address delays in benefits being paid.</li> <li>• Financial Support.</li> <li>• Single point of contact/linked services.</li> <li>• Greater integration of services in preventing/responding to homelessness.</li> </ul>	<p><b>“Provision of Joined-Up Advice/ Signposting” for those leaving prison/juvenile justice centres and places of care.”</b></p> <p>The Improving Benefit Uptake (IBU) Team and DfC Universal Credit Programme will work with with NI Prison Service, NIACRO (Northern Ireland Association for Care and Resettlement of Offenders), the Head of Commissioning for Care Leavers and the 16+ Team (Health and Social Care Board), Trusts, the NIHE, and Housing Associations to ensure that timely and appropriate advice on potential benefit entitlement and signposting to other appropriate Government supports and services is provided to people entering or leaving custody and their families, also care leavers and those who may be experiencing difficulties in sustaining tenancies, for instance, due to rent arrears.</p>	<p><b>Outcome(s):</b> Individuals leaving care receive their full benefit entitlement and are supported in the transition to independent living.</p> <p><b>Output(s):</b> Specific activities that will be undertaken during the lifespan of this first action plan will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hosting benefit clinics in custodial settings and other venues as appropriate e.g. Housing Association premises;</li> <li>• Conducting outreach visits for those identified as being more ‘vulnerable’;</li> <li>• Providing advice and support to Social Workers on potential benefit entitlements and notifications and welfare changes for Looked After Children and care leavers; and</li> <li>• Supporting the HSCB in its work to encourage providers of supported accommodation/lodging and floating support services for vulnerable young people aged 16–21+ to make maximum use of the IBU Community Outreach services.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Monitoring/Evaluation:</b> Progress on achieving outputs will be detailed in quarterly reports to DfC’s Housing, Urban Regeneration &amp; Local Government Group. Outcomes will be measured through the in-house evaluation of uptake of services.</p>	<p><b>Responsible Owner:</b> David Malcolm, DfC</p> <p><b>Partner Organisations:</b> Northern Ireland Prison Service, NIACRO, NIHE, HSCB, Trusts and Housing Associations.</p>

Priority Area	Action(s)	Expected Outcomes/Outputs	Monitoring Arrangements	Responsible Owner and Partner Organisations
<p><b>Priority Area:</b> Support for those leaving places of care, including institutional care, children’s residential and foster care, prisons, hospitals, mental health facilities.</p> <p><b>Link to discussion at first workshop:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove barriers to access to benefits for care leavers/those leaving custody, and their families/job seekers/domestic violence cases/Address delays in benefits being paid.</li> <li>• Financial Support.</li> <li>• Single point of contact/linked services.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Work to develop a wraparound support to provide an ‘end to end’ service/signposting.</b></p> <p>The Department for Communities Improving Benefit Uptake (IBU) Team has also commenced a programme of work to review its existing services and supports. In doing so, IBU aims to address current gaps in its knowledge of available support and services for those in need. It will also explore the potential for playing a more proactive role in connecting customers with these other supports and services. This work will benefit the most vulnerable households and individuals including those who are homeless and most at risk of homelessness, for instance, individuals leaving care and individuals with disabilities and other long-term health problems.</p>	<p><b>Outcome(s):</b> The most vulnerable households and those most at risk of poverty and disadvantage and, ultimately, homelessness will receive all the available support to improve their situation.</p> <p><b>Output(s):</b> By <b>March 2018</b>, the wraparound team will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completed a review of existing service provision;</li> <li>• Established new and renewed connections with partner organisations/delivery partners; and</li> <li>• Utilised available evidence sources, to proactively target those groups and households identified as ‘vulnerable’.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Monitoring/Evaluation:</b> Progress on achieving outputs will be reported to DfC’s Housing, Urban Regeneration &amp; Local Government Group quarterly. Outcomes will be measured through the in-house evaluation of uptake of services. Monitoring and evaluation information will also inform activities taken forward in subsequent years and the development of a longer term wraparound strategy.</p>	<p><b>Responsible Owner:</b> David Malcolm, DfC</p> <p><b>Partner Organisations:</b> DfC Business Areas DoH, DoJ, DE, Department of Finance (DoF), DfE, Department for Infrastructure (DfI), HSCB, Voluntary &amp; Community sector.</p>

Priority Area	Action(s)	Expected Outcomes/Outputs	Monitoring Arrangements	Responsible Owner and Partner Organisations
<p><b>Priority Area:</b> Support for those leaving places of care, including institutional care, children’s residential and foster care, prisons, hospitals, mental health facilities.</p> <p><b>Link to discussion at first workshop:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on prevention/ early intervention and harm reduction.</li> <li>• Focus on recovery.</li> <li>• Access to mental health and substance misuse services.</li> <li>• Greater integration of services in preventing/responding to homelessness.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Substance misuse and re-offending.</b></p> <p>The link between substance misuse and homelessness was highlighted by a number of stakeholders. One customer group flagged for particular concern was ex-prisoners, especially those who have served relatively short sentences. The challenges facing this group appeared to be centred on the fact that they could not avail of the full range of support and services provided within the prison setting to help them fully combat issues with substance misuse before their release. There also was anecdotal evidence to suggest that some individuals have experienced a gap in support on leaving prison which leaves them more at risk of homelessness and reoffending, often linked to the lack of availability of supported accommodation which is flexible enough to meet the needs of men and women with addictions.</p>	<p><b>Outcome(s):</b> Exiting prisoners receive appropriate and seamless support to combat substance misuse.</p> <p><b>Output(s):</b> By <b>June 2018</b>, an analysis of existing studies in this area will be undertaken and, if appropriate, further research will be commissioned, to ascertain the nature and extent of any individual or structural barriers facing this customer group in accessing and sustaining substance misuse services.</p> <p>Research findings will inform actions for subsequent iterations of this action plan.</p>	<p><b>Monitoring/Evaluation:</b> Progress on achieving outputs will be reported to DfC’s Housing, Urban Regeneration &amp; Local Government Group quarterly.</p> <p>Monitoring/evaluation will be informed by future actions.</p>	<p><b>Responsible Owner:</b> Stephen Martin, DfC</p> <p><b>Partner Organisations:</b> DoH, DoJ, PHA &amp; HSCB.</p>

Priority Area	Action(s)	Expected Outcomes/Outputs	Monitoring Arrangements	Responsible Owner and Partner Organisations
<p><b>Priority Area:</b> Support for those leaving places of care, including institutional care, children’s residential and foster care, prisons, hospitals, mental health facilities.</p> <p><b>Link to discussion at first workshop:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joined-up working across Government to provide a more holistic framework of support.</li> <li>• Provision of adequate facilities to support vulnerable families.</li> </ul>	<p><b>“Mapping Current Service Provision.”</b></p> <p>Mapping current service provision as an aid to identifying gaps in support for those who are homeless/most at risk of homelessness and identifying and addressing duplication of service provision was a recurring theme in the workshops.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the initial focus of this work will be to map Government/statutory service provision. The first phase of the mapping exercise will be taken forward as a pilot, either focused on a particular customer grouping or on a geographical area. It is anticipated this work will be led by service users with support from Government departments and their statutory partners and front line service providers.</p>	<p><b>Outcome(s):</b> Increased knowledge of the range of supports available to address and prevent homelessness, leading to more effective signposting of services and the delivery of better outcomes for service users.</p> <p><b>Output(s):</b> <b>By June 2018</b>, completion of first pilot mapping exercise.</p> <p>Learning from the development of the first pilot will inform the timeframe and scope for the roll-out of this project.</p>	<p><b>Monitoring/Evaluation:</b> Progress on achieving outputs will be reported to DfC’s Housing, Urban Regeneration and Local Government Group quarterly.</p> <p>Mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating outcomes will be developed as part of the pilot proposals.</p>	<p><b>Responsible Owner:</b> Stephen Martin, DfC</p> <p><b>Partner Organisations:</b> DoH, DoJ, HSCB</p>

Priority Area	Action(s)	Expected Outcomes/Outputs	Monitoring Arrangements	Responsible Owner and Partner Organisations
<p><b>Priority Area:</b> Support for families including support for those experiencing domestic violence, and community support mechanisms.</p> <p><b>Link to discussion at first workshop:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on prevention/early intervention and harm reduction.</li> <li>• Joined-up working across Government to provide a more holistic framework of support.</li> <li>• Empower people to take control of their own lives and equip them for the various life challenges that they face.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Develop a protocol or framework, following the principles of the General Data Protection Regulation to facilitate and encourage relevant Government departments and statutory partners, where possible, to share information about individuals who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness.</b></p> <p>Scotland and Wales already have mechanisms in place to enable organisations directly concerned with health, education, safety and social wellbeing to share personal information about individuals legally and safely. There are a number of key benefits attached to using such protocols, including that service providers are able to build up a more complete picture of individuals' circumstances and this provides the foundation for the provision of a more holistic and effective service.</p>	<p><b>Outcome(s):</b> The most vulnerable individuals and households will be provided with a more holistic and integrated service provision.</p> <p><b>Output(s):</b> <b>By June 2018</b>, produce draft protocol for discussion and agreement with partner organisations and wider stakeholders.</p> <p><b>By June 2019</b>, run a pilot of the protocol to refine/inform its further development prior to implementation.</p>	<p><b>Monitoring/Evaluation:</b> Progress on achieving outputs will be reported to DfC's Housing, Urban Regeneration &amp; Local Government Group quarterly. Mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating outcomes will be developed as part of the pilot project's terms of reference.</p>	<p><b>Responsible Owners:</b> Stephen Martin, DfC Chris Matthews, DoH Steven McCourt, DoJ</p>



Priority Area	Action(s)	Expected Outcomes/Outputs	Monitoring Arrangements	Responsible Owner and Partner Organisations
<p><b>Priority Area:</b> Employability, financial capability and access to benefits.</p> <p><b>Link to discussion at first workshop:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater awareness of causes of homelessness and underlying issues.</li> <li>• Empower people to take control of their own lives and equip them for the various life challenges that they face.</li> <li>• Joined-up working across Government to provide a more holistic framework of support.</li> <li>• Integration of employment and employability services for people who are homeless – ‘One Stop Shop’.</li> <li>• Remove barriers to access to benefits for care leavers/those leaving custody, and their families/job seekers/domestic violence cases/ Address delays in benefits being paid.</li> </ul>	<p><b>‘Helping Claimants who are Vulnerable’ Working Group.</b></p> <p>Establishment of a ‘Helping Claimants who are Vulnerable’ Working Group aimed at bringing about improvements in access to benefits, advice on financial capability and work-related support.</p> <p>‘Vulnerable’ in the context of this work includes those who are homeless and those groups who are most at risk of homelessness e.g. individuals leaving places of care, individuals with drug and alcohol addictions.</p> <p>The Working Group will complement and be informed by other relevant work of the Department e.g. work to develop a ‘wraparound support’ and benefit uptake.</p>	<p><b>Outcome(s):</b> Improved access to benefits, work-related support and financial capability advice, which will address and prevent homelessness.</p> <p><b>Output(s):</b> <b>By March 2018</b>, the Working Group will produce a report setting out recommendations for action. The report will be underpinned by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mapping existing benefit/employability interventions that contribute to addressing/preventing homelessness and identifying potential gaps in services.</li> <li>• Reviewing how other jurisdictions support vulnerable customers to access benefits and employability services and considering the applicability of these support mechanisms in NI.</li> <li>• Conducting customer profiling/segmentation to better understand the needs of vulnerable groups in accessing services.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Monitoring/Evaluation:</b> Mechanisms for monitoring/evaluating the effectiveness of action(s) to improve accessibility to benefits and employability support will be agreed by the Working Group and detailed in its report.</p> <p>Progress on the development of the Working Group report and the undertaking of associated research will be provided to DfC’s Housing, Urban Regeneration &amp; Local Government Group quarterly.</p>	<p><b>Responsible Owner:</b> Gavin McBride, DfC</p> <p><b>Partner Organisations:</b> DfC Business Areas, DfE</p>

# Glossary of organisations

CCEA	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
DE	Department of Education
DfC	Department for Communities
DfE	Department for the Economy
DfI	Department for Infrastructure
DoF	Department of Finance
DoH	Department of Health
DoJ	Department of Justice
HSCB	Health and Social Care Board
HSCTs	Health and Social Care Trusts
IBU Team	Improving Benefit Uptake Team (Department for Communities)
NIACRO	Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
NIHE	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
NIPS	Northern Ireland Prison Service
PCC	Patient and Client Council
PHA	Public Health Agency
YJA	Youth Justice Agency