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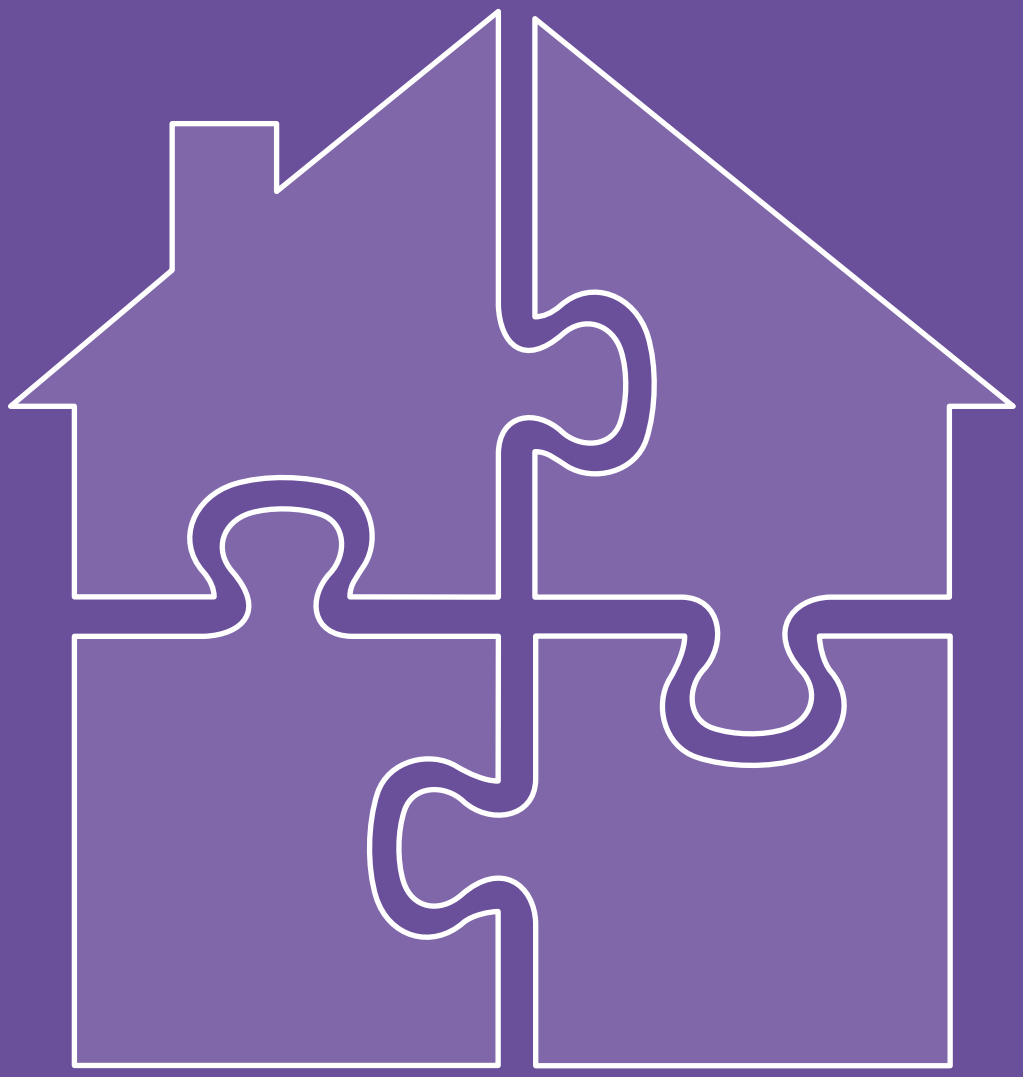

Interdepartmental Homelessness Action Plan 2019-20

Year 2 Report

This document contains the results for the second year (2019-20) of the Interdepartmental Homelessness Action Plan.

The Interdepartmental Homelessness Action Plan was developed to complement the NI Housing Executive's Homelessness Strategy and 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 at most risk of homelessness.

Following an initial Homelessness Workshop involving Government Departments, statutory partners, homelessness service providers and service users, agreement was reached on five main priority areas:

1. **Health and wellbeing, including mental health and substance misuse;**

2. **Education and awareness raising – children, young people, schools and providers;**

3. **Support for those leaving places of care, children's residential and foster care, prisons, hospitals, mental health facilities;**

4. **Support for families including support for those experiencing domestic violence, and community support mechanisms;**

5. **Employability, financial capability and access to benefits.**

A total of 13 actions from these priority areas were identified and taken forward.

The Homelessness Strategy Steering Group (HSSG), which is chaired by the Department for Communities (DfC) and includes representation from the Departments of Health (DoH, Department of Justice (DoJ), Department of Education (DE), statutory agencies and the voluntary sector, had overall responsibility for monitoring and reporting on the Action Plan. HSSG reviewed quarterly progress reports on the Action Plan and signed-off on the Year 2 results. HSSG will also be responsible for signing-off any future iterations of the Action Plan. It is noted that some of the actions have not been fully achieved due to the Covid-19 pandemic where resources were reallocated to deal with the crisis.

PRIORITY AREA 1 Health and wellbeing, including mental health and substance misuse			
Responsible Owner	**Actions**	**Expected Outcomes**	**End Year Result**
DoH Department of Health www.health-ni.gov.uk	1. Pilot a Homeless Healthcare Hub in Belfast to provide outreach care to those who are sleeping rough or in hostel accommodation. The proposal is to create a multi-disciplinary team hub in Belfast to provide care in the community for people experiencing homelessness, supported by enhanced primary care access. This hub would wrap multi-disciplinary input around the existing BHSCT homeless nursing team, and deliver joined up services in the community including nursing, GP, dental and podiatry. The hub will remove barriers to accessing health care by: • Co-location of staff and services in a location which provides easy access for homeless people; • Providing accessible services to people with a chaotic lifestyle, for example drop in and outreach clinics; • Facilitating multidisciplinary team working. Outreach will be provided from the hub into hostels, other voluntary settings and on the streets. This prototype hub will allow assessment of feasibility of the service, evaluation and regional learning to inform development of improved care pathways for people experiencing homelessness across Northern Ireland.	**Outcome(s)** Improved access to health and social care services for people who are homeless. Improved service user experience. **Milestone(s)** Subject to availability of funding: By 1 February 2019, begin delivery of additional primary care and Belfast homelessness nursing team services (including additional nursing, podiatry, dental and administration services). By 1 May 2019, open hub premises as base for enhanced services outlined above. By May 2020, complete evaluation of activity, impact and outcomes delivered through pilot.	Unable to be completed due to Covid 19

Resonsible Owner	Actions	Expected Outcomes	End Year Result
DoH Department of Health www.health-ni.gov.uk	2. The model for the provision of needle and syringe exchange services will be reviewed and revised to reduce the risk of blood borne viruses and improve accessibility, including for those who are homeless.	**Outcome(s)** Reduce the harm related to the use and misuse of drugs and reduce prevalence of blood borne viruses among the people who experience homelessness and the general population. **Milestone(s)** Review to be completed and agreed by end April 2019; Revised service model to be in place by July 2019 October 2019 (subject to resources) NB Target date amended in June 2019	Five NSES training courses were delivered to service providers in 2019/20, one of which was to the Belfast Health Inclusion Team prior to them commencing delivery of the NSES. PHA has commissioned Extern to develop a Needle Exchange webinar, due to the restrictions in delivering face to face training. The webinars will provide support to existing service providers to continue service delivery as well as support some new service providers as an introduction to the service. The Community based needle exchange pilot model has adapted service delivery to an outreach model during the current restrictions to ensure the needs of service users continue to be met. The service continues to work with a cohort of 25-30 clients and delivery is monitored in response to need. The service is working with hostels to support access to NSES and supporting homeless clients. The Simon Community which currently delivers a Low Threshold Service within the SE locality will be commencing needle exchange service delivery within hostels as an interim measure during the current restrictions.

Resonsible Owner	Actions	Expected Outcomes	End Year Result
DoH Department of Health www.health-ni.gov.uk	3. Co-produce an awareness and education plan to meet the needs of staff in the voluntary sector and to raise awareness among HSC staff regarding particular service needs of homeless people. Work with partners ie. Voluntary and community sector and HSC to provide awareness and training on issues effecting homeless health.	**Outcome(s)** Improved understanding of health related issues, services and support required by people experiencing homelessness by both statutory and voluntary service providers. **Milestone(s):** Co design with Voluntary Sector and co deliver awareness raising workshop for HSC staff by June 2019; Co design with partners and deliver through CEC training for voluntary sector staff on awareness of health issues including medicines management by October 2019.	Clinical Education Centre have contacted voluntary sector organisations and have shared their programmes and offered bespoke programmes. To date no organisation has availed of the programmes.

Resonsible Owner	Actions	Expected Outcomes	End Year Result
DoH Department of Health www.health-ni.gov.uk	4. To develop a practice framework for social workers in NI in relation to homelessness.	**Outcome(s)** To develop social workers' understanding of homelessness. To support social workers to develop best practice in relation to homelessness. **Milestone(s)** Develop Practice Framework document by June 2019.	The "Social Work and Homelessness" practice framework was launched on 8.11.19. Dissemination and integration into practice will be ongoing,

PRIORITY AREA 2 Education and awareness raising – children, young people, schools and providers			
Responsible Owner	**Actions**	**Expected Outcomes**	**End Year Result**
DE Department of Education www.education-ni.gov.uk cea Rewarding Learning	5. By 31 March 2020, to produce resources on preventative strategies within the curriculum, such as financial capability and self-esteem, to address social issues such as homelessness.	**Outcome(s)** Throughout 2019-2020, CCEA, in collaboration with DE, EA and other children's authorities, will work to support educational policies with a view to improving the well-being of children and young people as outlined in the Children's Services Co-operation Act 2015. **Milestone(s)** Provided that funding is available to continue Professional Associate work in 2019/20, CCEA has agreed to carry out the following work: By 31 December 2019 Publish resources online in relation to financial capability and wellbeing; By 31 January 2020 Publish resources online in relation to Financial Capability. NB Target date amended in November 2019. By 31 January 2020 Evaluate the use of the Homelessness resources by schools; By 31 March 2020 Provide examples of good practice illustrating how the resources have been used by schools. By 31 March 2020 Make explicit links across the curriculum to homelessness thereby maximising the potential use of the homelessness resources; By 31 March 2020 Ensure effective communication and engagement with schools to raise awareness of the availability of the resources.	The resources for Wellbeing and Financial Capability were published in January 2020. An evaluation of the Homeless resources was carried out in January however response rates were extremely low with 7 primary and 1 post primary response returned. The closing date of the evaluation was extended and additional communications and reminders were issued to schools, however with schools closing due to COVID-19 plans will be taken forward to re-engage with schools in the next academic year (2021/22). Case studies of good practice were not finalised due to school closure and will be finalised in the next academic year (2021/22).

PRIORITY AREA 3 **Support for those leaving places of care, including institutional care, children's residential and foster care, prisons, hospitals, mental health facilities.**			
Responsible Owner	**Actions**	**Expected Outcomes**	**End Year Result**
DoJ Department of Justice www.justice-ni.gov.uk	6. To commission research to assess the longer term outcomes of an offender's access and retention of accommodation following release.	**Outcome(s)** To establish the effectiveness of resettlement provision, interventions and outcomes over the longer-term. **Milestone(s)** To commission research by September 2019	An invitation to tender for this research was issued in late February 2020 but unfortunately received no responses. The emerging covid-19 situation will most likely have been a factor in this so we will consider issuing again when the situation improves

Responsible Owner	Actions	Expected Outcomes	End Year Result
Department for Communities An Roinn Pobal Depairtment fur Commonities www.communities-ni.gov.uk DoH Department of Health www.health-ni.gov.uk	7. Proactively address housing needs of hospital in-patients who are experiencing homelessness. By taking a case study approach, review and make recommendations where necessary for improvement to hospital discharge arrangements for in-patients at risk of or experiencing homelessness. This will include consideration of the roles of HSC and NI Housing Executive, in particular with regards to improving coordination and collaboration between housing and health and social care services for in-patients before and at discharge.	**Outcome(s)** People at risk of or experiencing homelessness who are admitted to hospital as an in-patient will experience smoother transition and support between health and housing services on discharge from hospital. **Milestone(s):** By 30 April 2019 establish a joint housing and health task and finish group with representation from homelessness providers to take forward the joint review. By 30 September 2019 review a range of discharge case studies of homeless in-patients, including mental health and acute in-patients identify barriers to smooth transitions. By December 2019 produce a report with findings of case study review with recommendations for improvement. By 31 March 2020 commence implementation of recommendations.	Meeting with DfC, NIHE and Social Care Trust was held on 23 January 2020 to get an understanding of the ECHO pilot and a copy of the evaluation of the pilot obtained. Due to the Covid-19 crisis this action was not progressed and further consideration is required on the scope of the action for Year 3.

PRIORITY AREA 4 Support for families including support for those experiencing domestic violence, and community support mechanisms			
Responsible Owner	**Actions**	**Expected Outcomes**	**End Year Result**
Department for Communities An Roinn Pobal Depairtment fur Commonities www.communities-ni.gov.uk	8. 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 at risk of homelessness.	**Outcome(s)** To identify the key reasons for young people, particularly in the 18-21 age group, having difficulties in successfully accessing help and advice around homelessness issues. **Milestone(s)** By 31 October 2019 to have gathered evidence from Youth organisations in order to identify and understand particular difficulties faced by young people in accessing help and advice in relation to their homelessness situation.	CHNI Research Report – DfC met with the NI Youth Forum to discuss the issues raised in the CHNI Research Report. The Youth Forum reported back to DfC following consideration of the key issues. One of the issues raised in relation to apprenticeships. Another issue raised was in relation to youth involvement in relation to Housing and Homelessness issues. This links into the Young Person's Peer support Project which will be monitored as the Project progresses.

Responsible Owner	Actions	Expected Outcomes	End Year Result
DoJ Department of Justice www.justice-ni.gov.uk	9. To consider the impact of new domestic violence and abuse initiatives, in terms of how these may impact on homelessness levels, and what steps may be taken to address this.	**Outcome(s)** Development of a homelessness* impact assessment (HIA) template for use during the development and evaluation of domestic violence and abuse policies and initiatives by June 2019; **Milestone(s)** • To carry out a HIA on all substantive DVA Policy proposals from July 2019; • To provide bi-annual updates on assessments for the Inter-Departmental Homelessness Action Plan and to the Homeless APG on request;	Any proposed domestic violence and abuse initiative will be assessed during the policy development stage (using an agreed template) to identify whether it could have an impact on homelessness levels and, if so, what mitigating factors could be put in place to address this. There will also be occasions when existing domestic violence and abuse initiatives are updated or amended. The template will again be used to identify any associated new risks relating to homelessness and how these could be addressed.

Responsible Owner	Actions	Expected Outcomes	End Year Result
DoJ Department of Justice www.justice-ni.gov.uk	10. To review the current systems for accessing accommodation for offenders with service providers and bring forward a revised framework for co-operation by December 2019.	**Outcome(s)** To enable the accommodation and associated support needs of those entering and leaving custody to be met. **Milestone(s)** By December 2019, to complete review and bring forward a revised framework for co-operation.	The Protocol review target date was moved to Dec 2020 due to the situation with Covid-19. The 2 operational level meetings scheduled with NIHE and Housing Rights for the end of March were postponed for the same reason and a review of when further progress can be made will be held at the end of Q1 Year 3. It is worth noting that positive progress was made in Q4 of Year 2, moving the review closer to completion prior to the work being paused.

PRIORITY AREA 5 Employability, financial capability and access to benefits			
Responsible Owner	**Actions**	**Expected Outcomes**	**End Year Result**
Department for Communities An Roinn Pobal Depairtment fur Commonities www.communities-ni.gov.uk	11. A Housing Rights - Universal Credit and Homelessness pilot Project. During the implementation of Universal Credit from October 2018 to April 2019 to empower and train a minimum of 150 key frontline staff to deliver appropriate advice and support to assist vulnerable people in temporary accommodation successfully transition into long term accommodation. The pilot will also provide access to a dedicated helpline support for these staff and a facility to refer individual complex cases where required. Vulnerable/homeless clients of the key workers supported through the pilot will have access to appropriate advice and financial capability support to minimise any adverse impact of Universal Credit (Estimated reach will be gathered) The Department will have access to any emerging policy issues on the impact of roll-out of Universal Credit on homeless people through information gathered by Housing rights during the pilot.	**Outcome(s)** Increased awareness of the impact of Universal Credit for those leaving temporary accommodation. Increased confidence to provide support to their clients on the housing issues arising from the implementation of Universal Credit. Increased awareness of financial capability and resources to enable them to assist clients to be more financially capable and tenancy ready to move into their new home **Milestone(s)** By April 2019 empower and train a minimum of 150 key frontline staff.	The project has completed with the following outputs/ outcomes: • 134 key workers/volunteers from 27 organisations participated in the project; • 97% of participants reported an increased understanding of Universal Credit in relation to homeless people leaving temporary accommodation • 93% of participants reported an increase in their confidence to deliver appropriate advice and support to their clients on the housing issues arising from the implementation of Universal Credit; • 95% of participants reported an increase in their financial capability skills to enable them to assist homeless people leaving temporary accommodation to be more financially capable and tenancy ready to move into their new home; • Participants estimated that their increased knowledge as a result of this training would help over 3,700 clients. This project was delivered from Welfare Reform Mitigations funding which ends in March 2020 and will be included in the overall evaluation of the mitigation measures.

PRIORITY AREA 5 Employability, financial capability and access to benefits			
Responsible Owner	**Actions**	**Expected Outcomes**	**End Year Result**
Department for Communities An Roinn Pobal Depairtment fur Commonities www.communities-ni.gov.uk	12. Labour market activation support for homeless individuals or for those at risk of homelessness	**Outcome(s):** An integrated employability pathway, that connects people to suitable support, for individuals at risk of homelessness or who are homeless. **Milestone(s):** Connecting the Jobs & Benefits offices with the right support organisations that work directly with individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.	Test and learn with Falls Rd JBO and the Welcome Centre extended to other organisations. Model still to be replicated across the local office network. Local offices have embarked on building links from a “Work & Wellness” perspective with local support providers including those supporting homeless individuals. Regular opportunities for support groups to attend the offices to showcase services with resulting increases awareness of Work Coaches of challenges faced and support available.

Responsible Owner	Actions	Expected Outcomes	End Year Result
Department for Communities An Roinn Pobal Depairtment fur Commonities www.communities-ni.gov.uk	13. Delivery of employability support to ensure tenancy sustainability through Housing Associations in local communities.	**Outcome(s):** Strong partnership working/ referral pathways between Housing Associations, NIHE & the Department in regards to employability to ensure tenants can sustain tenancy. **Milestone(s):** Dedicated contacts and pathways within the Work & Inclusion Group to support Housing Associations tenants to be in place by January 2020. Working with NIHE through the floating support programme to link with employability support through new referral route to existing programmes by March 2020.	Dedicated contacts and pathways within the Work & Wellbeing Division to support Housing Associations tenants have been provided and currently being implemented. Meeting held in February to establish processes and procedures to enable NIHE central network to begin referring tenants to existing employability programmes such as Condition Management Programme, Workable and Access to Work (as appropriate). Due to covid-19 a number of Employability programmes were suspended. Work will continue between NIHE and Work & Wellbeing Division upon programme reinstatement. NIHE will be invited to participate in co-design of relevant new programmes under Employability NI Programme design in 2021.

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