

Report Impact Review

Hidden homelessness in London

Released 27 September 2017

Feedback and impact

- Terrie Alafat, Chief Executive of the Chartered Institute of Housing, commented 'Homelessness has risen steadily since 2010 according to official statistics and we know that the problem is acute in London. But as this report highlights there are many more people affected by homelessness that we don't know about. To have so many people homeless in 2017 is quite simply a national disgrace and something we must act on now. History tells us that we can significantly reduce homelessness, but it will take a cross-departmental commitment from government and a strategic approach to tackle all of its causes.'
- Jenny Barnes, Head of Policy and Research at Centrepoin said 'We think this report is a very useful political counterbalance to the ongoing focus on rough sleeping... We were pleased with how much focus was placed on the issue of proving vulnerability as this is something that I think most people are unaware of, but it's an issue that makes a huge difference to people's experiences on the ground. We therefore particularly liked the recommendations on this, and on better data collection around people's characteristics. It was great to see the point about the TfL adverts – this is something that we and others have been recommending for some time, so it would be great if this report can help drive this through.'
- Mary Mason, Chief Executive of Solace Women's Aid, who gave evidence to the investigation, welcomed the report and [responded in a statement](#).
- New Horizons Youth Centre said 'It is both fitting and an honour that the London Assembly and Sian Berry chose our centre to host the launch of their Hidden Homelessness Report. The report's findings highlight precisely what we at New Horizon Youth Centre have been consistently telling government and the mayor's office: young people are disproportionately affected by the housing crisis, but their homelessness is not visible on the streets.'
- Polly Neate, Shelter's chief executive, praised the report, saying it 'reveals the the tragedy of rising and persistent homelessness in London for tens of thousands of people, many of them young and vulnerable to abuse' and urging national government to 'stem this crisis by ending the freeze on housing benefit and giving Londoners the leg up that they so desperately need.'
- The Department for Communities and Local Government responded to press enquiries about the report, saying: 'Tackling homelessness is a complex issue with no single solution, but this government is determined to help the most vulnerable in society. We're investing £550 million to 2020 to address the issue and implementing the most ambitious legislative reform in decades, the Homelessness Reduction Act. This Act means more people get the help they need earlier to prevent them from becoming homeless in the first place.'
- The Royal Society of Arts wrote a blog which [mentions the report](#).



Media coverage

- Widespread media coverage for the report, including major outlets and trade press - BBC London News, LBC Radio, BBC London radio, 5live Investigates, The Guardian, Sky News, Evening Standard, 24Housing, Inside Housing, picked up by PA and Reuters.
- Continued pick up by national press in the months since release, including a [Standard article](#).

Mayoral response and recommendation implementation

	Recommendations	RAG	Response - January 2018
1	The Government should recognise the acute nature of homelessness in London and keep under review the funding to implement the Homelessness Reduction Act for London local authorities, to ensure that boroughs have sufficient resources to relieve and prevent homelessness.	N/A	The Mayor says he has urged the government to commit to fully cover the costs of implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act.
2	The Mayor should lobby London local authorities to record the protected characteristics of those presenting at housing options services, following comprehensive training of staff about the sensitivity required in collection, and the purpose of such monitoring. This would create better understanding of London's homeless population.		The Government has since reviewed data it asks local authorities to record. The Mayor says he is 'pleased to see this includes more thorough recording of equality characteristics.'
3	The Mayor should review the assessment of 'vulnerability', and advice given to non-priority need applicants across London to create best practice guidelines for local authorities and homelessness charities. This should make particular reference to advice and support for young and LGBT persons, as well as supporting vulnerable people. He should add this to the agenda for his No Nights Sleeping Rough Task Force.		The Mayor responds that, as guidance and legal definitions already exist, he believes it would complicate things to introduce London-specific guidance at this stage. He says that the No Nights Sleeping Rough Taskforce has already considered the implications of the Act, but only insofar as they relate to rough sleeping.
4	The Government should rewrite the guidance around evidence required to reach an assessment of 'vulnerability' for those who have experienced domestic violence and abuse to make it easier for authorities to identify victims accurately. They should ensure that staff know that police crime reference or risk assessment numbers are not required in order to validate an application.	N/A	The Mayor says his Housing Strategy 'makes clear that I recognise the importance of appropriate housing support in tackling domestic violence and abuse.' The new Homelessness Code of Guidance includes a dedicated chapter on domestic violence.
5	In light of the Homelessness Reduction Act's introduction, and new data gained from prevention services, the Government should look to review the list of those who meet the criteria for 'vulnerability' under the legislation.	N/A	The Mayor suggests that further change to legislation to the statutory definition of homelessness 'are unlikely in the current political context. But it is important that the government keeps the Act under close review'
6	The Mayor should promote the use of existing homelessness advice and support services using the London.gov.uk website and TfL advertising space.		The Mayor said that he will promote existing advice and support services, but only when they have indicated they would welcome it. Assembly officers have informed services that gave evidence to the enquiry about this. The Mayor also says that rough sleeping campaigns are promoted on London.gov.uk and public transport.
7	The Government should ensure that any future legislation on domestic violence and abuse gives survivors of domestic violence and abuse priority in tenancy law. This would mean that survivors are able to remain in their homes following an incident of abuse, if they wish, rather than the perpetrator. Legislation should seek to formalise the use of reciprocal housing agreements between local authorities (and housing associations) to ensure that people who experience domestic violence and abuse can maintain their housing eligibility band across London.		The Mayor 'wholeheartedly' agrees that survivors of domestic violence and abuse should be able to remain in safe and secure accommodation and expects future legislation will enshrine this. He will take action through his Housing Strategy to make sure housing providers identify and support victims of abuse; indicating support for the Pan-London Reciprocal Agreement; and helping allow survivors to move without surrendering social housing tenancy, by giving priority in his Housing Moves scheme.