

**Coming of Age:
Older homelessness and
Supporting People**

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- **research commissioned by the UK Coalition on Older Homelessness and Homeless Link**
- **funded by Help the Aged and hact**
- **briefing paper for SP commissioners and their partners, and full report**
- **links with previous and current work on older homelessness by the Coalition, HtA and hact**
- **includes work on numbers and costs of older homelessness by the New Policy Institute**

Older people are “the forgotten homeless”:

They fall down the gaps between strategies and services

- mainstream older people’s strategies and service provision may assume older people are adequately housed**
- older people are often marginalised in all-age homelessness services and ignored in homelessness strategies**
- specialist services and strategies (eg domestic violence, mental health, learning disability) may not consider the different needs of people in later life**

SP programme provides opportunities to meet the challenge of older homelessness

- for creative commissioning of new services**
- to influence and change existing services**
- to encourage provider organisations to work collaboratively**
- to work in partnership with other commissioners and funders**

Housing LIN also provides opportunities to meet the challenges of older homelessness

- **what are the challenges?**
- **complex reasons for older homelessness**
- **costs of older homelessness**
- **examples of joint working to meet needs**
- **a checklist for local action**

What are the challenges?

- **need for joint commissioning, joint funding, partnerships (housing, health, social services, specialist voluntary agencies)**
- **bricks and mortar provision (new build, existing stock, re-provisioning) not always easy to fund or source**
- **some older homeless people have multiple and complex needs but are shunted between services (housing-related support, health, social care)**
- **and lots more challenges... but we have the answers!**

Who are older homeless people?

- **People aged 50+, homelessness defined as:**
 - rough sleepers
 - hostel residents (designated direct access or short-stay)
 - bed and breakfast/boarders with no other option
 - nowhere to go on discharge from institutions (eg prison)
 - staying with friends or family (and overcrowded)
 - unreasonable to remain in current housing because of harassment, abuse, domestic violence
 - about to be evicted
 - resettled but at risk of abandonment or eviction

What are the costs of older homelessness?

Homelessness costs money. Services to help older homeless people can save money by saving on costs such as:

- failed tenancies (abandonment/eviction/arrears)**
- health costs (pneumonia, mental health, TB, fractures ...)**
- bed-blocking in hospital or direct access or short-stay hostels**
- police and criminal justice costs (eg attacks on older homeless people)**
- higher cost options (eg nursing home) instead of lower-cost options (housing-based models of care and support)**

Complex reasons for older homelessness

Often triggered by bereavement or relationship breakdown but linked to other factors including:

- limited or no support networks
- a history of unresolved loss or trauma
- physical health problems, disability, sensory impairment
- mental health problems, dementia
- substance abuse, addiction
- limited literacy/numeracy, lack of or loss of confidence in managing bills

Some are homeless from earlier life but many become homeless for the first time in later life

Good practice examples

- **Cambridge Cyrenians: specialist resettlement and tenancy sustainment service for older homeless people moving into sheltered housing**
- **Flagship HA, Lowestoft: shared house and floating support in sheltered housing**
- **Peabody Court, Camberwell: sheltered housing for older homeless people**
- **St Eugene's Court, Birmingham: specialist housing and community centre for older people from the Irish community**
- **Specialist supported housing projects for older drinkers including those with dementia**

A checklist for local action

For local strategies (Supporting People, older people, homelessness, housing, others) you need to know:

- how many older people are homeless or at risk of homelessness**
- whether local homeless provision and services are available and appropriate for older homeless people**
- Supporting People reviews and contract management can encourage partnership working, training and other links between homelessness and older people's services**