

## **Homelessness is unacceptable: tackling homelessness is everyone's business**

This statement of intent is adapted from the Memorandum of Understanding developed as part of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Homelessness Trailblazer project. The signatories to this full Memorandum of Understanding can be found here: <https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/housing/priority-themes/housing-need/homelessness-trailblazer/>

The purpose of this statement reflects that of the Memorandum of Understanding. It has been adapted to reflect the intentions of organisations who do not have a statutory obligation under the Homelessness Reduction Act but who are still committed to making homelessness the unacceptable outcome.

The purpose of this statement of intent is to communicate that each signatory:

- Believes that homelessness is unacceptable;
- Understands the impacts of homelessness on individuals and on communities;
- Commits to action to prevent homelessness and to enable people to move on from homelessness.

The following organisations have committed to this statement of intent as of July 2018:

- **CHS Group**
- **Wintercomfort for the homeless**
- **Cambridge Community Arts**
- **Cambridge Churches Homeless Project**

# 1. Introduction

Homelessness is bad for the health, wellbeing and wealth of people and communities in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Homelessness affects our ambitions for:

- Economic growth and a skilled workforce
- Strong and sustainable communities
- Healthy and safe communities
- Transformed public services

It is not acceptable for homelessness to exist yet the number of households (all types) experiencing homelessness in the area has been rising since 2010<sup>1</sup>.

Many households live in circumstances that can be described as 'homeless'<sup>2</sup>:

- *People who are roofless* i.e. they are sleeping rough or living in emergency accommodation
- *People who are houseless* i.e. they have a place to sleep but this is short term, for example in a hostel, supported housing, or asylum seeker accommodation, or they are due to leave a long-term placement but have no home to return to e.g. from prison or from a health care placement
- *People living in insecure housing*, for example they are temporarily living with friends and family, or they are living under the threat of eviction or the threat of violence
- *People living in inadequate housing*, for example unfit housing or in extreme overcrowding

Homelessness can be complex to understand, prevent and resolve. The causes of homelessness are typically described as either structural (e.g. poverty, housing supply and affordability, unemployment) or personal (e.g. poor physical or mental health or wellbeing, experience of violence or abuse, relationship breakdown, experience of care or prison) and can be interrelated and reinforced by one another. For many people, simply providing a house will not enable them to move on positively from the causes of their homelessness, or their experience of homelessness.

Homelessness is everyone's business. This statement was developed to demonstrate that signatories understand this, and that by working together we can be more effective in earlier identification, homeless prevention and enabling people to move on from homelessness to live happy, healthy and fulfilled lives in our communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Homelessness measured by local authorities and reported through quarterly returns to the government, reported in Homeless Prevention Trailblazer bid <http://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/file/3185/download> and in Cambridgeshire's Homelessness Bulletin Edition 2 <http://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/housing-need-data>

<sup>2</sup> Taken from ETHOS, the evidence based European Typology of Homelessness and housing exclusion, developed by FEANTSA <http://www.feantsa.org/download/en-16822651433655843804.pdf>

## **2. Our commitments**

### **1. Visible leadership and governance**

We will:

- Communicate the importance of preventing homelessness within our own organisations, in our work with partners and with our customers/service users;
- Be clear what our organisation can offer to prevent homelessness more effectively, and what we ask of others to enable us to do this;
- Include relevant objectives and performance measures within our business and delivery plans, where this is relevant and possible, and report on these to our board (or alternative) every year;
- Assess the impact of all relevant policies and processes on homelessness when they are developed/reviewed.

### **2. A ‘think home’ workforce**

We will:

- Work towards incorporating homelessness (the risk factors/causes and opportunities to prevent and respond), into staff training;
- Support the ‘think family’ approach to working with households who are experiencing more complex difficulties in their lives, alongside homelessness (see ‘8. Jargon Buster’ for details of the ‘think family’ approach);
- Support staff to reflect on their work with people experiencing homelessness and to share this with others.

### **3. More genuinely affordable rented homes**

- Where possible we will support and/or enable an increase in the number of genuinely affordable rented homes accessible to households who are at risk of becoming homeless, or are already homeless.

### **4. Co-investment with communities**

We will work with the public and local communities to:

- Raise public awareness of the risks of homelessness, the impact of homelessness on people and communities, and why investment in homeless prevention and response benefits everyone;
- Work with other organisations in the voluntary, community and faith sectors to achieve the best possible outcomes.

### **5. Co-investment with businesses**

- Where possible we will work with business interests to raise awareness of the impact of homelessness on the economy, and to gain commitment to invest in activities that will prevent homelessness, and enable people to move on from homelessness.

### **6. Learning from experiences of homelessness**

We will:

- Provide opportunities for people who have experienced homelessness opportunities to share these with our organisations, and those we work with;
- Listen to, and act on, the voices of people who have experienced homelessness.

## 7. Legal status

Nothing in this statement shall be construed as creating any legal relationship between the parties. It is a statement of intent to foster genuine and mutually beneficial co-operation.

## 8. Quick jargon buster

**Co-investment:** Businesses are a partner in ending homelessness, contributing towards the ambition as part of their core business rather than solely through corporate social responsibility action.

**Co-production:** a way of working whereby citizens and decision makers, or people who use services and service providers work together to create a decision or service which works for all.

**Life chances:** the chances an individual has of sharing in the opportunities to live a healthy, happy and productive life, and chances of being resilient in unexpected circumstances.

**Multiple and complex needs:** several problems are experienced at the same time, including mental ill health, homelessness, drug and alcohol misuse, offending, and family breakdown.

**'Think family'** approach involves a commitment to: one lead professional; one thorough assessment considering the needs of the whole household; one plan, co-produced with the household; a team around the household ie, all professionals work together around the household.