

MEMORANDUM

TO: Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness and Housing

FROM: HomeBase

RE: Evaluating Homeless Prevention, Ideas from the United Kingdom

DATE: September 29, 2006

The following report summarizes a paper published by the United Kingdom's Department for Communities and Local Government. The paper, "Evaluating Homelessness Prevention," can be accessed at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1500456>.

Key Findings as Reported by Study:

- Homelessness prevention is being actively embraced by a growing number of local authorities
- Central to the homelessness prevention ethos is a pro-active rather than reactive approach; a central focus on resolving applicants' housing problems rather than a narrowly legalistic emphasis on a household's status as regards the homelessness legislation
- The most widely adopted approaches to homelessness prevention are enhanced housing advice, rent deposit and similar schemes to enhance access to private tenancies, family mediation, domestic violence victim support, and tenancy sustainability.
- In many local authorities homelessness prevention activities are targeted at non-priority as well as potentially priority homeless households. It is highly likely that a substantial part of the 35% post-2003 drop in homelessness acceptances (in the UK) is attributable to homelessness prevention activities.
- Homelessness prevention practices- particularly those involving households otherwise liable to be priority need cases- can be highly cost effective.
- The monitoring of homelessness prevention outcomes has been patchy, though it is anticipated that this will improve due to the recent establishment of Best Value Performance Indicators covering this area.
- Most of the homelessness prevention initiatives that could be assessed appeared to be cost effective, in that savings in the cost of temporary accommodation and administration associated with homelessness exceeded the operating costs of services.

Other Key Information:

- Housing options interviews have a central role within the homelessness prevention framework. These interviews examine the feasibility of securing an applicant's existing accommodation or examining the possible means of accessing a new tenancy for potentially homeless families.
- Improved and expanded housing advice services are another key feature
 - Allow for increased role for 'landlord liaison' figure to develop 'early warning systems' to alert authorities on families at risk of homelessness
 - Targeted toward 'high risk' and 'high priority' groups
 - Highly cost-effective

- Rent deposit schemes are playing a growing role in re-housing potentially homeless households and are highly cost-effective
- Family mediation schemes are some of the most commonly used strategies to prevent youth homelessness
 - Appear to be effective, but are not well monitored in the long-term
- Relationship breakdown involving domestic violence was the main reason for loss of settled home for 13% of homeless households in '04/'05 (in the UK)
 - Main types of homelessness prevention relating to domestic violence are 'sanctuary schemes,' which allow victims to remain in their homes, supporting victims in planned moves, crisis intervention services, floating support, and resettlement support
 - Solid evidence of sanctuary schemes potential to prevent homelessness
 - Highly cost-effective
- Collaboration between prison-based housing staff and external agencies such as training providers, outreach providers, other advice agencies, and social landlords necessary
- 'Peer involvement' models of prison based housing advice potentially beneficial
- Flexible and client-centered provision, close liaison with key agencies, and building support with other agencies all critical for tenancy sustainability.

Are you interested in hearing more about strategies for homelessness prevention beyond discharge plans?

For further information, please contact Danielle Crowell at danielle@homebaseccc.org, or at 415-788-7961 x301