

### **13 PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS DUTIES – A JOINT SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT AND COSLA CONSULTATION (DIJB7-2022)**

In September 2017, the First Minister set out a new commitment to eradicate rough sleeping, transform the use of temporary accommodation in Scotland and end homelessness. Ministers subsequently established the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARASAG) to make recommendations on how these changes could be achieved. In response to those recommendations, in November 2018, the Scottish Government and COSLA published the Ending Homelessness Together action plan (updated in October 2020), which included a commitment to develop wide-reaching prevention duties. At the request of the Scottish Government, Crisis convened the Prevention Review Group, chaired by Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick, to develop recommendations for legal duties on Scottish local authorities and wider public bodies to prevent homelessness. The recommendations of the Prevention Review Group were published in February 2021 (<https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/244558/preventing-homelessness-in-scotland.pdf>) and are now subject of a joint consultation by the Scottish Government and COSLA.

The consultation aims to support the introduction of legislation as part of the upcoming Housing Bill in year two of the current Parliament, which leads to system change and person-centred and trauma-informed service responses to meet individual needs to better prevent homelessness. The consultation invites views in two broad areas:

1. Introducing new duties (through a Housing Bill expected in 2023) on a range of public bodies and landlords to prevent homelessness, particularly by asking and acting on a risk of homelessness, as well as responsibilities relating to strategic and joint planning.
2. Changing existing homelessness legislation to ensure homelessness is prevented at an earlier stage, including a proposal to extend the duty to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness up to six months before, to maximise the housing options available to people and to prescribe what reasonable steps may include.

The consultation period is to 31 March 2022. The consultation document and supporting information can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/prevention-homelessness-duties-joint-scottish-government-cosla-c-consultation/documents/>.

The consultation includes proposals that have a direct and indirect impact on Integration Joint Boards. This includes proposing new statutory responsibilities specifically for health and social care partnerships/integration authorities, social workers and for GPs, as well as seeking views on how any new responsibilities might be best implemented in practice. Proposals also cover aspects such as case co-ordination and joint planning that impact upon how health and social care services and practitioners work in partnership with other public and third sector partners.

Through discussion with partner organisations it has been agreed that work will take place through the Homelessness Partnership (a strategic planning group of the HSCP) to develop a partnership response to the consultation wherever possible. However, it has also been noted that individual partners, including the Health and Social Care Partnership, may decide to submit separate responses on specific matters directly impacting their functions.

The Integration Joint Board is asked to note the consultation and intended approach to developing a response.