

Response of Welsh Assembly Government to recommendations of Homelessness Commission

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p><b>Definitions</b></p> <p>1. The National Assembly should adopt the following definition of “homelessness”: “Any person who lacks accommodation or where the tenure is not secure”.</p> <p>The following are examples of people covered by this definition: Homeless people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ sleeping rough</li> <li>◆ living in insecure/temporary housing (excluding assured/assured shorthold tenants)</li> <li>◆ living in short term hostels, night shelters, direct access hostels</li> <li>◆ living in bed and breakfasts</li> <li>◆ moving frequently between relatives/friends</li> <li>◆ squatting</li> <li>◆ unable to remain in, or return to, housing due to poor conditions, overcrowding, affordability problems, domestic violence, harassment, mental, physical and/or sexual abuse etc</li> </ul> <p>People threatened with homelessness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ staying in hospitals, police custody, prisons, other institutions or supported schemes and due for release with no accommodation</li> <li>◆ required to leave by family/ friends</li> <li>◆ facing possession proceedings, within three months of the end of short term/limited tenancy, or threat of illegal eviction</li> <li>◆ required to leave current accommodation due to relationship breakdown</li> </ul>	<p>The Welsh Assembly Government (“Assembly Government”) regards this as a clear workable definition that encompasses all groups of people at risk of homelessness.</p> <p>It will be incorporated with additional criterion of “unsuitability for physical needs”, within the Assembly Government’s National Homelessness Strategy and its guidance on Local Homelessness Strategies, and will support the development of inclusive strategies without extending the statutory responsibilities of local authorities to individual homeless people.</p> <p>The guidance will recommend this as a working definition that local partnerships could voluntarily adopt for their Local Homelessness Strategies.</p>
<p>2. The National Assembly should adopt the following definition of “rough sleeping”: “People sleeping, or bedded down, in the open air; people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation”.</p> <p>The following are examples of places covered by this definition: People sleeping, or bedded down, in the open air</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ on the streets</li> <li>◆ in doorways</li> <li>◆ in parks</li> </ul>	<p>The Assembly Government regards this as a clear workable definition that encompasses all groups of people at risk of rough sleeping.</p> <p>It will be incorporated within the Assembly Government’s National Homelessness Strategy and its</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ in bus shelters</li> </ul> <p>People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ barns</li> <li>◆ sheds</li> <li>◆ car parks</li> <li>◆ cars derelict boats</li> <li>◆ stations</li> <li>◆ squats</li> <li>◆ tents</li> <li>◆ makeshift shelters</li> </ul>		<p>guidance on Local Homelessness Strategies, and will support the development of inclusive strategies without extending the statutory responsibilities of local authorities to individual homeless people.</p> <p>The guidance will recommend this as a working definition that local partnerships could voluntarily adopt for their Local Homelessness Strategies.</p>
RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE	
<p><u>Local Homelessness Strategies</u></p>		
<p>3. The National Assembly should issue the Draft Local Homelessness Strategies Guidance to local authorities for consultation.</p>	<p>The Assembly Government invited views on the Homelessness Commission report, including the appended draft guidance, from local authorities and others between September 2001 and February 2002. The draft guidance prepared by the Homelessness Commission (Appendix 7) has been used as the basis for the guidance on Local Homelessness Strategies. This guidance will be incorporated into the draft statutory Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness, which will be issued for consultation in early Summer 2002, with the final version being issued early in 2003.</p>	
<p>4. Local authorities should prepare a local homelessness strategy in accordance with the Guidance to be issued by the National Assembly, as hereinbefore mentioned in Recommendation 3 above.</p>	<p>Under the provisions of the Homelessness Act 2002, local authorities are required to produce Local Homelessness Strategies within 12 months of the Act coming into effect. The Commencement Order will be put before the National Assembly for Wales as soon as possible. It is anticipated that consultation on the guidance will begin in July 2002, and will be issued as Final Guidance to local authorities by early 2003. The Assembly Government has already funded work on six local homelessness strategies, and further funding is being made available to local authorities (section 126, Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996) to support development of these strategies during 2002/3.</p>	
<p>5. The National Assembly should monitor the consistency with which local authorities interpret and meet their legal duties to tackle homelessness under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, and under the forthcoming Homelessness Bill.</p>	<p>There is evidence of significant variations in the way local authorities apply the homelessness legislation, including the new Homeless Persons (Priority Need) (Wales) Order 2001 ("the Order"), which gives the Assembly Government cause for concern. The Assembly Government will carry out a review of the impact and implementation of the Order. Final Guidance on the Order will take account of any problems, and we will work with authorities, Shelter and other organisations to help ensure that local authority staff fully understand the Order and other homelessness legislation. The Audit Commission has responsibility for inspection of local authorities and we will refer any concerns to them.</p>	
<p>6. The National Assembly should advise local authorities that they should integrate their local homelessness strategy into their broader community plan.</p>	<p>The draft guidance on Local Homelessness Strategies will explain the need for a clear explicit link between the Homelessness Strategy and the Community Plan. Both plans are statutory requirements and will need to remain distinct, though inter-related, documents.</p>	
<p>7. The National Assembly should appoint a "Standing</p>	<p>The Assembly Government will be requiring all local authorities to submit their final Local</p>	

<p>Commission" to guide and monitor the development of homelessness strategies in Wales.</p>	<p>Homelessness Strategies. We will monitor the quality and outputs and will consider whether further action or guidance is needed. Both the National Consultative Forum on housing in Wales and the Local Government and Housing Committee will be monitoring the implementation of the National Homelessness Strategy (see Recommendation 8). The Assembly Government is considering the need for a specific monitoring group to be established.</p>
<p><b><u>National Homelessness Strategy for Wales</u></b></p> <p>The National Assembly should adopt a strategy for addressing homelessness in Wales that should form part of the wider National Housing Strategy for Wales.</p>	<p>The Local Government and Housing Committee will be considering a draft framework for a National Homelessness Strategy in April 2002. The framework will be issued for consultation and further developed into a National Homelessness Strategy by February 2003. The National Housing Strategy has been issued, and will be continually up-dated as necessary. The national homelessness strategy will form part of the broader national housing strategy.</p>
<p><b><u>Monitoring and Measuring of Homelessness</u></b></p> <p>9. The National Assembly should issue the amended WHO12 form statistical return to local authorities for consultation purposes with a view to its implementation as soon as possible. The form will collect additional information about the number of people who experience homelessness, including the prevalence of ethnic minority homelessness, as well as its causes.</p>	<p>The statutory WHO12 Inquiry Form has now been amended in accordance with the Commission's recommendations, and has been issued to local authorities for 2002/3 - the information will be returned and analysed in 2003.</p>
<p>10. The National Assembly should encourage agencies, including voluntary agencies, Registered Social Landlords and local authorities, to adopt the Combined Survey method of counting rough sleepers.</p>	<p>The guidance on Local Homelessness Strategies will advise local authorities to use the "Combined Survey" method (i.e. using snapshot and ongoing survey methods) as the most effective approach to measuring rough sleeping. The Assembly Government will promote further development of good practice in this area.</p>
<p><b><u>Targets and Outcomes</u></b></p> <p>11. The National Assembly should amend the target (referred to in betterwales.com) as follows: <i>to reduce (by 2003) the "number of homeless households placed by local authorities in temporary housing for more than six months".</i></p>	<p>The Assembly Government recognises that the existing target is inappropriate, as it does not reflect the length of time people stay in temporary accommodation. Statistics on the number of households in temporary accommodation for more than six months will be available in 2003, and this will allow the Assembly Government to set a target and timescale for the reduction in numbers of people remaining in temporary accommodation long-term, based on the base-line figure.</p>
<p>12. The Commission endorses the principle of the objective to eliminate the need to sleep rough by April 2003 but believes that it is not achievable within that time scale, and recommends that the National Assembly reviews the timescale based on realistic benchmarks for measurement of progress.</p>	<p>The Assembly Government does not currently have adequate information on the levels of rough sleeping or the extent of emergency provision. This information will not be available until the Local Homelessness Strategies are in place (Summer 2003), and it will take some time before the planned investment feeds through into available provision.</p> <p>The Assembly Government is committed to eliminating the need for rough sleeping at the earliest opportunity, but proposes that the target date for achievement of this aim is determined in summer 2003 on the basis of proper evidence.</p>

<p><b><u>Bond Schemes</u></b></p> <p>13. The National Assembly should continue to advocate and support the positive development of the growth of local Bond Guarantee Schemes.</p>	<p>The Assembly Government is already committed, in its National Housing Strategy, to extending access to bond schemes across Wales as soon as this is possible. The Assembly Government recognises the important contribution that bond schemes make in accessing private rented accommodation. The Local Homelessness Strategies guidance will endorse the use of bond schemes to alleviate homelessness amongst all sectors of the community. The Assembly Government is undertaking a mapping exercise of all bond schemes in Wales, to establish coverage and identify gaps in provision. Funding has been made available to voluntary organisations, through section 180 of the Housing Act 1996, to secure growth of these schemes.</p>
<p>14. The National Assembly should review the management of existing Bond Guarantee Schemes to promote good practice.</p>	<p>This is already a commitment in the National Housing Strategy. The Assembly Government intends to issue a good practice guide for schemes during 2002, and has already held discussions with schemes, to involve them in development of the guidance.</p>
<p>15. The National Assembly should review the effectiveness of the Cardiff Custodial Bond Bank and, in due course, incorporate the findings into the Local Homelessness Strategies Guidance.</p>	<p>The Assembly Government is undertaking a review of this scheme and will be reporting its findings to the Local Government and Housing Committee in June. We will then consider the relevance of these findings to future guidance.</p>
<p><b><u>Exclusion Policies</u></b></p> <p>16. The National Assembly should provide Guidance to local authorities that possession action using mandatory procedures against Introductory Tenants in cases of rent arrears is considered poor practice. The authority should, in such cases, pursue alternative debt recovery procedures.</p>	<p>The Assembly Government agrees the principle that eviction should only be used as a last resort, but the action proposed requires further consideration. The Assembly Government will be undertaking a review of Introductory Tenancies during 2002/3, which should lead to more appropriate guidance being issued. The Assembly Government is also participating in a joint working party on rent arrears, which will produce good practice guidance in this area.</p>
<p>17. The National Assembly should make a Statutory Instrument, under the provision of section 129(3) of the Housing Act 1996, that all Introductory Tenants facing possession action by a local authority for rent arrears are entitled to an oral hearing to review the decision to seek possession, and to be independently represented at such a hearing.</p>	<p>Following the implementation of the Homelessness Act 2002, the Assembly Government will be recommending in its statutory Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness, that local authorities should allow a tenant to have an oral hearing for independent reviews to comply with the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998. However the main problem is courts' lack of discretion on the award of possession for introductory tenancies - further consideration will be given to the need for legislation following the review of introductory tenancies.</p>
<p>18. The National Assembly should advise local authorities to regularly monitor and evaluate their anti-social behaviour policies.</p>	<p>This matter will be placed on the agenda of the All-Wales Forum on Crime and Disorder Issues for their consideration when they next meet in early summer 2002. Local authorities are already required to address anti-social behaviour in their Crime Reduction Strategy, which must be reviewed every three years (some are reviewed annually). Landlords should take account of the CIH guidance ("The Law") on anti-social behaviour, funded by the Assembly. The Home Office is about to issue new guidance and proposals, and the Assembly Government will then need to consider its response.</p>
<p>19. The National Assembly should encourage local authorities to develop private rented/registration schemes in their area.</p>	<p>Local authorities have been encouraged to do this since the Housing Act 1996 came into force. About half of Welsh local authorities have registration schemes. The Assembly Government is committed to introducing a national mandatory licensing scheme for HMOs, which will aim to provide safe, acceptable living conditions without reducing the supply of private rented accommodation. When legislation is passed introducing mandatory licensing</p>

	for houses in multiple occupation, it will be a statutory requirement for all local authorities, which have HMOs to have a licensing scheme.
20. The National Assembly should advise both local authorities and Registered Social Landlords that a lack of a permanent address is not a reason for excluding a homeless person from their Housing Register/Waiting List.	This will be incorporated into the statutory revised Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness.
21. The Commission endorses the recommendations made by Joy Kent in her report: "Review into the Use of Exclusions and Restrictive Practices in the Allocation of Social Housing" and recommends their implementation.	The Assembly Government has consulted on this report. The Local Government and Housing Committee is to consider the responses to the report and proposed next steps at its April meeting - the response to this recommendation will be considered in the light of this discussion.
<b>Prevention</b> 22. The National Assembly should advocate the benefit of independent housing advice in the prevention of homelessness.	The Assembly Government will conclude consultation on the Housing Advice Audit (see Rec 28) in July 2002. It is already committed in the National Housing Strategy to enabling everyone in need to access independent housing advice, an aim shared by the Legal Services Commission ("LSC"). The LSC is already funding independent housing advice services across Wales, and a new second-tier service providing specialist support to housing advice services will begin in Spring 2002. The Local Homelessness Strategies Guidance will encourage local authorities to provide an advice information service to the "Quality Mark" Standard accredited by the Legal Services Commission, and to ensure that independent and informed advice and advocacy services are available in their area. The Assembly Government is considering the need for funding to support additional independent housing advice services to fill existing gaps.
23. The National Assembly should include housing and homelessness in the National Curriculum.	The Assembly Government has already funded "Canllaw Cymru" and Shelter's "Homeworks" initiative, which will enable young people to gain a better understanding of homelessness and how to avoid it. Further consideration will be given to this matter by ACCAC in the context of the next review of the curriculum, which will be undertaken over the next two years.
24. The National Assembly should make representations to the UK Government that housing advice, guidance and support is provided to those leaving prison, long-term care, hospitals and psychiatric hospitals to prevent homelessness, promote and regain links with the community and to find and sustain accommodation on their release.	Discussions are already underway with the Prison Service in Wales on the development of better advice and support services to people in Welsh prisons. The Assembly Government will work with the Prison and Probation services to ensure that preparation for release includes planning of suitable accommodation and support. The Assembly Government will also strengthen guidance on discharging of patients from health care institutions to ensure that they are able to move into suitable housing.
25. The National Assembly should encourage police authorities to maintain a list of local authority and voluntary direct access hostels to refer those requiring emergency accommodation.	Police authorities are already expected to maintain referral links with hostels and other direct access housing providers. Discussions are taking place with representatives of the Police Service to ensure that lists of local homelessness services are up-dated and used to help homeless people into emergency accommodation. This matter can be placed on the agenda for the Minister's next quarterly meeting with Chief Constables. Police will be encouraged to work more closely with local authorities and Crime and Disorder Partnerships. The setting up of a central register or database will be considered.
26. The National Assembly should encourage social landlords to provide furnished accommodation, where appropriate.	Social housing is supported and funded in accordance with the local authority priorities. The Local Homelessness Strategies Guidance will encourage local authorities to identify the

	demand for furnished accommodation in their area and to ensure that homeless people have access to furniture and practical help when moving, in order to provide a sustainable housing solution and to prevent recurring homelessness.
27. The National Assembly should promote housing advice services across Wales to provide a comprehensive, sustainable and independent advice service beyond the statutory obligations of the local authorities.	See Recommendation 22.
28. The Commission endorses the recommendations in the report by Bob Widdowson with Derek Manson Smith: "Welsh Housing Advice Audit" on the audit of housing advice services in Wales.	See Recommendation 22.
<b><u>Health and Homelessness</u></b>	
29. The National Assembly should ensure that Health Improvement Plans, and if adopted, Health and Well-Being Plans, have a strong multi-disciplinary and housing base.	The Assembly Government will take account of this recommendation in drafting guidance for future Health and Well Being Strategies. The Guidance will reflect the need for the plans to be multidisciplinary, including a housing dimension.
30. The National Assembly should ensure that Health Improvement Plans, and if adopted, Health and Well-Being Plans include reference to homeless people, the need for this group to have equal access to primary health services appropriate to their needs and indicate how their needs would be identified and addressed. This could be effected by the appointment of a nurse-practitioner with specific responsibility for homeless people, but the Commission rejected cosmetic solutions such as registering park benches, and took the view that if the systems in place required such action they were fundamentally flawed.	Local Health Boards will need to identify the health needs of homeless people and how they will be addressing them. The Assembly Government will ensure that its guidance on Health and Wellbeing Plans covers the need to ensure that primary care services are accessible to homeless people. The Assembly Government will meet with practitioners to explore current problems in the provision of primary care to homeless people, and how these can be overcome. The Assembly Government will carry out further work to address the difficulties faced by homeless people in maintaining contact with essential services due to lack of a stable home or address.
31. Local authorities should provide to homeless people with mental illness a comparable quality of care to those who are housed, and the National Assembly should issue suitable Guidance to that effect. Authorities, in conjunction with Local Health Groups and voluntary agencies, should identify how they will assess and address this within their area.	This recommendation is already referred to in the Adult Mental Health Strategy Guidance, on the quality of care to all patients. The National Service Framework for Mental Health will specifically address the importance of meeting the needs of homeless people.
32. The Health Services should ensure that no person is discharged from hospital without accommodation, or to accommodation that would prejudice their health, unless this is their express choice.	The NHS should always have regard to accommodation arrangements before discharging people from hospital. Existing guidance on discharge procedures is currently under review, and the Assembly Government will ensure that this Guidance promotes best practice in this area.
33. As a response to the Primary Care Strategy, the Commission urges that more importance is placed on the provision of primary	The needs of homeless people will be addressed within the Action Plans, which arise from the Primary Care Strategy.

care to homeless people.	
34. The National Assembly should develop guidance for health and housing authorities on how they should promote better access to health services for homeless people.	This recommendation will be incorporated in the guidance on Health and Well-Being Strategies and the Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness. (see response to Rec. 29)
<b><u>Substance Misuse and Homelessness</u></b>	
35. The National Assembly, together with local health groups and in conjunction with local authorities, Registered Social Landlords and voluntary organisations should review the adequacy of funding for rehabilitation schemes relating to drug and alcohol misuse in partnership with Social Services Departments.	The Assembly Government recognises in its Strategy "Tackling Substance Misuse: A Partnership Approach" that a range of treatment options should be available to meet the individual needs of substance misusers, including rehabilitation schemes. Its support for residential rehabilitation schemes is kept under review and is moving this year to a 3 year funding period in line with Assembly Government policy. This move to longer term funding is also in line with a recommendation of the 1998 Review of Purchasing Requirements for, and Provision of, Drug and Alcohol Residential and Community Facilities in Wales. The Assembly Government is about to undertake a full review of the adequacy of drug and alcohol treatment services in Wales.
36. The National Assembly should fund Social Services Departments to provide additional support to people who have multiple diagnosis (i.e. two or more difficulties of a mental health problem, drug or alcohol abuse).	New arrangements have been introduced for a unified multi-disciplinary assessment that will help to ensure that appropriate care packages are tailored for those with complex needs. Meeting the needs of this group will be given additional impetus through the new Health and Well-Being Strategies Guidance, and the consequent planning and service delivery structures. Funding levels for local authorities to meet their statutory responsibilities are determined through normal budgeting processes.
37. Police Forces should establish a consistent approach to encouraging referrals to drug rehabilitation units/wet houses and should more actively promote arrest referral schemes.	The Home Office retains responsibility for the activities of the police forces in England and Wales, including initiatives such as arrest referral schemes. Police Services are already expected to encourage referrals to services for substance misusers. The Home Office is about to issue further guidance. The Assembly will ensure that the matter is discussed at the quarterly meetings of Assistant Chief Constable Operations.
38. The National Assembly should make representations to the Home Office that interpretation and guidance on the implementation of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, as amended, which takes account of the need for organisations working with homeless people who are also drug misusers to be able to work with them within the provided accommodation on a controlled harm minimisation basis.	The Home Office is still preparing guidance for consultation prior to introduction of the amendment to the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. The Assembly Government's response to the consultation will reflect the need for continuing support for people with drug misuse problems in a harm-reduction environment.
39. The National Assembly should consider whether the Care Standards Act has any implications for existing Drug and Alcohol Misuse Projects.	The Assembly Government has consulted on draft regulations and national minimum standards for care homes for adults, which cover drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres. The Assembly Government will be tailoring the final regulations to ensure that work can continue with people misusing substances on a harm reduction basis.

<p><b><u>Ex-Offenders and Homelessness</u></b></p> <p>40. The National Assembly should make representations to both the National Probation Service for England and Wales and the Prison Service, to improve the advice and follow-up support provided to ex-offenders released from prison.</p>	<p>The Assembly Government will provide further clarification of local authority responsibilities to re-house former prisoners within the forthcoming statutory Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness. The Assembly Government will work with the Prison and Probation service to improve housing advice work and broader preparation for resettlement into prison sentence planning.</p>
<p>41. The National Assembly should make representations to both the National Probation Service for England and Wales and the Prison Service, to provide housing advice, assistance and planned discharge to accommodation, to prisoners on their admission and prior to their release from prison.</p>	<p>The Assembly Government will promote protocols between prison, probation and housing services to cover resettlement planning, including the safe re-housing of dangerous ex-offenders. The Assembly Government will encourage the development of a seamless link between Prison and Probation resettlement work. The Assembly Government will issue guidance on the inclusion of Prison and Probation services in planning frameworks for local homelessness strategies and Supporting People plans.</p>
<p>42. The National Assembly should make representations to the National Probation Service for England and Wales to ensure that the pastoral needs of ex-offenders, in respect of housing, are reflected in all its community-based programmes.</p>	<p>As 40 and 41.</p>
<p>43. The National Assembly should make representations to the Prison Service, first, that purpose-built accommodation be provided in Wales for young offenders and female prisoners; secondly, that educational and training facilities in Welsh custodial institutions be reviewed; thirdly, that more Welsh prisoners be allowed to serve their sentence in Welsh prisons with the provision of suitable re-settlement accommodation in Wales.</p>	<p>The Assembly Government has already begun discussions with the Prison Service on these issues. The Service is hoping to develop more facilities for young offenders and women within the existing establishment, although are constrained by stretched resources. Education and training are likely to be given much greater emphasis in revisions to Prison Service guidance. Prisons are trying to enable Welsh prisoners to complete their sentence in Welsh prisons where possible. Protocols need to be developed with social housing providers to ensure that suitable resettlement accommodation is available.</p>
<p><b><u>Domestic Violence and Homelessness</u></b></p> <p>44. The National Assembly should advise local authorities that they should house victims of domestic violence in any area, without the need to establish a local connection.</p> <p>45. The National Assembly should advise local authorities that victims of domestic violence should receive support, including affordable housing and housing benefit advice.</p>	<p>This reflects current guidance, which will be strengthened in the revised statutory Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on Homelessness and Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness (see Rec 3).</p> <p>Local Authorities already have a statutory duty to provide homelessness advice. The Housing Advice Audit has recommended the inclusion of Women's Aid Groups in local Community Legal Services Partnerships, and this is now the norm, and we will encourage local authorities to liase closely with specialist support providers to help victims of domestic violence. This can be incorporated into the current development of more integrated Assembly Government policies on domestic violence, including proposals for an All Wales Domestic Violence Strategy.</p> <p>The Minister has asked for a Working Group to be established to consider how to develop more cohesive domestic violence policies. The group will be a mixture of Assembly Government staff and external members, and is expected to meet by early Summer 2002.</p>
<p>46. The National Assembly should advise local authorities of the</p>	<p>The Assembly Government has endorsed this view in its provisional Guidance on the</p>



<p>importance of not housing women who have suffered domestic violence all in the same location.</p>	<p>Homeless Persons (Priority Need) (Wales) Order 2001, that will be incorporated into the revised Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness (see Rec 3).</p>
<p><b><u>Education, Training, Employment and Homelessness</u></b></p> <p>47. The National Assembly should make representations to the UK Government that additional funding is provided to increase flexibility of employment opportunities and/ or therapeutic work.</p>	<p>The Assembly Government is exploring with the Department for Work and Pension (“DWP”), the extent of flexible employment and training opportunities suitable for homeless people, which it hopes to extend.</p>
<p>48. ELWa should ensure that adequate funding is available for the provision of learning and training services which are accessible, flexible and appropriate to the needs of homeless people.</p>	<p>Research is being commissioned by ELWa to identify gaps in the range of existing learning and work opportunities for young homeless people. The importance of meeting the need of homeless people has been specifically included in the annex to the Assembly Government’s remit letter, which sets out the requirements it places on ELWa.</p>
<p>49. The Education Department of the National Assembly should investigate the links between exclusion policies in schools and homelessness and make appropriate recommendations to local Education Authorities to reduce exclusion.</p>	<p>The Assembly Government has issued guidance, which highlights that school excluded children are at an increased risk of all aspects of social exclusion, and exhorts schools to minimise exclusions. The National Assembly has set targets to reduce permanent exclusions, which are mostly being met.</p> <p>The Guidance is under review, and the review will take account of the need to minimise exclusion from education and from other services, including housing. Estyn inspectors are given clear guidance on the need to examine and report on how schools are implementing the guidance on exclusions.</p>
<p><b><u>Support</u></b></p> <p>50. The National Assembly should include in its “Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness” that following assessments, appropriate support is provided for people in applicable homeless application cases;</p>	<p>This Code of Guidance will be reviewed in 2002 and we will include this in the revised text.</p>
<p>51. The National Assembly should advise Registered Social Landlords and Voluntary Organisations and, also include in its “Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness”, the need to provide support services in conjunction with emergency accommodation to homeless people to help and prepare for, and settle into, suitable long-term accommodation.</p>	<p>This is already covered to some extent in the specification for SHRG, which will continue into Supporting People Revenue Grant (“SPRG”). The Code of Guidance will be reviewed in 2002 and we will reflect this in the revised text. The Homelessness Act will require local authorities to assess and plan the provision of necessary support for resettlement of homeless people.</p>
<p>52. The National Assembly should include in its “Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness” the need to provide adequate after care support for people who have been resettled into the community.</p>	<p>This is already covered to some extent in the specification for SHRG, which will continue into SPRG. The Code of Guidance will be reviewed in 2002 and we will include this in the revised text. Specific needs will depend upon local priorities/circumstances.</p>
<p>53. The National Assembly should promote models of specialist supported small-scale units for those people with acute or</p>	<p>The new unified assessment process is directed at meeting complex needs. However the aim would be for most needs to be met within the community as far as possible.</p>

chronic needs.	
54. The National Assembly should promote the posts of resettlement workers in the community, which would focus on tackling financial difficulties, reducing social isolation and assisting with employment/learning issues.	Local authorities will need to assess the need for re-settlement services and incorporate them in their homelessness strategy Action Plans.
<b><u>Social Services and Homelessness</u></b>	
55. The National Assembly should provide guidance to local authorities on how the needs of homeless people should be addressed within their Social Care Plans.	The current guidance for local authorities on Social Care Plans already requires them to take account of the needs of homeless people.
56. The National Assembly should seek to ensure that Social Services Departments pro-actively work with housing colleagues, local health groups, statutory and voluntary agencies to alleviate and prevent homelessness through the identification of needs and provision of assistance to children in need and other vulnerable groups.	The guidance on Social Care Plans will be extended to address more specifically joint working between social services and housing on homelessness. The Health Act flexibilities guidance will be amended to point up the opportunities to address housing and homelessness issues. Guidance will be issued on Health and Well being Strategies which will ensure housing and homelessness issues are covered appropriately. The Wales Care Strategy group will be tasked with including care services which are provided as an adjunct to housing within its work.
<b><u>Carers and Homelessness</u></b>	
57. The National Assembly should take account of the relationship between carers and homelessness in its review of policy on lettings and in contributing to the review of tenure law.	Both reviews have begun and we will ensure that carers needs are taken into account to minimise the risk of homelessness.
<b><u>Children and Homelessness</u></b>	
58. The Commission recommends that a named health visitor is appointed to liaise closely with housing departments and receive regular up-dates on the status and location of homeless children.	The Assembly Government will issue guidance to housing authorities on their responsibilities to liaise with social services and health services in respect of children in homeless families.
59. The National Assembly should include in its "Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness" that where they are considering children and homelessness, they take into account Command Paper 1668, Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on the 20 <sup>th</sup> November 1989.	This will be incorporated into the revised Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness to be issued for consultation in Summer 2002.

<u>Welfare Benefits</u>	
60. The National Assembly should make representations to the UK Government to review the adequacy of Welfare Benefits payable to 16-25 year olds.	The Assembly Government is already committed to doing this in the National Housing Strategy. The National Assembly has made representations to the Secretary of State for Wales to support this objective and will follow up responses to these representations.
61. The National Assembly should make representations to the UK Government to abolish the Single Room Rent Restriction Rule.	See Recommendation 60.
62. The National Assembly should make representations to the UK Government to amend their regulations so that Social Fund payments are based on individual need and not on the type of benefit receive.	See Recommendation 60.
63. The National Assembly should make representations to the UK Government to amend their regulations so that consideration can be given to making Community Care Grants instead of loans to homeless people through the Social Fund.	See Recommendation 60.
64. The National Assembly should make representations to the UK Government that consideration is given to reviewing the amount of housing benefit payable to vulnerable women who have been in the UK for a period of less than 12 months.	See Recommendation 60.
65. The National Assembly should ask the Department for Work and Pension to provide precise Guidance to its staff in order to achieve a more flexible approach across Wales to the interpretation of legislation and regulations governing the payments of benefits to homeless people or people at risk of homelessness, that recognises the need of the claimant and applies to both mandatory and discretionary benefits e.g. the Social Fund.	See Recommendation 60.
66. The National Assembly should make representations to the Department for Work and Pension to promote better co-ordination between its department and voluntary homelessness organisations.	See Recommendation 60.
67. The National Assembly should review how local authorities make payments in relation to hardship situations across Wales.	See Recommendation 60. The Assembly Government will also raise with DWP at a regular liaison meeting.

<p><b><u>Rural Homelessness</u></b></p> <p>68. The Commission understood that the resourcing of services in rural areas would remain problematic, particularly for specialist services, but wished to see the National Assembly strengthen its focus on this issue through research and assistance to local authorities.</p>	<p>The Assembly Government has already carried out secondary research in this area. We will now identify best practice from work done elsewhere in the UK and promote awareness of good practice in tackling homelessness in rural areas, including through the guidance on local homelessness strategies.</p>
<p>69. The National Assembly should recognise the additional costs incurred in providing services and advice in rural areas, and should be sympathetic to the funding requirements of authorities' Local Homelessness Strategies seeking to overcome access problems.</p>	<p>The Assembly Government will consider the specific difficulties faced by rural areas in addressing the needs of homeless people. It is already funding the development of strategies and services in rural areas, and will promote good practice in overcoming the difficulties faced in providing accessible services to homeless people in rural areas.</p>
<p>70. Local authorities need to consider the impact of transport costs on the ability of homeless people to access housing and advice services.</p>	<p>The Local Transport Services Grant ("LTSG") is paid by the Assembly Government to local authorities to subsidise local bus services and to support community projects in their area. Frequent and reliable bus services will result in better access to housing and advice services. It is acknowledged that in some rural areas conventional bus services are not always available. The Assembly Government is keen that authorities should carefully consider the potential offered by community transport projects, which in certain cases can be more flexible and cost effective than conventional bus services. The Assembly Government is providing the Community Transport Association with financial assistance to expand and develop its support and advice network in Wales, particularly in rural areas.</p>
<p><b><u>Miscellaneous</u></b></p> <p>71. The National Assembly should acknowledge the efforts of voluntary organisations in the creation of a member representative body working with homelessness in Wales, to represent the views of these organisations.</p>	<p>The Assembly Government acknowledges these efforts, but does not consider this to be the best use of our funds for tackling homelessness. We have previously rejected a bid for funding such an organisation for £255,052 for a 3 year period. Voluntary organisations can currently express their views through Shelter Cymru and the WCVA. The Assembly Government will ensure that information is published on developing good practice in tackling homelessness.</p>
<p>72. The National Assembly should look at ways in which more emphasis is placed on increasing the awareness and understanding of homelessness within the community at large.</p>	<p>This agenda will be progressed through publicising and promoting the future National Homelessness Strategy. We are also increasing awareness of homelessness through the Shelter "Homeworks" project and "Canllaw Cymru", and will continue to do this through Ministerial engagements, conferences etc. The Assembly Government provides core funding to Shelter Cymru to promote wider awareness of homelessness, and will support a major conference later in 2002/3 that will highlight the nature of the problem and how it will be tackled.</p>
<p>73. The National Assembly should review the pilot projects to promote Personal Housing Plans for homeless people and assess their viability and applicability throughout Wales.</p>	<p>The Assembly Government is already funding the Personal Housing Plan project in Bridgend, and a similar project in Cardiff. We will be reviewing their progress during the next 12 months, and publicising the lessons of these projects.</p> <p>They will provide a body of expertise, which will form the basis of Assembly Government guidance on assessment of individual needs, and assist the wider planning process.</p>

<p><b>Funding</b></p> <p>74. The National Assembly should allocate funding to support local authorities facilitating the development of local homelessness strategies.</p>	<p>The Assembly Government has already provided substantial funding during 2001-2 for authorities to initiate homelessness strategies, under section 126 of the Housing, Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.</p> <p>Following the implementation of the Homelessness Act 2002, Local Homelessness Strategies will become a statutory duty. The Assembly Government is making further funding available for the financial year 2002/3 to assist the development of these mandatory strategies.</p> <p>Further special funding should not be required to review and implement strategies on an ongoing basis.</p>
<p>75. The National Assembly should make additional funding available to voluntary organisations, under the provisions of Section 180 of the Housing Act 1996, to meet gaps in provision identified following the implementation of the local authorities' local homelessness strategy.</p>	<p>This programme has already increased by £1.4m in 2002/3. The budget will need to be re-examined when local authorities have produced their local homelessness strategies, to see if it can meet the needs identified.</p> <p>From April 2003 much of this revenue funding will be channelled through Supporting People Revenue Grant.</p>
<p>76. The National Assembly should make additional capital funding available to local authorities, under the provisions of Section 126 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, to meet gaps in provision identified following the implementation of the local authorities' local homelessness strategy which should take into account any revenue implications.</p>	<p>This will have to be considered in the light of local homelessness strategies and identified needs.</p>
<p>77. The Commission recognises the major change in the funding of Supported Housing which will occur as a consequence of the implementation of Supporting People, and urges the National Assembly to monitor the impact to ensure that there is no reduction in service provision.</p>	<p>Local authorities will be required to review the support needs in their area under the provisions of the Homelessness Act 2002. They will have to ensure that resources are used most effectively to meet local priorities.</p> <p>The Assembly Government will consider the local homelessness strategies, and provide guidance on how priorities should be set.</p>
<p>78. The Commission welcomes the increase in the Supported Housing proposed, but again urges the National Assembly to keep the overall needs under review and devote additional resources for support if these are identified as part of the Local Homelessness Strategies.</p>	<p>The Assembly Government has already increased resources to provide an additional 200 bed spaces by 2002/3, and national monitoring arrangements will advise on the need for further increases as identified.</p>
<p>79. The National Assembly should ensure that where projects funded by Section 180 of the Housing Act 1996 relate to supported housing schemes, funding arrangements should be consistent with those for Supporting Housing Revenue Grant ("SHRG"), i.e. based on agreed service delivery and subject to 5 yearly reviews.</p>	<p>The s.180 programme is being reviewed, and where funding is directed at long term projects providing support these will be transferred to Supporting People Revenue Grants ("SPRG") from April 2003. Comparable funding and review procedures will be adopted for other s.180 revenue projects.</p>

<p><b><u>Research</u></b></p> <p><b><u>First Priority</u></b></p> <p>80. There is a need for more longitudinal research to track pathways through homelessness; that is, to link the routes into homelessness with specific routes out of it.</p>	<p>The Assembly Government will commission a review of the research evidence on the “housing histories” of people who have experienced homelessness. The study will seek to identify effective ways of intervening to prevent homelessness, and bring about long term solutions. Anticipated start date: summer 2002.</p>
<p>81. There is a need for both statutory and non-statutory agencies to collect information on the relative proportions of people who experience short-term intermittent and long-term homelessness.</p>	<p>This recommendation is directed at organisations working with the homeless, particularly local authorities through their local homelessness strategies. The Assembly Government will help to facilitate this by promoting good practice and measuring homelessness.</p>
<p>82. There is a need to implement a standardised, systematic method (e.g. a common monitoring form) for recording approaches to non-statutory agencies across Wales.</p>	<p>The Assembly Government will support the development of good practice in this area, and will provide funding to encourage this. It would not be appropriate to impose a standard model for recording all approaches from non-statutory homeless people, which will depend on local definitions and monitoring arrangements.</p>
<p>83. There is a need for more evaluation of preventative work (other than housing advice services) and specific specialist services/schemes (e.g. resettlement and support services).</p>	<p>The Assembly Government will commission an evaluation of preventative work and specific specialist services (other than housing advice). Anticipated start date: Autumn 2002.</p>
<p>84. There is an immediate need to examine what more can be done to prevent people leaving care, prisons and other institutions becoming homeless.</p>	<p>The Assembly Government will commission a project to identify effective action to prevent people leaving care, prisons and other institutions from becoming homeless on discharge. The study will be based on extensive consultation with statutory agencies, care leavers, prisoners, ex-offenders and voluntary organisations. Anticipated start date: Autumn 2002</p>
<p>85. The National Assembly should commission, in conjunction with service providers, research into the most appropriate form of temporary accommodation for 16-25 year olds.</p>	<p>The Assembly Government will commission an evaluation of the main forms of temporary accommodation for young single homeless people. Anticipated start date: winter 2002</p>
<p><b><u>Second Priority</u></b></p> <p>86. There is a need for a review of research to lay out the best way in which to consult with homeless people about current service provision, gaps in provision, and strategies to tackle homelessness.</p>	<p>The Assembly Government will commission the development of guidance for homeless agencies on incorporating homeless people into patterns of service provision, and the strategic planning process. Research to facilitate development of guidance will be commissioned autumn 2002.</p>
<p>87. There is a need for more specifically rural based research.</p>	<p>The Assembly Government has completed an internal review of homelessness in rural areas. This will be followed up with work to develop good practice in the provision of accessible services in rural areas.</p>
<p>88. There is a need to establish a database of specialist service provision (voluntary and statutory) throughout Wales.</p>	<p>The Assembly Government is contributing to a current project led by QMC London, to establish a UK wide database of homeless services.</p>
<p>89. There is a need for a review of research examining the</p>	<p>The Assembly Government will commission a review of the research evidence on the reasons</p>

barriers to accessing available services that would point to the specific needs, or the need for specific action across Wales.	for poor access and take-up by homeless people of needed medical, care and support services to aid identification of how take-up can be improved. Anticipated start date: summer 2002.
90. There is a need to establish a database of homelessness research, evaluation (e.g. strategies, projects) and monitoring (e.g. of service use) activity throughout Wales.	The Assembly Government will provide information on homelessness research database and other sources through its internet web pages. The Assembly Government's Housing Directorate is currently working to improve its internet presence.
91. There is a need for the Health Services to undertake a cost-benefit analysis of the cost of maintaining a person with health problems in the community rather than in an institution.	The Assembly Government is already contributing to a major study commissioned by the DTLR into the impact of poor housing on health.