

Appendix 2

1. SUMMARY OF THE HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION ACT (HRA)

- 1.1 The HRA introduces requirements for local housing authorities (LHAs) to carry out homelessness prevention work with all those who are eligible for help and threatened with homelessness.
- 1.2 **Definition of homelessness and threatened with homelessness:** this clause extends the period during which a local housing authority (LHA) should treat someone as threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days, and sets out the action LHAs should take when someone applies for housing assistance, having been served with a notice to end an assured shorthold tenancy.
- 1.3 **Duty of Local Housing Authority to provide advice:** this clause strengthens and extends the general advice duty, requiring the LHA to design a service that meets the needs of certain groups at risk of homelessness. These include;
- Persons released from prison or youth detention
 - Care leavers
 - 16/17 year old homeless cases
 - Former members of the regular armed forces
 - Persons leaving hospital
 - Victims of domestic abuse
 - Persons suffering mental illness
 - And any other groups identified as a particular risk of homelessness within the district.
- 1.4 **Mandatory code of practice:** this clause stipulates that the Secretary of State *must* provide a code of practice for LHAs, to be approved by a resolution by each House of Parliament, on the services they provide which are aimed at reducing homelessness.
- 1.5 **Homelessness prevention duties:** this clause includes new duties to those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, to:
- carry out an assessment;
 - agree a personal housing plan;
 - help prevent homelessness; and
 - help to secure accommodation for all eligible applicants, regardless of priority need.
- 1.6 **Duty owed to those who are homeless:** this clause further amends the 1996 Act), placing a duty on LHAs to relieve homeless for 56 days by helping applicants to secure accommodation regardless of priority need. LHAs will be required to take reasonable steps that are likely to help the applicant to secure accommodation. Reasonable steps could include, for example, providing a rent deposit or access to mediation to keep households together

- 1.7 **Deliberate and unreasonable refusal to cooperate:** this clause also amends the 1996 Act to introduce the provision for the LHA to serve a notice on the applicant where it is considered they have deliberately and unreasonably refused to cooperate with the authority to help prevent their homelessness.
- 1.8 **Local connection of a care leaver:** this clause amends the 1996 act to clarify the circumstances under which care leavers should be treated as having a local connection with the LHA.
- 1.9 **Review of decisions:** this clause proposes additional rights of review in relation to new duties in the HRA.
- 1.10 **Co-operation between authorities and others:** this new duty applies to all public authorities specified in the regulations to refer cases to the LHA where they consider that a person is homeless or threatened with homelessness.