

Appendix 2

Summary of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and Implications

- The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) received Royal Assent on 27 April 2017, and will place increased duties on local housing authorities to prevent and relieve homelessness. It will amend the current duties under the Housing Act 1996
- The changes will not come into effect immediately as councils will need time to prepare. The Government also has to issue comprehensive new guidance on how to deliver the duties as well as publish a commencement order. Officers expect the changes will take effect in April 2018 with a new Code of Guidance being issued later this year.
- The HRA transforms the help councils are expected to provide to all homeless people. It aims to ensure provision of new support to people who aren't entitled to help under the current system. It requires councils to try and prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place, intervening early and encouraging other public sector bodies to actively assist in identifying and referring those at risk of homelessness.

The key provisions include:

- **A prevention duty:** This is a continuation of the current duty to prevent homelessness although the time period for this to be triggered has increased from 28 days before a household are homeless to 56 days, provided they are eligible for assistance on the basis of their immigration status. This duty will arise irrespective of their connection to the area.
- **A relief duty:** a new duty for councils to try and resolve the homelessness of people who are already homeless by helping them to secure accommodation. To qualify for help they must be eligible for assistance on the basis of their immigration status **and** have a connection to the local area, otherwise they can be referred to another local authority.
- **Measures to incentivise cooperation:** People being helped under the prevention and relief duties will be expected to take reasonable steps to resolve their own homelessness and cooperate with the Council's attempts to assist them. Should they deliberately and unreasonably refuse to cooperate the duty owed to them by the Council at any given stage of the process may end.
- **A duty to refer:** a new duty on other public services to refer people to the local housing authority if they are working with people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- **Continued temporary accommodation protection for families:** councils are required under existing law to accommodate homeless families, if they meet a number of tests and the HRA maintains these protections in cases where councils are unable to help families under the new prevention and relief duties.

Reviews of the Council's decisions

- Clients will have increased rights to seek reviews of the Council's decisions at each stage of the assessment process and over any aspect of the personal housing plan that they disagree with.