



Keep Well Collaborative¹ Keeping people safe and well at home

Out of Area Placement – briefing: Homelessness Reduction Act

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 came into force in April 2018. Within the detailed regulations there's a new requirement (from the 01 October 2018) for specific public bodies to notify a local housing authority if they identify someone who they believe is currently homeless or may be threatened with homelessness within 56 days.

For the NHS, this new duty – the Duty to Refer - extends to include all emergency departments, urgent treatment centres and hospitals providing inpatient care.

Who is at risk of homelessness?

- The person who is in high levels of debt ...
- The benefit claimant who is being refused financial support ...
- The patient who is affected by anxiety and depression ...
- The person seeking advice who admits addiction ...
- The employee being made redundant ...
- The person indicating their relationship may have irretrievably broken down...
- The child with low school attendance ...
- The parent trying to manage alone with demanding children ...
- The offender who has received a custodial sentence ...
- The patient who was just admitted to hospital?
- *You, your colleague ... anyone ...*

What does this mean for you?

In short, this now means that **housing is everyone's business.**

We all know that a home is much more than a roof and a bed. The right home environment is the very cornerstone of our lives. It can help us to lead healthy, enabled lives and to recover from illness.

If you think someone you're in contact with is in danger of losing their home, unable to return home for whatever reason, or is currently homeless, you now have a Regulatory Duty to Refer them, with their consent, to a local housing authority of their choice. It doesn't mean that they will be immediately housed, but it does mean that a personalised housing plan can be put in place and they will have support from a local authority housing team to secure their home. Across **Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight there's a new standardised Referral Protocol and form which can be downloaded from any local housing authority website and submitted on line.**

¹ The Keep Well Collaborative is a network of housing, health, social care, statutory and voluntary agencies who work together to improve the mental health and wellbeing of local communities by keeping people safe and well at home. Commissioned by HIOW STP. Facilitated by Shared Ventures Ltd www.sharedventures.co.uk www.keepwellcollab.co.uk @KeepWellCollab #Collaborate

If you work in the NHS, here's some things to ask yourself for every patient:

For all placements (in or out of area), you should be asking:

- Has an **assessment of the patient's current & future housing needs** been undertaken (thinking of requirements such as location, shared or self-contained, ground floor, proximity to shops / transport)?
- Is the patient's current **home owned or rented**?
- **How is the mortgage or rent being paid** whilst they are in hospital?
- Is their **current home going to be there on discharge**? Is current housing threatened by some issue – rent/mortgage arrears, landlord ending tenancy, poor quality housing, poor location, issues with neighbours, poor access, relationship breakdown?
- Who is the **landlord / mortgage company**? With the patient's permission, get in touch to let them know a patient is in hospital – if they know, they may be able to help you with discharge planning (especially if they are a housing association or local authority housing team – and there may also be additional support services they provide to tenants to help with this).
- If their current home is **not going to be available on discharge, where do they want to return to**? Talk to the local housing authority about what type of housing is needed and what support needs to be in place for them to continue to recover at home.

For placements outside of current local housing authority area, you should be asking all the above *plus*:

- Where is the patient returning to on discharge? **Is there a discharge plan in place at least 56 days before they are due to leave**? If they have No Fixed Abode, please refer them to the local housing authority. If they refuse to be Referred, how can you ensure they continue their journey to recovery without a home to go to?
- **Is a different home is required**? What type of housing and where? **Is this in the same local authority area**? Do they have a local connection? They could currently live in Eastleigh but want to be discharged to Winchester but have no local connection there; or must they live elsewhere as it's unsafe for them to return to their original area? Note: Local authority definitions of local areas (and therefore local connection) can differ to geographic definitions used by the NHS. If you're Referring to a local housing authority area outside of Hampshire there may also be different Duty to Refer protocols in place.
- **If before 56 days, who can you discuss their situation with at the local housing authority?**

We hope this has got you thinking about how important your role is in preventing homelessness. If you've any concerns about your patient's home, then please contact the local housing authority – your call, or Referral, could keep them safe and well at home for longer, and ultimately save the NHS money.

For more information please contact:

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