
STATES OF JERSEY



MINISTERIAL RESPONSE TO THE JERSEY HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

Presented to the States on 9th March 2021
by the Minister for Housing and Communities

STATES GREFFE

REPORT

Minister's introduction

I welcome the publication of the [Jersey Homelessness Strategy](#) by the Homelessness Strategic Board. The strategy is an ambitious, comprehensive, and evidence-based framework for tackling homelessness in Jersey, setting out eight key priorities and connected actions to achieve this. The Government of Jersey is committed to working in partnership with the Homelessness Strategic Board to deliver actions to support the aims of the strategy. In this document, I outline the Government's response to the strategy and how we will take forward priorities and actions.

Over the next five-years, the Government will take steps to tackle the causes of homelessness in Jersey and to provide support to individuals and families who are at risk of homelessness. We will aim to:

- collect better data on homelessness to inform policy development and service design;
- establish a Housing Advice Service so that appropriate help and information is available to anyone who needs it;
- ensure effective multi-agency support is in place, including referral pathways and personal housing plans;
- work with social housing providers to build more homes across a range of housing needs;
- support the delivery of new temporary and supported housing options, including approaches such as 'Housing First'; and
- enhance the role of the private rented sector, including security of tenure and protections for tenants.

A stakeholder working group (the homelessness cluster) was set up by the Homelessness Strategic Board to help develop its strategy, and this group will continue to meet in order to monitor progress against the strategy and to ensure there is regular dialogue between the Government and stakeholders on policy and operational matters.

Action plan

The Minister is proposing to take forward actions in line with the Jersey Homelessness Strategy in three phases:

- **Phase one:** Focus on actions that can be taken forward in 2021. *These actions are public-facing initiatives that will enhance homeless services. They include initiatives where funding has been earmarked in 2021 as part of the 2021-2024 Government Plan.*
- **Phase two:** Focus on actions proposed in the strategy that the Minister agrees in principle, but which require further exploration before they are taken forward. *Work on these actions will take place in 2021-2023 to understand the scope and resource implications, carry out policy development and engage with stakeholders on proposals.*

- **Phase three:** Focus on actions to develop a statutory framework to tackle homelessness. *Phases one and two focus on policy and procedural changes that can be delivered without legislation. The delivery of these services and associated policies and procedures will inform the development of any future statutory provision for homelessness.*

It will take time to tackle homelessness, embed system changes and deliver services that work for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Experience from other jurisdictions shows that it can take ten years or more to deliver homelessness strategies. The Government's focus is, therefore, on delivering a number of key priorities over the next five years that will help to tackle homelessness and which can be built upon in the years ahead. The actions that can be taken by Government will form a major part of tackling this issue, but it will not be enough on their own. The Government will continue to work closely with the Homelessness Strategy Board and individual stakeholders to create effective and holistic solutions to tackle homelessness.

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1. Understand and define homelessness by providing a statutory definition and clear messages to promote a shared understanding of the issue.	Introduce a statutory definition of homelessness.	<p>ACCEPT</p> <p>The Minister agrees there is merit in developing a statutory definition of homelessness. This would provide a clear basis for the design and provision of homeless services.</p> <p>The previous Minister agreed to develop a statutory framework for the allocation and letting of social housing in response to the Review of Social Housing in Jersey. This will take place in 2022 and 2023. The Minister believes that a statutory definition of homelessness should be introduced as part of this work so that a definition is aligned with the provision of services such as access to social housing and housing support.</p> <p>The four conceptual categories of homelessness – rooflessness, houseless, insecure, and inadequate housing – are already adopted in government policies and procedures such as the</p>	Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance. Phase 3 – 2022/2023

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		eligibility criteria for social housing. These categories will continue to be used for policy and operational purposes prior to the introduction of a statutory definition of homelessness.	
2. Evidence the scale and nature of homelessness to help plan how to prevent and address it	<p>The Government's Department for Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance to work with Statistics Jersey to identify opportunities to capture homelessness data, including the next Jersey Census and annual Jersey Opinions and Lifestyle Survey.</p> <p>Existing services and providers to be required to report on a standardised data set.</p> <p>A robust data collection framework to be integral to a new housing advice hub and housing-related support commissioning.</p>	<p>ACCEPT Data collection is key to understanding the extent and nature of homelessness. Better data will provide an evidence-base to inform policy development and service design.</p> <p>Statistics Jersey will collect information as part of the 2021 Census (21st March) on the number of homeless persons in the island, including rough sleeping.</p> <p>The housing advice service that is being set up in Customer and Local Services (CLS) will include a data management system from which it will be possible to collect information on the number of persons who are homeless or threatened with homelessness using the service and the reasons why they are homeless.</p> <p>Existing service providers that receive grant-funding are already required to report on the number of persons using their services. Joint working with the homelessness cluster will ensure there is regular reporting on the number of persons using homeless services against a standardised data set.</p>	Customer and Local Services; Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance. Phase 1 – 2021
3. Create a housing advice hub so that everyone knows	The already formed Government working group to consider our	<p>ACCEPT The Minister agrees there is a need to improve the advice, guidance and support provided</p>	Customer and Local Services, Phase 1 – 2021

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<p>where to go to get help with their housing.</p>	<p>proposal for a partnership-based housing advice model and recognised good practice.</p> <p>If a partnership is to be formed, consultation to take place with the key partner agencies to agree on governance, structures, and funding arrangements.</p> <p>Practical matters such as a location and embedding the service within the “closer to home” model to be resolved with the aim of the service being operational during 2021.</p> <p>Structured pathways and personal housing plans to be included in the service specification.</p>	<p>to the public on housing matters. This was one of the recommendations of the Review of Access to Social Housing, which was also accepted at the time.</p> <p>Work to establish a Housing Advice Service commenced in 2020, and a team has since been established in Customer and Local Services. This includes the Affordable Housing Gateway. Work will continue in 2021 to fully establish the service.</p> <p>Funding has been allocated as part of the 2021-2024 Government Plan.</p> <p>The new service will include:</p> <p>A Support Officer to provide a single point of contact so that people are offered consistent advice and support, which is linked to services such as Income Support, and through which they can be referred to other agencies to meet specific needs.</p> <p>A new Housing Advice Service page has already been launched on gov.je, which brings together housing advice and information on the housing services provided by government and partner agencies. This includes guidance on what to do if a person is threatened with homelessness.</p> <p>An online tool is being created to help people access advice and guidance about their specific housing needs. An e-mail and telephone service</p>	

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		<p>will also be made available in Q1/Q2 2021.</p> <p>The strategy highlights the range of charitable and commercial organisations that already provide housing advice and support in Jersey. The Housing Advice Service will work in partnership with these organisations to ensure the co-ordination of housing services. The Housing Advice Service will also look to develop ways of embedding the service in the community, including drop-in sessions at different venues that emulate the Closer to Home model.</p>	
4. Establish a complex needs team to take responsibility for resolving the housing issues of the most vulnerable	<p>Explore how an Emergency Housing service similar to the service established during the coronavirus outbreak, could be established on a permanent basis and as a multi-agency team responsible for the housing needs of complex cases.</p> <p>Review the staffing roles within the team to ensure that all appropriate specialisms are available, including the existing Outreach team.</p> <p>Establish referral mechanisms into supported accommodation options such as an expanded Housing First service.</p>	<p>ACCEPT</p> <p>The development of a complex needs team is the Minister's main priority for 2021. Recurring funding has been earmarked in the 2021-2024 Government Plan to support this work. £120,000 has been made available to develop a complex needs team in 2021, with £180,000 p.a. available from 2022 onwards to fund the service.</p> <p>A government project has commenced to design and implement improved homelessness services.</p> <p>Subject to detailed planning, the project is likely to create a critical support team to assist persons who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The team will work with government and non-government partners to develop an effective, multi-agency homeless assessment and early intervention service, including referral pathways</p>	Customer and Local Services; Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance. Phase 1 – 2021/2022

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		<p>and personal housing plans for households at risk of homelessness.</p> <p>This is likely to include provision for 'high support' individuals to address complex and multiple needs, and 'low support' individuals who may not currently be supported by agencies because their needs are such that they fall outside of existing provision.</p>	
5. Provide a housing safety net for all, which is appropriate, flexible, and able to meet the needs of everyone	Commission a review of funding requirements for current emergency provision and the suitability of accommodation such as Aztec House.	<p>ACCEPT</p> <p>The 2021 -2024 Government Plan includes additional ongoing funding of £300,000 per annum to support the activities of the Shelter Trust, who are responsible for Aztec House.</p> <p>Organisations such as the Shelter Trust are instrumental in providing accommodation and support for people who are homeless.</p> <p>A review of current service provision is an action for the Shelter Trust to take forward, but the Government acknowledges that the Trust is an important partner in the delivery of homeless accommodation and support. The Government will, therefore, work with the Shelter Trust to consider how this action can be taken forward.</p>	Customer and Local Services; Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance. Phase 1 – 2021/2022
	Consider how gaps in emergency accommodation could be best filled through more flexible accommodation arrangements and commissioned	<p>ACCEPT</p> <p>The Minister agrees that it is necessary to ensure that appropriate accommodation options exist for a range of groups that are not well-served at present. It identifies families, vulnerable young persons; women who have</p>	Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance. Phases 2 and 3 – 2022-/2024

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	<p>services. Explore opportunities to utilise existing buildings or pod structures to provide self-contained accommodation.</p>	<p>suffered domestic abuse; and individuals with complex and multiple needs. These include temporary, supported, and settled accommodation options.</p> <p>The Minister will work with voluntary and community organisations and social housing providers to identify gaps in provision with a view to securing accommodation where necessary.</p>	
	<p>Conduct a wider review of the existing migration and Income Support framework to identify and debate the extent to which there is any friction with the spirit of providing a housing safety net for all and, in particular, the under 25 age group.</p>	<p>REJECT</p> <p>The Migration Control Policy will be debated by the States Assembly in March 2021. The Minister believes that any changes to rules around rights and access to benefits must be considered within this overarching framework.</p> <p>The report of the Migration Policy Development Board included an action to undertake a review of all government funded services that include residency requirements with the aim that access to services is aligned across all areas. It did not, however recommend a review of access to Income Support for households with less than five-years residency.</p> <p>Specific Income Support rules already exist to assist the under 25 age group who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. In the following circumstances, young people under 25 would be considered for assistance with accommodation costs –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have care of a child ▪ Leaving care 	

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Medical condition that requires specific accommodation outside the family home ▪ Breakdown of family situation, confirmed by Social Services Department ▪ Living independently for more than 12 months prior to claiming Income Support <p>The Minister agrees there is a need to tackle homelessness amongst young people. Other actions set out in the strategy and accepted in this response – such as the creation of a Housing Advice Service, critical support team, multi-agency working, personalised housing plans, and new temporary supported housing options where there are identified gaps in provision – will provide a mechanism for young people to access tailored accommodation and support.</p>	
6. Implement commissioning and regulation to ensure that housing-related support services are consistent and sustainable	<p>Identify existing commissioning frameworks within the Government’s structure and consider if there are existing mechanisms which could take responsibility for commissioning housing-related support.</p> <p>Review the Supporting People framework operating in Wales (as a working example)</p>	<p>ACCEPT IN PRINCIPLE The Minister accepts this recommendation in principle. The Government already funds a number of services that provide accommodation and support to prevent people threatened with homelessness, including emergency shelter accommodation and supported housing. The Government provides some of these services directly, but others are provided by partner organisations through grant funding.</p>	Customer and Local Services; Health and Community Services. Phase 3 – 2023/2024

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	<p>and make recommendations on how this could be adapted to work in Jersey. Revise Care Commission guidance to include registration of housing-related support providers.</p> <p>Aim to adopt a Jersey commissioning framework for housing-related support during 2021.</p> <p>Prioritise the commissioning of existing gaps in housing-related support services and emergency provision focused on flexible self-contained accommodation to meet the needs of a wide range of groups, including families.</p> <p>Examine current pathways which lead to homelessness for key groups, starting with young people and offenders, and use the commissioning framework to fill identified gaps.</p>	<p>The Minister believes that the immediate priority is to identify gaps in current service provision, and it may be necessary to commission new homeless accommodation and support services (for example, tailored needs-based pathways for specific groups; and approaches such as Housing First).</p> <p>Housing-related support providers were registered with the Jersey Care Commission in 2020. They are registered as ‘care homes’ and are subject to the Commission’s Care Home Standards. These care homes are due an annual inspection in 2021, which will provide an opportunity to engage with providers and consider any gaps in standards that may need to be addressed.</p> <p>The Government currently commissions these types of services through block grant, which are monitored through an SLA with each provider. At present, the Shelter Trust and the Women’s Refuge receive grant funding. These grants provide excellent value in tackling and preventing homelessness. However, this is merit in adopting a framework for planning and commissioning services for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. This would ensure that government departments are working collectively to consider gaps in service provision, resource requirements and service specifications in order to deliver services that improve</p>	

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		health and housing outcomes. The work of the homelessness cluster provides and the project to design and implement improved homelessness services (see priority four) provide a basis for improving commissioning.	
7. Strengthen the role and supply of social housing to ensure that it is better able to meet housing need.	Implement the recommendations of the HQN 2018 review to increase access to the social housing register.	<p>ACCEPT IN PRINCIPLE</p> <p>The previous Minister responded to the recommendations of the Review of Access to Social Housing (the HQN 2018 review) and actions are being taken in line with that response.</p> <p>A review of eligibility criteria to the Affordable Housing Gateway (social housing register) will be completed during 2021.</p>	Customer and Local Services; Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance. Phases 1–3 in line with the Ministerial Response to the Review of Social Housing Growth, Housing and Environment; Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance. Phases 2 and 3 – 2022-/2024
	Examine options for alternative funding models for social housing delivery such as capital grants and private capital. Consider the adoption of a policy which enables more affordable rents to be charged in the social housing sector without preventing best use of accommodation available. Include an affordable housing policy in the emerging Island Plan	<p>NEITHER ACCEPT NOR REJECT</p> <p>The Government has committed to a review of social rent policy during 2021 in the 2021-2024 Government Plan.</p> <p>The Minister supports the delivery of social housing by Andium Homes and the housing trusts. The best way to meet housing need is to ensure there is sufficient housing supply.</p> <p>The Minister will await the findings and recommendations</p>	Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance. Phase 1 – 2021/2022

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	which encourages further provision.	<p>of the Housing Policy Development Board to consider policy measures to increase the supply of social housing, including the funding requirements for social housing and the release of land in order to deliver social housing on a viable basis. The Bridging Island Plan and the next Island Plan create the planning framework within which developments can be facilitated.</p> <p>There is also a need for clearer strategic co-ordination role to support Andium Homes and the housing trusts to deliver new sites. Funding has been earmarked in the 2021-2024 Government Plan to create this role.</p>	
	Approve a regulatory system to provide assurance that social housing providers are adopting appropriate standards in the delivery of social housing and obligations in relation to the Housing Gateway.	<p>ACCEPT</p> <p>The Minister recognises that the original intention of the Housing Transformation Programme to include a statutory framework was not implemented at the same time as the other changes but that the States Assembly did not support P.120/2017 'Social Housing in Jersey: introduction of a regulatory framework'.</p> <p>The need for a regulatory framework was included as a recommendation of the Review of Access to Social Housing (the HQN 2018 review) and accepted by the previous Minister. This work is planned for 2022-2023.</p>	Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance. Phase 3 – 2023/2024

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8. Support private sector tenants and landlords to promote positive relationships.	Review the provisions of Residential Tenancy (Jersey) Law 2011 to determine whether there is a need to provide greater security of tenure for tenants or at least protection from eviction for any residential occupier [whether a tenant or licensee].	<p>ACCEPT</p> <p>The Minister agrees there is merit in considering whether the Residential Tenancy (Jersey) Law 2011 requires amendment to increase security of tenure in order to reduce the incidence of homelessness. Work is likely to commence in 2022.</p> <p>Measures have been introduced in recent years to improve the quality and desirability of letting in the private rented sector. This includes the Public Health and Safety (Rented Dwellings) (Jersey) Law 2018, which introduced minimum repair and maintenance standards for rented accommodation.</p> <p>The Government is continuing a programme of work to enhance the private rented sector. The Statement of Common Strategic Policy 2018–2022 includes a priority to improve the quality of rented accommodation and strengthen the rights of tenants. This work is currently in progress.</p> <p>A project to investigate rent stabilisation measures has been included in the Government Plan 2021-2024 to ensure that tenants are not subject to unfair rent increases. Moreover, legislation is planned in 2021 to prevent landlords from discriminating against families with children when letting a property.</p>	Growth, Housing and Environment; Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance. Phases 2 and 3 – 2022/2024
	Explore the models of tenant accreditation/training	<p>ACCEPT IN PRINCIPLE</p> <p>The Housing Advice Service will develop relationships with</p>	Customer and Local Services; Strategic

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	<p>identified in this review and consider how this could be implemented in Jersey.</p> <p>Increase support for private sector landlords through financial assistance and partnerships such as social lettings agencies and leasing schemes.</p>	<p>private sector landlords and letting agents to facilitate access to accommodation for individuals or are homeless or threatened with homelessness, including emergency and settled accommodation.</p> <p>Initiatives such as a tenant accreditation scheme and a social letting agent could therefore be piloted as part of this work. This is not a priority for the Housing Advice Service in phase one and consideration needs to be given as to whether increased support for the private sector is desirable or necessary (such as financial assistance, for example); where there are gaps; and how it might work practice.] The Minister will work with the Homelessness Strategic Board to consider how these actions could be taken forward with the private rented sector.</p>	<p>Policy, Planning and Performance. Phase 2 – 2022/2023</p>

Minister's conclusion

I would like to thank everyone who has participated in developing the Jersey Homelessness Strategy. It is important now more than ever to make sure that everyone in our community has access to affordable, stable, and good standard accommodation, and receives appropriate support where necessary to sustain accommodation. I do not underestimate the challenges in tackling homelessness, but this strategy, together with the strength of relationships that have developed as a result of it, provides the best possible framework for achieving success over the next five years.

The Government is already taking action to tackle homelessness and has committed more than £500,000 a year to supporting homeless initiatives in the 2021-2024 Government Plan. We will build on this foundation and continue to invest in and strengthen homeless services in order to ensure that no one in Jersey must face being without a home.

Deputy Russell Labey
Minister for Housing and Communities