# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Establishment of Homelessness Action Group**  |
| **DATE**  | **28th June 2019**  |
| **BY** | **Julie James, Minister for Housing and Local Government**  |

The Welsh Government is committed to the goal of ending homelessness in Wales. Our strategy is first and foremost prevention but if homelessness cannot be prevented ensuring it is rare, brief and non-recurrent.

We have invested considerably in homelessness prevention and relief over the last few years and made great progress under our preventative legislation, but we face a growing problem and must do more. The duties in the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 should be the last line of defence, not the first, and we need to ensure that all services work to the spirit not simply the letter of the law. Listening to those who work in the sector and to those with lived experience, we need to think and work differently if we are to achieve our goal.

Homelessness is about more than rough sleeping, although this is the most acute form of homelessness and one that we should rightly be ashamed still exists in our affluent country. We need a whole system approach to tackling homelessness in all its forms and that has prevention and rapid re-housing at its core. Our approach has to be informed by those with lived experience and must ensure services place the individual at the centre and work together in a trauma informed way. Tackling and preventing homelessness is a public services matter, rather than a housing matter, and must therefore be approached as such.

In order to help us bring forward the step change needed, I have invited Jon Sparkes, Chief Executive of Crisis, to Chair a small Homelessness Action Group of experts and innovative thinkers. I have invited them to consider the actions we need to take as a nation to create a new policy landscape to achieve the goal of ending homelessness.

The Action Group will be a Welsh Government task group, which will report to Welsh Ministers, but will work independently to provide policy recommendations on the actions and solutions required to address the following questions:

1. What framework of policies, approaches and plans are needed to end homelessness in Wales? (What does ending homelessness actually look like?)

2. What immediate actions can we take to reduce rough sleeping between now and the winter of 2019/20, and to end rough sleeping altogether?

3. How do we put the delivery of rapid and permanent rehousing at the heart of preventing, tackling and ending homelessness?

4. How can we ensure joined-up local partnerships and plans are put in place to prevent, tackle and end homelessness throughout Wales?

In order to operate at the pace required, the group will meet 12 times between June 2019 and March 2020, reporting into Welsh Government during this time. The first meeting of the Action Group takes place today, Friday 28 June.

I will update Members on the progress and outcomes from the Action Group and the subsequent actions of the Welsh Government as this work progresses.