

Extension to the ban on evictions

Many of our National Advisory Panel have lived experience of homelessness, and/or working in homelessness services.

We feel strongly that the lived experience of being evicted from accommodation should be communicated widely to policy makers to ensure that an appropriate policy solution is found, both for those who are likely to be evicted if the ban is not extended further, and those who already may be considered for eviction due to historic rent arrears, domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour.

Impact of eviction

Eviction, and the threat of eviction, can have detrimental effects on individual's health and wellbeing. This can include increases in anxiety and other mental health difficulties, and increased reliance on drugs and alcohol. Further, people may be forced into dangerous situations in order to survive.

*"It's like re-traumatising somebody, when you tell them you're going to be evicted. You take away all their hope. Their plan, their way of living day by day. You force them to go back to chaos on the street, and living that way. You give them a temporary reprieve, it's like being sentenced. You say I'm going to extend your sentence, but it's going to include hard punishment. Why would you do that? Why would you put them through that pressure?" **Member of National Advisory Panel***

*"The anxiety. That 6 month period that they're going to have. Your mental health is going to fall through the floor. If you are using illicit substances, if you're an alcoholic, that's all going to be impacted by the anxiety on your mental health, the fact that you're going to be on the streets at the end of it, or the likelihood is that you are." **Member of National Advisory Panel***

*"Your mental health, your self-esteem. You'll get to a point where people bury their head in sand, and if we're not careful they'll self-harm, using substances, maybe even putting themselves in dangerous situations just to get accommodation, we do see that." **Member of National Advisory Panel***

Evictions can also have an extremely negative affect on recovery for people experiencing multiple disadvantages. Support networks and ties with services can be broken, forcing individuals and services to invest considerable resource in re-establishing these connections. Further, being evicted can compound disadvantages, for example increasing use of substances can lead to mental health services no longer being accessible for individuals.

*"The fact that they know where the local shop is, the local cash machine, they feel comfortable going into the bookies. We move them and take them up, and we don't think about that." **Member of National Advisory Panel***

*"What we do when we evict people from their house or flat or whatever, is we remove any support that they got. They're support is in that area, the doctors, the dentist, friends, local shop. If they're accessing CPN, social workers. It can take 8 weeks to catch that back up if you remove them. You're setting them up to fail." **Member of National Advisory Panel***

*"You're tearing there life out from them. And then you point the finger because their more drugs or their drinking more of their mental health has deteriorated." **Member of National Advisory Panel***

"You are going to have people coming back onto the street. The downward spiral is that they're mental health is going to be suffering, so they start, maybe, to self-medicate, because they're not seeing

*clinicians. Drug and alcohol services won't take them and they don't get put in the category of being vulnerable, because the drug and alcohol issue is not as severe and enduring than a diagnosable mental health issue, so it cancels each other out. So the person is then in the situation where councils won't listen to them, mental health services or NHS won't listen to them... We need to have a new approach to say that the people with multiple disadvantages will have multiple disadvantages within the multiple disadvantages." **Member of National Advisory Panel***

High demand on services and accommodation

The influx of people onto the street or into homelessness services as a result of any future lifting of the eviction ban will be occurring at a time where rough sleeping numbers are already extremely high, including families, young people, people with physical and mental health difficulties and those fleeing domestic violence.

*"As we are now there will be families on the street. There will be children on the street. I've already seen young people, 16 to 17 years olds on the street. Care leavers on the street." **Member of National Advisory Panel***

*"I remember when I was on the street. The winter shelter just closed down. A bloke came in to [WINTER SHELTER] – definitely he shouldn't have been on the streets. Severe mental health problems. He should never have been on the streets. A year later he was in a hostel, and getting support, thank God." **Member of National Advisory Panel***

*"There's a guy I know who's on the street. He has a heart condition. [AREA] Council put him in temporary accommodation. Three months later, he was told, you still have a heart condition, but you have to leave the place. He said I'm going to die on the street. And I've heard that from a couple of people on the streets." **Member of National Advisory Panel***

*"We see females, predominantly, fleeing DV, and with services refusing to accommodate them you are in fact telling them to go back to a dangerous situation. That's where the problem lies, you're getting people restricted from the hotels and other accommodation providers. If you go on the council waiting list tomorrow you're not going to get anything for 6 months, I can guarantee you that. There was a freeze on people bidding on social housing, so the backlog on that is going to be enormous." **Member of National Advisory Panel***

The high numbers of people experiencing homelessness or rough sleeping means there are already extreme pressures on services and accommodation providers. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many people who were previously hidden to services are now in temporary accommodation, further increasing the demand on the sector and limiting its ability to respond to a future influx.

*"Services are stretched beyond belief. How we going to cope? There's going to be an influx of people onto the street, with multiple issues, mental health, addiction of some sort, domestic violence, different forms of abuse, disability. There's not enough services to cope with it as we stand now, before this pandemic!" **Member of National Advisory Panel***

*"We already got an issue with private rented being a lot more difficult to access. I just think moving forward, with what has not been implemented and what has been implemented, we're getting to get to a point where it'll be impossible for people with multiple disadvantage to access any sort of accommodation. The private rented sector is a lot more difficult. It's going to be unaffordable." **Member of National Advisory Panel***

*"Social housing is an issue as local authorities are reluctant for people to go straight from rough sleeping into council properties. Its encouraged they go to supported accommodation, but the problem is the demand on supported accommodation. I think we're going to get to a point where we're going to be supporting a number of individuals and there's no accommodation options for them. I'm really worried." **Member of National Advisory Panel***

“Yes we have been lenient because of COVID. We have opened that door. But there are massive debts the Borough is going to have to cover. And that means they’re going to have to pull it in, and when they pull it in these are the first ones that are going to suffer.” **Member of National Advisory Panel**

With the pressures services and accommodation providers are already facing, the Panel has concerns that a removal on the ban on evictions will have a disproportionate effect on those experiencing multiple disadvantages who are either accessing homelessness services or who have not been engaged with. For example, individuals experiencing multiple disadvantages may be less likely to meet particular rules and restrictions that are places on them by providers. It is a concern that in turn, minor breaches of rules will be seen as an excuse to evict people, given the high demand on their services from other individuals.

“They’ll say we cannot help. They’ll give them one offer only. It could be anything to cause the eviction. It could be so slight, like go to someone else room, or come back late. The rigidity of the hostels and the housing providers is so scary, you can’t maintain that way of living. You’ll get that eviction and you’re gone, you’ll go back to the street, then they’ll say you did that to yourself, because you knew the rules.” **Member of National Advisory Panel**

“We bring people into a hostel environment and we want to work with people, so we work with people with chaotic drug use and chaotic mental health. But then the instance they break them rules, we’re forced to evict them. We knowingly take in an addict, and then we evict him for being an addict.” **Member of National Advisory Panel**

“It’ll cause double the amount of work for us. We work really hard to get people into accommodation, and that’s on their terms, not always the terms of the hostel. We have to say ‘they’re going to struggle to pay their service charge, we know that, because they’ve never had to pay a bill before, not on time, because they don’t live like that. You’ll have to be a bit lenient.’ But that’s one of the conditions when you go into an environment like that, you pay your bill on time. Give them some space!” **Member of National Advisory Panel**

Resources are already invested into the sector to support people who have been evicted from their accommodation, however a lack of joined up working means that services often work in crisis management mode, rather than pro-active recovery work. Where people are evicted despite the positive work of other agencies, the investment that has been placed in developing relationships and supporting recovery is put at risk.

“It forces us to work extremely hard to get someone settled, but then out of nowhere people are coming to us saying they evicted me. No conversation to try and support people, and then we have to go back through the council, and then they say you’re client is too hard to place... All that work is undone.” **Member of National Advisory Panel**

“The distrust in services. You’ve built up the rapport and relationship and supported them in their accommodation, and then when they’ve been evicted, you’ve got other pieces to pick up, and they’ve got that distrust with you, because they’ve got that distrust with services.” **Member of National Advisory Panel**

“It perpetuates a very untrustworthy them and us situation. We need to be creating and enabling a rapport of parity and this is lost.” **Member of National Advisory Panel**

“They feel rejected and trust is broken.” **Member of National Advisory Panel**

Next steps

Expert Link – National Panel

The panel believe that lifting the eviction ban on people will see an increase in numbers of people onto the streets, which will disproportionately affect people who are experiencing multiple disadvantage.

Policy solutions in this area will need to focus on addressing the causes of disadvantage, for example affordability of housing and access to services, and improvements to multi-agency working.

As we have shared previously, during the response to COVID-19 many services have improved the flexibility of their offer as well as improving their partnership working with other agencies. We believe it will be crucial for this to continue to help mitigate the effect of the inevitable increase in rough sleeping.

*“We’re treating the symptoms rather than the cause. We throw money at the symptoms, but we don’t get rid of the disease at the cause... We need a culture change.” **Member of National Advisory Panel***

*“Last 6 months, we’ve had a relaxing of the rules, we’ve seen what we always wanted, where statutory and non-statutory are actually talking to each other. But the problem is we’re on ease now, so they’ll all go back into their little pockets, and put the old policies back in place, and that’s the big worry.” **Member of National Advisory Panel***

About Expert Link

Expert Link is a peer led organisation championing the voice of people with lived experience of multiple disadvantages, including homelessness, mental health issues, substance misuse, offending and domestic violence and abuse. We advocate for a world where people with lived experience of multiple disadvantages are treated as equal partners in decisions made about their lives.