

Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017

**Statutory duties for
hospitals, A&E and urgent
treatment centres**

Homelessness Reduction Act

- Places 2 new duties on Local Authorities from 3 April 2018:
 1. '**duty to prevent**' up to 56 days before someone becomes homeless
 2. '**duty to relieve**' homelessness for people who are already homeless

New Statutory Duty

- Section 213B affects:
 - A&E
 - Wards
 - Urgent Treatment Centres
- Came into force 1 October 2018.
- Does not cover Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Definitions of homelessness

- Not just people sleeping rough
- Anyone in temporary accommodation (B&B, hostels, night shelters, refuges) **and**
- Anyone threatened with homelessness in the next 56 days

Identifying homeless patients

Ask the patient where they intend to go upon discharge

Ask early to allow time for referral (ideally at admission)

Be aware the person may not disclose homelessness fearing stigma or rejection

NB The person may give their last address or a 'care of' address; check they can receive post there

Why help homeless patients?

- To improve patient health, reduce readmission rates and preventable deaths
- Compassionate, respectful healthcare professionals positively impact stigmatised patients
- Duty to refer under HRA section 213B

Your 'Duty to Refer'

If you work in hospital ward, A&E or a UTC in England, **you must** notify a Local Authority homelessness or housing options team of **any patient** who is homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Who Should Make the Referral

- Hospital homeless team (Pathway team)
Monday-Friday 9am-5pm
- If the attendance or admission will be completed outside of team hours, staff may need to make referrals themselves
- If you do not have a Pathway team all staff are responsible for making referrals

Before making a referral

1. Obtain patient **consent** to the referral.
2. Obtain **contact details** so that the Local Authority can contact the patient. This could be a care of address such as a GP or day centre.
3. Ask the patient **which Local Authority** they wish to be referred to. They are more likely to be successful if they have links to that area.

One exception

- You do not need to refer if you help the patient to approach the Local Authority.
- You should warn the Authority that the patient will be presenting to them
- The patient may need someone to accompany them
- It is insufficient to give the patient Local Authority details and tell them to attend.

Required referral information

At a minimum the referral must include:

1. Name of patient
2. Consent to referral by patient
3. Contact details for patient
4. Reason for referral i.e. homeless or at risk of homelessness

Additional referral information

With patient consent you may also include:

5. Date of birth
6. Relevant medical and social history
7. The patient's current circumstances
e.g. 'sleeping rough' or 'being evicted
on xxx date'
8. Risks to the patient and/or others

Which Local Authority?

- Patients can choose which Local Authority to be referred to
- They are more likely to be successful if they have recent links to the area e.g. have been living there or have family there
- Different rules apply if the patient is at risk of violence

Referral Forms

- Each Local Authority has its own form, which should be emailed back
- Many accept electronic referrals via live.housingjigsaw.co.uk/alert/duty-to-refer
- A generic referral form is available at www.pathway.org.uk/standards
- If unsure google 'homeless' and your Local Authority

Recording the referral

- Record consent given and referral made, or consent not given
- Keep copy of referral in notes
- The Local Authority should acknowledge the referral
- Contact them if no acknowledgement is received

Pathway

- 10 homeless hospital teams in England supporting 3500 patients a year
- Multidisciplinary NHS professionals and third sector workers

Commission a team
www.pathway.org.uk



Further Guidance

Department of Health guidance

www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-duty-to-refer-for-nhs-staff

Faculty for Homeless and Inclusion Health guidance

www.pathway.org.uk/homelessness-reduction-act

More resources

- The Faculty for Homeless and Inclusion Health
- Network focused on the health of excluded people
- Research, CPD, meetings

www.pathway.org.uk/faculty



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