



The Positive Pathway Model

Briefing Paper



**West Midlands
Combined Authority**

Background

The Positive Pathway Model was originally developed in 2012 by St Basils and DCLG¹ as a resource for local authorities and their partners to use locally to provide a planned approach to homelessness prevention and housing for young people.

The model has subsequently been updated, most recently in 2020², to integrate changes in national policy, legislation, public sector funding and service provision; and has been evaluated. It is increasingly used across the sector and considered to be a tried and tested approach to reviewing and developing planned approaches to homelessness prevention, contributing to improved outcomes for those at risk of homelessness.

A Positive Pathway Approach to Designing out Homelessness

Adapted for use by the WMCA Homelessness Taskforce, the Positive Pathway Model provides a critical framework to help achieve the Taskforce's aim to design out homelessness, in all its forms.

If we recognise that homelessness is not a linear process or experience, the Positive Pathway Model offers a flexible framework to review and ensure that support is provided across all areas where someone may need it whether that is before they become homeless or after they have become homeless.

In this way, the model has provided the Taskforce with a framework for identifying gaps in strategies, policies, procedures, laws, structures, systems and relationships that either cause or fail to prevent homelessness; and to identify conditions for systems change to address these gaps.

Central to the model are some key assumptions:

- Homelessness is a product of the interplay of structural inequalities and personal risk factors or disadvantage
- Homelessness should be prevented wherever possible, so it is rare, and where it occurs it is a brief and non-recurring experience for people
- Preventing homelessness will generate better and more sustainable outcomes for people
- The earlier the prevention takes place the more effective and efficient it will be
- Prevention activity is a perpetual and intentional process, meaning some people will need active and ongoing preventative support to avoid repeat homelessness
- Where people do become homeless there needs to be a clear pathway to a settled home

¹ Now the Department for Levelling Up Homes and Communities (DLUHC)

² Refreshed Positive Pathway documents launched (stbasils.org.uk)

Positive Pathway Model



Universal Prevention is activity, infrastructure and support that is not specifically focused on homelessness but ensures that the protective factors that we all benefit from are created, nurtured and maintained. For example, access to affordable housing, income, education and health services. Effective universal prevention results in the knowledge, resilience, options, and opportunities that avoid homelessness.

Targeted Prevention focuses on people who are likely to be at risk of becoming homeless, but not yet in crisis. Activity in this space would be aimed at specific vulnerable groups such as women experiencing domestic abuse or care leavers and have a direct link to housing and homelessness. For example, a leaving care pathway, protection for those at risk of abuse, support to households to access private rented housing and housing advice. Effective targeted prevention includes stepping in quickly, at the right time, with the right support so that homelessness is prevented.

Crisis Prevention and Relief activity is focused on the point of crisis and includes immediate interventions that avert crisis and offer support to people who are already homeless. For example, mediation with landlords, schemes to pay off rent arrears, temporary accommodation for families and street outreach for people who are sleeping rough. Effective crisis prevention and relief results in reducing the time people are homeless and the subsequent harm that it causes.

Recovery activity is focused on those people and households that have been homeless, ensuring that their homelessness is a brief experience. Effective recovery activity will be caring and supportive in its nature and aim to re-establish protective factors for people such as rebuilding positive networks, so people do not become homeless again.

Move On Support focuses on activity that supports the transition to a settled home. Effective move on support includes practical help to make a house a home, overcoming exclusion and isolation, and supporting wider aspirations so that repeat homelessness is avoided.

Settled Home activity should seek to ensure that people flourish in their home. Effective activity in this space includes people having the opportunity to grow, develop and be a part of their local community. A settled home is also a key element of Universal Prevention.

The journey into and out of homelessness is not a linear one for many people and the Positive Pathway Model does take account of that which is why elements like having a safe and settled home can feature in both Universal Prevention and Settled Home. The model and the actions it helps generate are relevant where ever people start their journey.

How we are using the Positive Pathway Model

We have used the model as a critical analysis tool to identify what is already being done to prevent homelessness, identify where the gaps are, and what might be done to address those gaps across the region. This has informed the development of the Taskforce's 5 key priorities and work programme.

The model has also been used to help us develop the **Commitment to Collaborate to Prevent and Relieve Homelessness Toolkit**.

We have now also begun to use the model to help us review and contribute to the wider strategies, plans and activities of the WMCA through its health and equity impact assessments (EQIA) to promote inclusion and reduce health and wider inequalities.

We aim to continue to use the model to assess our own plans, actions and outcomes so that we can stay focused on making the systemic and sustainable changes that will make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurrent.





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