

## Appendix 26: Housing and homelessness (See Article 13)

The UK is suffering from an acute housing crisis, with rents soaring and house building grinding to a halt.<sup>1</sup> There were 1.77 million households in England on social housing waiting lists in 2008, and 489,400 households living in officially overcrowded homes. Government targets for the building of new homes have been missed, with construction slowing to a crawl since the recession.

However, the cost of housing has continued to rise in spite of the recession in both the private and social rented sectors, with average rents at record highs and homes unaffordable in more than half of English local authorities. Reforms to social housing are not only increasing rents, but also reducing security of tenure. Above-inflation increases in private rents have been compounded by cuts to housing support, even as the need for that help spreads. The number of Housing Benefit claimants in work more than doubled between November 2008 and February 2012, whereas the number of claimants out of work rose by only 9.3%.<sup>2</sup>

Case study:<sup>3</sup>

*"We have seen a marked increase in women presenting themselves as homeless, and these women are not typical; they are increasingly women who have lost jobs or are experiencing domestic abuse. And job losses are affecting more women than men."*

The Pankhurst Centre

Under the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR), everyone has the right to adequate housing.<sup>4</sup> However in the UK, the human cost of scarce and expensive housing is stark. Family life is affected, with people forced to delay having children, or to live away from the support of grandparents, while the cost of housing is forcing millions to cut back on other essential spending, including food and heating, and pushing many into debt. Newly homeless households also increased by 18% in England between 2010 and 2011.<sup>5</sup> The situation for Black and minority ethnic (BME) women and heads of households is concerning, considering that they particularly struggle to secure decent housing conditions. For example, according to research, 45% of Latin Americans live in

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<sup>1</sup> Oxfam (2012) *The Perfect Storm: Economic stagnation, the rising cost of living, public spending cuts, and the impact on UK poverty*. Oxfam: Oxford <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/the-perfect-storm-economic-stagnation-the-rising-cost-of-living-public-spending-228591>

<sup>2</sup> Netmums Coffee House Chat, Housing benefits- will I be forced to move? <http://www.netmums.com/coffeehouse/house-garden-194/money-finance-entitlements-267/550208-housing-benefit-cuts-will-i-forced-move.html> Accessed 24/05/2013

<sup>3</sup> Oxfam (2012) *The Perfect Storm: Economic stagnation, the rising cost of living, public spending cuts, and the impact on UK poverty*. Oxfam: Oxford <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/the-perfect-storm-economic-stagnation-the-rising-cost-of-living-public-spending-228591>

<sup>4</sup> International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cescr.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Oxfam (2012) *The Perfect Storm: Economic stagnation, the rising cost of living, public spending cuts, and the impact on UK poverty*. Oxfam: Oxford <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/the-perfect-storm-economic-stagnation-the-rising-cost-of-living-public-spending-228591>

inadequate housing and one third live in overcrowded conditions sharing their houses with other families and with more than a quarter living in multi-person households. Of those living in overcrowded households, 60% had incomes of less than £1,000 per month.<sup>6</sup>

Case study:<sup>7</sup>

Marisol, 37 from Bolivia lives with her two children in a shared house with four other families in Southwark. There is no living room in the house and every family has one room. All families share one bathroom. Marisol cooks on a small stove that is in her room. She pays £70 a week on rent and can't afford any more because she only works 12 hours per week earning £700 per month.

### **Recommendation:**

**The Government should provide secure, affordable, decent housing for all, by investing in affordable homes to boost the economy and to help solve the housing crisis and increasing maximum penalties for rogue landlords**

### **Housing Benefit**

Since 2010 a wide array of cuts and caps to Housing Benefit (support for housing costs for those on low/no income) have been introduced. The National Housing Foundation has warned that benefit reductions could put 200,000 people at risk of losing their homes.<sup>8</sup> These changes will have a particularly damaging impact on women as they constitute the majority of recipients of Housing Benefit:<sup>9</sup> single women constitute approximately 50% of recipients, with couples composing around 20% and single males 30%.<sup>10</sup> It is expected that 60% of single women, many of whom are lone parents, will receive less Housing Benefit under the Housing Benefit cap, compared to 3% of single men.<sup>11</sup> 47% of those affected will have children, of which 32% will be lone parents.<sup>12</sup> Overall, almost 1 million more women claim Housing Benefit than men – many of whom will be single mothers at risk of poverty. (See Appendix: 15)

Reductions to Housing Benefit therefore mean that a disproportionate number of women will be priced out of their locality. Women and children tend to have stronger links than men to their local community (including through playgroups, schools and children's centers) and rely more heavily on informal networks to

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<sup>6</sup> McIlwaine, C. (2011) *No Longer Invisible: The Latin American community in London*. Queen Mary University of London, Latin American Women's Rights Service and Trust for London.

<http://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/No%20Longer%20Invisible%20report.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Latin American Women's Rights Service <http://www.lawrs.org.uk/> Accessed: 22/03/13

<sup>8</sup> ACEVO (2010) *Squaring the Circle: How charities can help Government cut spending whilst protecting society's most vulnerable* <http://tinyurl.com/5vhc79t>

<sup>9</sup> Stephenson, M. and Harrison, J. (2011) *Unravelling Equality: A Human Rights and Equality Impact Assessment of the Spending Cuts on Women in Coventry*. A Joint Report of the Centre for Human Rights in Practice, University of Warwick and Coventry Women's Voices

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/chrp/projectss/humanrightsimpactassessments/cwv/>

<sup>10</sup> Department for Work and Pensions (2010) *Equality impact assessment housing benefit*. Welfare and Wellbeing Group <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/lha-and-carers-eia.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Department for Work and Pensions (2011) *Housing Benefit Cap: Equality Impact Assessment* <http://tinyurl.com/438o5yy>

<sup>12</sup> Department for Work and Pensions (2010) *Equality Impact Assessment Housing Benefit – Changes to the Local Housing Allowance arrangements and Housing Benefit size criteria for people with non-resident overnight carers*. [www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/lha-eia-nov10.pdf](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/lha-eia-nov10.pdf)

assist them with caring responsibilities. These networks are particularly vital for single parents. Forced moves will have a disproportionate impact on women with children since they are usually the parent responsible for organising schooling and often rely heavily on informal networks of support to combine paid work with childcare. Therefore, moving to a new area may make it difficult for women to continue with paid work. (See Appendix: 18)

The wider equalities impact of reductions in Housing Benefit is also stark:

- 8% will be pensioners.<sup>13</sup> (See Appendix: 19)
- 13% will be from BME groups who will also be disproportionately affected by the four bedroom cap.<sup>14</sup>
- People with non-dependants (like elderly relatives) living in the same households will also incur extra charges.<sup>15</sup>
- 19% of those affected will be disabled.<sup>16</sup>

It is estimated that 65,000 disabled people (including those with profound mental health issues) are at risk of losing their homes because of a cut in mortgage payment support for vulnerable people.<sup>17</sup> (See Appendix: 36) This benefit, which pays the interest on a mortgage, is to be reduced from its present value of 6.08% to what the Government says is the Bank of England average mortgage rate of 3.67% – a cut that means a loss of £1,300 annually for every £100,000 borrowed.<sup>18</sup> Research from the National Housing Federation shows that changes to the amounts paid to mortgage interest for disabled claimants have been estimated to potentially lead to an additional 64,000 disabled people becoming homeless.<sup>19</sup> The changes will make renting in the social housing sector unaffordable in many higher priced areas of the country. Disabled people will only be able to afford to rent in the cheapest properties in an area, which are more than likely to be inaccessible. This will exaggerate the difficulties disabled people face in finding suitable accommodation to live independently, increase homelessness amongst disabled people and push them further into poverty. 670,000 households – two

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<sup>13</sup> 34% of people receiving housing benefit are pensioners but only 8% of those are in private rented accommodation in Department for Work and Pensions (2010) *Equality Impact Assessment Housing Benefit – Changes to the Local Housing Allowance arrangements and Housing Benefit size criteria for people with non-resident overnight carers*. [www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/lha-eia-nov10.pdf](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/lha-eia-nov10.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Chartered Institute of Housing (2010) *Memorandum to Work and Pensions Select Committee: Inquiry into the Impact of the Changes to Housing Benefit announced in the June 2010 Budget*, p. 14. <http://www.cih.org/resources/policy/Consultation%20responses/Resp-SelectCommitteeBudget-Oct10.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Department for Work and Pensions (2010) *Equality Impact Assessment Housing Benefit – Changes to the Local Housing Allowance arrangements and Housing Benefit size criteria for people with non-resident overnight carers*. [www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/lha-eia-nov10.pdf](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/lha-eia-nov10.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> 26% of people receiving housing benefit are disabled but a smaller proportion are in private rented accommodation in Department for Work and Pensions (2010) *Equality Impact Assessment Housing Benefit – Changes to the Local Housing Allowance arrangements and Housing Benefit size criteria for people with non-resident overnight carers*. [www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/lha-eia-nov10.pdf](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/lha-eia-nov10.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Ramesh, R. (2010) 'Mortgage aid cut "will see disabled people lose homes"', *The Guardian*, 9<sup>th</sup> August 2010 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2010/aug/09/mortgage-benefit-cuts-disabled-housing>

<sup>18</sup> Ramesh, R. (2010) 'Mortgage aid cut "will see disabled people lose homes"', *The Guardian*, 9<sup>th</sup> August 2010 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2010/aug/09/mortgage-benefit-cuts-disabled-housing>

<sup>19</sup> Ramesh, R. (2010) 'Mortgage aid cut "will see disabled people lose homes"', *The Guardian*, 9<sup>th</sup> August 2010 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2010/aug/09/mortgage-benefit-cuts-disabled-housing>

thirds containing a disabled family member – will be hit by an average £670 penalty every year, because they are deemed to have a spare bedroom which is needed for care support.<sup>20</sup>

Case study:<sup>21</sup>

*"I'm severely disabled and I can't go out to work so I have no way of earning extra money to cover this benefit cut [the 'bedroom tax']. My flat has been specially adapted for me and my parents only live ten minutes away, which is a great comfort to me. My second bedroom is extremely small, but is useful if I need someone to stay with me to provide care and support during the night."*

Joanna, York

There have been significant cuts to Local Housing Allowance (LHA), with further cuts planned in future years. LHA is the Housing Benefit paid to people in private rented accommodation. It is means-tested and can be claimed by people in paid work as well as people who are unemployed, disabled, carers or retired. However, LHA has been capped at £250 a week for a one bedroom house/flat, £290 for two bedrooms, £340 for three bedrooms, up to an upper limit of £400 a week for a maximum of four bedrooms. Non-dependent deductions will also increase. This is the amount deducted from LHA because it is assumed that a non-dependent family member such as an adult son or daughter or an elderly relative is contributing to the rent. Since October 2011 LHA only covers up to the bottom 30% of rents rather than the median and from January 2012 the age threshold for claiming the single-room rate was raised to 35. Anyone younger than this with no dependants will only receive LHA for the cost of a room in a shared house (rather than a one bedroom flat, for example). From April 2013 LHA rates have been uprated in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rather than actual local rents.<sup>22</sup>

Case study:<sup>23</sup>

*"Being in the system of public housing, which I wasn't before, I haven't been able to choose where I live. It's like you never have a home, you don't have control."*

Sandra, Salford

The changes to LHA will disproportionately impact on women, particularly lone parents, BME women and those with larger families. The immediate impact of these changes will vary depending on the level of rents in different parts of the country. People in London and other cities with high levels of rent are likely to be particularly badly affected. Impacts will include increased rent arrears, evictions and homelessness. The number of couples with an income of less than £50 a week

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<sup>20</sup> Orr, D. (2011) 'Welcome reform may see families lose homes', [Guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk), 14<sup>th</sup> December 2011 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/joepublic/2011/dec/14/welfare-reform-families-lose-homes>

<sup>21</sup> Laycock, M. (2013) 'Bedroom tax' misery: disabled woman's flat fears', [The York Press](http://www.yorkpress.co.uk), 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2013 [http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/indepth/poverty/news/10329254.\\_\\_\\_\\_Bedroom\\_tax\\_\\_\\_\\_misery\\_\\_\\_\\_disabled\\_woman\\_\\_\\_\\_s\\_flat\\_fears/](http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/indepth/poverty/news/10329254.____Bedroom_tax____misery____disabled_woman____s_flat_fears/)

<sup>22</sup> Stephenson, M. (2011) *TUC Women and the Cuts Toolkit: How to carry out a human rights and equality impact assessment of the spending cuts on women*. TUC: London <http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality/tuc-20286-f0.cfm>

<sup>23</sup> Oxfam (2012) *The Perfect Storm: Economic stagnation, the rising cost of living, public spending cuts, and the impact on UK poverty*. Oxfam: Oxford <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/the-perfect-storm-economic-stagnation-the-rising-cost-of-living-public-spending-228591>

after rent has been paid will double. This is less than half the minimum income guaranteed by benefits such as Job Seekers Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance.<sup>24</sup> It has been estimated that between 311,000 and 612,000 people will be left in 'severe housing difficulty' (unable to re-negotiate their rent or make up the shortfall) by the LHA changes.<sup>25</sup>

Case study:<sup>26</sup>

Maria, a BME woman, is 43 and lives with her two children. She has been renting in the private sector. Her Council informed her of a 35% reduction in her Housing Benefit. She was subsequently evicted by the landlord. She has tried to rent somewhere else but it has been very hard to obtain a place because landlords are reluctant to rent to people on benefits. Maria is also illiterate and has health problems. *"My children and I are living in our friends' living room while we manage to obtain a place. It has been very hard for us as a family and we feel that we are a load for them."*

In the longer-term, the impacts are likely to be even more severe because of the change to uprating LHA rates in line with the CPI rather than actual rents. In the ten years to 2008, the CPI rose by 20%. During the same time, actual rents increased by almost 70%.<sup>27</sup> This will mean that the number of houses and flats affordable to people claiming LHA is likely to be reduced quite substantially. The Chartered Institute of Housing has calculated that in some parts of the country it will only take a few years before the level of LHA is lower than the lowest rent available both in social housing and in the private sector.<sup>28</sup>

Supporting People is paid from Central Government to Local Government to provide housing-related support to help vulnerable people to live as independently as possible in the community, in their own homes or in hostels, sheltered housing or other specialised supported housing. It funds services that help older people, disabled people, women and their children leaving violent relationships and homeless people. The Supporting People budget, has been cut by 12% over four years and the ring fencing of the budget has been lifted which means that councils can decide what they want to spend the money on. Cuts to services funded by Supporting People will vary in different parts of the country. In some parts of the country there have been drastic cuts to supported housing, shelters and other support for homeless people.<sup>29</sup> Some councils have cut the support they provide to such projects by significantly more than 12%. (See

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<sup>24</sup> Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research (2010) *How will changes in Local Housing Allowance affect low-income tenants in private rented housing?* Cambridge University: Cambridge [http://england.shelter.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/290041/CCHPR\\_final\\_for\\_web\\_2.pdf](http://england.shelter.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/290041/CCHPR_final_for_web_2.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research (2010) *How will changes in Local Housing Allowance affect low-income tenants in private rented housing?* Cambridge University: Cambridge [http://england.shelter.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/290041/CCHPR\\_final\\_for\\_web\\_2.pdf](http://england.shelter.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/290041/CCHPR_final_for_web_2.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Latin American Women's Rights Service <http://www.lawrs.org.uk/> Accessed: 22/03/13

<sup>27</sup> Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research (2010) *How will changes in Local Housing Allowance affect low-income tenants in private rented housing?* Cambridge University: Cambridge [http://england.shelter.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/290041/CCHPR\\_final\\_for\\_web\\_2.pdf](http://england.shelter.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/290041/CCHPR_final_for_web_2.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Chartered Institute of Housing (2010) *Memorandum to Work and Pensions Select Committee: Inquiry into the Impact of the Changes to Housing Benefit announced in the June 2010 Budget*, p. 14. <http://www.cih.org/resources/policy/Consultation%20responses/Resp-SelectCommitteeBudget-Oct10.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> False Economy, UK cuts and testimonies <http://falseeconomy.org.uk/cuts/> Accessed 24/05/2013



**Appendix: 5)** In 2011 Nottingham City Council, for example, was planning cuts of 45% to its supported housing services.<sup>30</sup> In some parts of the country there is already a shortage of accommodation for single homeless women. These cuts are likely to make this situation worse.

Furthermore, a cap of £500 will be placed on all benefits in 2013. This will mean that any given household will not be able to claim more than £500 per week in Housing Benefit, Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support, Child Benefit and other benefits such as Carer's Allowance.<sup>31</sup> (See Article 13) Those who are claiming Housing Benefit and Job Seekers Allowance will also only receive their full Housing Benefit award for a period of 12 months<sup>32</sup> which will affect a large number of disabled people in particular. (See Appendix: 36)

Cuts to LHA are likely to increase homelessness<sup>33</sup> at the same time as support for homeless people is being cut. Cuts to LHA will push many families into poverty as they struggle to make up the shortfall in rent. Women often act as the 'shock absorbers' of poverty, cutting back themselves in order to balance family budgets.<sup>34</sup> Poverty has a potentially serious impact on women's human rights, including potentially on the right to life, right to health and right to food.<sup>35</sup>

## **Women and homelessness**

Research<sup>36</sup> from one homelessness NGO has found that one in ten rough sleepers in London are women and over half of those living in temporary accommodation are women. Female clients arrive at services with a wide range of significant and complex needs, for example:

- 66% have a mental health problem
- 55% have a substance misuse problem, either drugs and/or alcohol
- More than one in ten have a history of being in care
- 54% of those who have slept rough have been involved in prostitution
- Over half have experienced violence or abuse from a partner or family member
- Almost one in ten are pregnant, have given birth or have had an abortion in the last year
- 45% are mothers.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Stephenson, M. (2011) *TUC Women and the Cuts Toolkit: How to carry out a human rights and equality impact assessment of the spending cuts on women*. TUC: London  
<http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality/tuc-20286-f0.cfm>

<sup>31</sup> Stephenson, M. (2011) *TUC Women and the Cuts Toolkit: How to carry out a human rights and equality impact assessment of the spending cuts on women*. TUC: London  
<http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality/tuc-20286-f0.cfm>

<sup>32</sup> Disabled People Against Cuts (2010) 'Disabled people fight back in protest – UK disability news', Disabled World website, 15<sup>th</sup> December 2010 <http://www.disabled-world.com/news/uk/fighting-back.php#ixzz19LVQRNp3>

<sup>33</sup> Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research (2010) *How will changes in Local Housing Allowance affect low-income tenants in private rented housing?* Cambridge University: Cambridge  
[http://england.shelter.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/290041/CCHPR\\_final\\_for\\_web\\_2.pdf](http://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/290041/CCHPR_final_for_web_2.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> Women's Budget Group (2005) *Women's and Children's Poverty: making the links*. WBG: London  
<http://www.wbg.org.uk/documents/WBGWomensandchildrenspoverty.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> British Institute of Human Rights, Poverty and Human Rights Project 2009-2011  
<http://www.bih.org.uk/projects/poverty> Accessed: 13/04/13

<sup>36</sup> St Mungo's (2012) *Rebuilding Shattered Lives* <http://www.mungos.org/documents/3125/3125.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> St Mungo's (2012) *Rebuilding Shattered Lives* <http://www.mungos.org/documents/3125/3125.pdf>

Despite these needs, women are not always well served by existing homelessness provision as much of this has traditionally been designed for men. A women's journey into homelessness will often have different characteristics from that of a man's, for example there is frequently a history of domestic violence, traumatic loss of children/family, time spent in custody and a childhood characterised by unstable housing and often abuse and neglect. Research<sup>38</sup> has found that 70% of women rough sleepers have experienced abuse from a partner(s), all of whom reported that this was what led them ultimately to become homeless. 40% of women rough sleepers said that they had also experienced abuse within the family home before this. Previous research has also found that women who have slept rough to flee domestic violence on average have more support needs than those who do not sleep rough.<sup>39</sup> Women's homelessness is also characterised by a lack of contact with statutory homelessness services. Data in London<sup>40</sup> shows that on average 10-15% of rough sleepers are women and over half of those living in temporary accommodation are women. One report<sup>41</sup> found that 19% of female residents have slept rough, but anecdotal evidence suggests that the figure is much higher.

Homelessness amongst women is a hidden problem, which explains the variation in figures. The current approach to annual street counts may also miss counting some homeless women as they sleep rough at different times of the day and in different locations from men. Women take extreme measures to avoid the dangers of sleeping rough, for example, living in squats and crack-houses, returning to an abusive partner, engaging in sex work, 'sofa surfing' and may even commit crimes so that they are taken into custody. These situations can intensify a women's vulnerability and needs and keeps them hidden without access to services that can support them.

Case study:<sup>42</sup>

Rosa, a Colombian woman, met her British partner via the internet. They got married in Latin America and came to live in the UK. She became pregnant soon afterwards and her husband started abusing her while pregnant. As the scale of the abuse intensified, Rosa ran away one night with her two month old baby because she was scared about his safety. She did not speak English and did not know how to access support services. She ended up living on the couch of one of her friends for several months with her little baby until she approached Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS) and was able to secure accommodation.

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<sup>38</sup> Moss, K. and Singh, P. (2012) *Women Rough Sleepers who are the Victims of Domestic Violence*. University of Wolverhampton

<http://womenroughsleepers.eu/sites/default/files/WRS%20FINAL%20REPORT.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> St Mungo's (2011) 'Press Release: Battered, broken, bereft - new rough sleeping report', St Mungo's website [http://www.mungos.org/press\\_office/1002\\_battered-broken-bereft-new-rough-sleeping-report](http://www.mungos.org/press_office/1002_battered-broken-bereft-new-rough-sleeping-report)

<sup>40</sup> Broadway, CHAIN Research <http://www.broadwaylondon.org/CHAIN/CHAINResearch.html>  
Accessed 24/05/2013

<sup>41</sup> St Mungo's (2011) 'Press Release: Battered, broken, bereft - new rough sleeping report', St Mungo's website [http://www.mungos.org/press\\_office/1002\\_battered-broken-bereft-new-rough-sleeping-report](http://www.mungos.org/press_office/1002_battered-broken-bereft-new-rough-sleeping-report)

<sup>42</sup> Latin American Women's Rights Service <http://www.lawrs.org.uk/> Accessed: 22/03/13

In 2009 Women's Aid found that the majority of refuge clients did not seek advice from their social housing landlord before leaving home to escape violence. Therefore many women are missing out on the opportunity of support at an early stage. Homeless women often have extremely complex support needs including alcohol and substance use and physical and mental health problems which may mean that they are excluded from many services.<sup>43</sup> Gaps in service provision have also been identified<sup>44</sup> including a lack of emergency accommodation, direct housing for women, arrangements for women on release from prison, (See Article 15) limited housing for people with complex needs, very limited women-only services and local authority housing strategies that do not mention women rough sleepers specifically. Women with complex needs, such as substance use and mental health issues, have always struggled to get into domestic violence refuges and so become homeless. With the cuts to refuge provision this situation is now becoming worse.<sup>45</sup> (See Appendix: 5)

A 'one size fits all' approach does not work in homelessness services. There are few women-only shelters or accommodation and those that do exist are not fully accessible to all women or appropriate to their needs. For example, lesbian and bisexual women are invisible in most housing and homelessness services therefore there is a need for specific services and housing provision with LGBT residents, specialist workers and LGBT staff.<sup>46</sup> Additionally securing space in a refuge for victims of violence is extremely challenging and there are not enough places available. It is even more difficult if for women with 'no recourse to public funds'. (See Appendix: 8)

There is no mention of women rough sleepers specifically in existing legislation in the UK, the Government's 'No second Night Out' policy<sup>47</sup> also has nothing specific to women, and other policies, such as the Housing Strategy,<sup>48</sup> are generic. There is also concern that changes to Housing Benefit will produce more homeless people.<sup>49</sup>

### Recommendations:

- **High quality services are needed that can meet the personal, emotional and social needs of women, as well as addressing housing, health and work. Staff must be equipped to understand women's**

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<sup>43</sup> Bancroft, J. (2012) 'Invisible Women', *Connect*, Issue 46, July 2012

<http://issuu.com/homelesslink/docs/120712102152-d08db8549f2f44f6940a58fbf481a92d>

<sup>44</sup> Moss, K. and Singh, P. (2012) *Women Rough Sleepers who are the Victims of Domestic Violence*. University of Wolverhampton

<http://womenroughsleepers.eu/sites/default/files/WRS%20FINAL%20REPORT.pdf>

<sup>45</sup> St Mungo's, *Rebuilding Shattered Lives: Davina's blog*

<http://rebuildingshatteredlives.org/davinas-blog/> Accessed 24/05/2013

<sup>46</sup> Women's Resource Centre (2010) *In All Our Colours: Lesbian, bisexual and trans women's services in the UK*. Women's Resource Centre: London

<http://thewomensresourcecentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/IAOC.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> No Second Night Out <http://www.nosecondnightout.org.uk/> Accessed 24/05/2013

<sup>48</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government (2011) *Laying the foundations: A housing strategy for England* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/laying-the-foundations-a-housing-strategy-for-england--2>

<sup>49</sup> Moss, K. and Singh, P. (2012) *Women Rough Sleepers who are the Victims of Domestic Violence*. University of Wolverhampton

<http://womenroughsleepers.eu/sites/default/files/WRS%20FINAL%20REPORT.pdf>



**needs and must develop partnerships with other agencies and sectors to ensure this**

- **There must be increased opportunities for the involvement of women themselves in evolving the services that support them and the development of dedicated projects for homeless women**
- **The effect on rough sleepers of the changes to Housing Benefits must be acknowledged and addressed**