



Public Health  
England

# There's no place like home – tackling the health and wellbeing of homeless families

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**March 2017**



# Homelessness?

- Homelessness is defined as;
  - Rooflessness (without a shelter of any kind, sleeping rough)
  - Houselessness (with a place to sleep but temporary in institutions or shelter)
  - Living in insecure housing (threatened with severe exclusion due to insecure tenancies, eviction, violence)
  - Living in inadequate housing (in caravans on illegal campsites, in unfit housing, in extreme overcrowding)
  - Source: ETHOS developed in 2005 by FEANTSA
- Ill-health and injury can be a cause and/or consequence
- Homelessness often culmination of several problems – not just a housing problem!





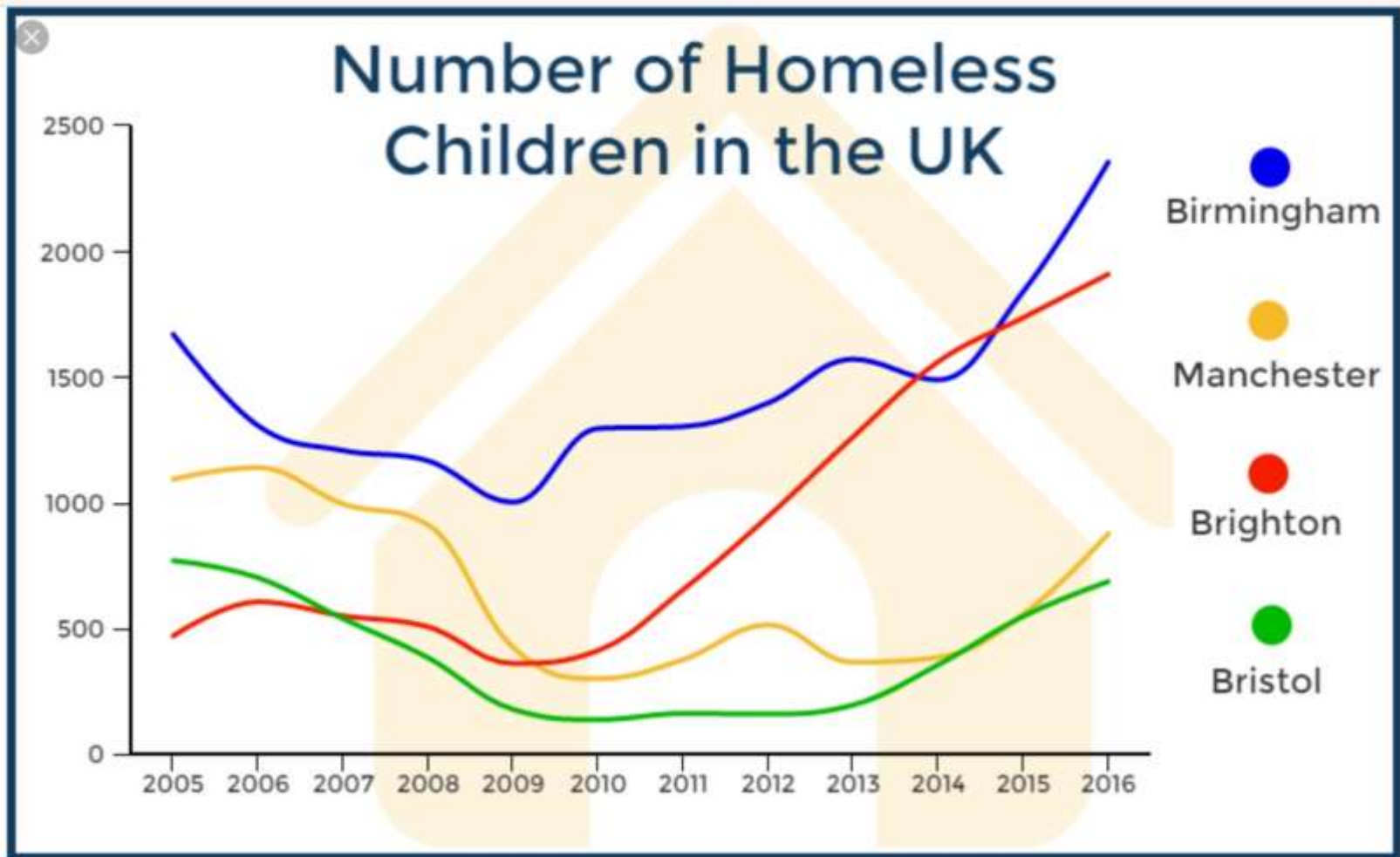
# Scale of the issue

Statistics have shown:

- the number of homeless families with dependent children owed the main homelessness duty has risen: couples with dependent children have increased by 73% and lone parents by 50.1% (41,980 households)
- Although official statistics among 16 to 24 year olds reports a decrease in statutory homelessness, Young and homeless reported this population is considered hidden and difficult to quantify..
- There is an increase in the use of temporary accommodation, including bed and breakfast. There has also been a 255% increase in the number of homeless households who have been temporarily accommodated out of area (in another local authority area) since the low point at the end of March 2010.
- Rough sleeping has increased by 102% since 2010: official statistics reported a snap shot of 3,569 people counted or estimated on one night in November 2015. During 2015 to 2016, around 8,096 people were seen rough sleeping in London by outreach workers.



# North south divide?





# The complexities

- Structural factors include:
  - unemployment, insecure and/or low paid employment
  - poverty and inequality
  - housing supply and affordability
  - access to social security
- Individual factors include:
  - poor physical health
  - mental health problems
  - alcohol and drugs issues
  - adverse childhood experiences
  - bereavement
  - relationship breakdown
  - experience of care or prison
  - experience of violence, abuse, neglect, harassment or hate crime
  - seeking asylum/refugees and other migration



(Source: PHE (2016) Applying all our health: homelessness)



## Children and families

- Threat of, and actual homelessness increases stress, depression, and isolation
- Increased risk of illness or injury
- Moving regularly affects behaviour, attendance at school, attainment
- Likely poor quality and unsuitable accommodation
- Expensive: choices to make re: basic living costs, extra costs eg, school uniform, replacement of possessions, setting up new home....
- Affects life chances





## Young people

- Homelessness often follows relationship breakdown
- Lack formal support and struggle to access services
- Complex and compounding challenges (sources to be supplied):
  - Lack relationship and independent living skills
  - 40% experienced abuse at home
  - 51% excluded from school & 57% are not in education, employment or training (NEET)
  - Up to 70% have mental health problems and 33% self-harm
  - Poor health eg, drug and/or alcohol problems (9%)
  - Vulnerable: gangs, criminal activity, exploitation, trafficking
- Risk of embarking on a 'career'





# Areas for attention?

## **Children and families**

- In precarious housing, including private rented sector
- In temporary accommodation
- Relocated 'out of area' in temporary & settled housing
- Found 'not homeless' and referred to social care
- Living on unauthorised encampments

## **Young people**

- Asked to leave by family and friends
- Unable to access assistance to meet housing needs
- Seeking to move on from homelessness to independence, including work





# Why homelessness matters?

- The safety nets are not good enough
- Children and young people are ignored in decisions about them
- We need to switch from a deficit to asset based model
- Children and young people are our **now** and our future – they deserve a better future!



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6TLVgwoqhoc&sns=em>



# Individual and population health

Healthcare professionals play an important role, working alongside other professionals to:

- identify the risk of homelessness among people who have poor health, and prevent this
- minimise the impact on health from homelessness among people who are already experiencing it
- enable improved health outcomes for people experiencing homelessness so that their poor health is not a barrier to moving on to a home of their own

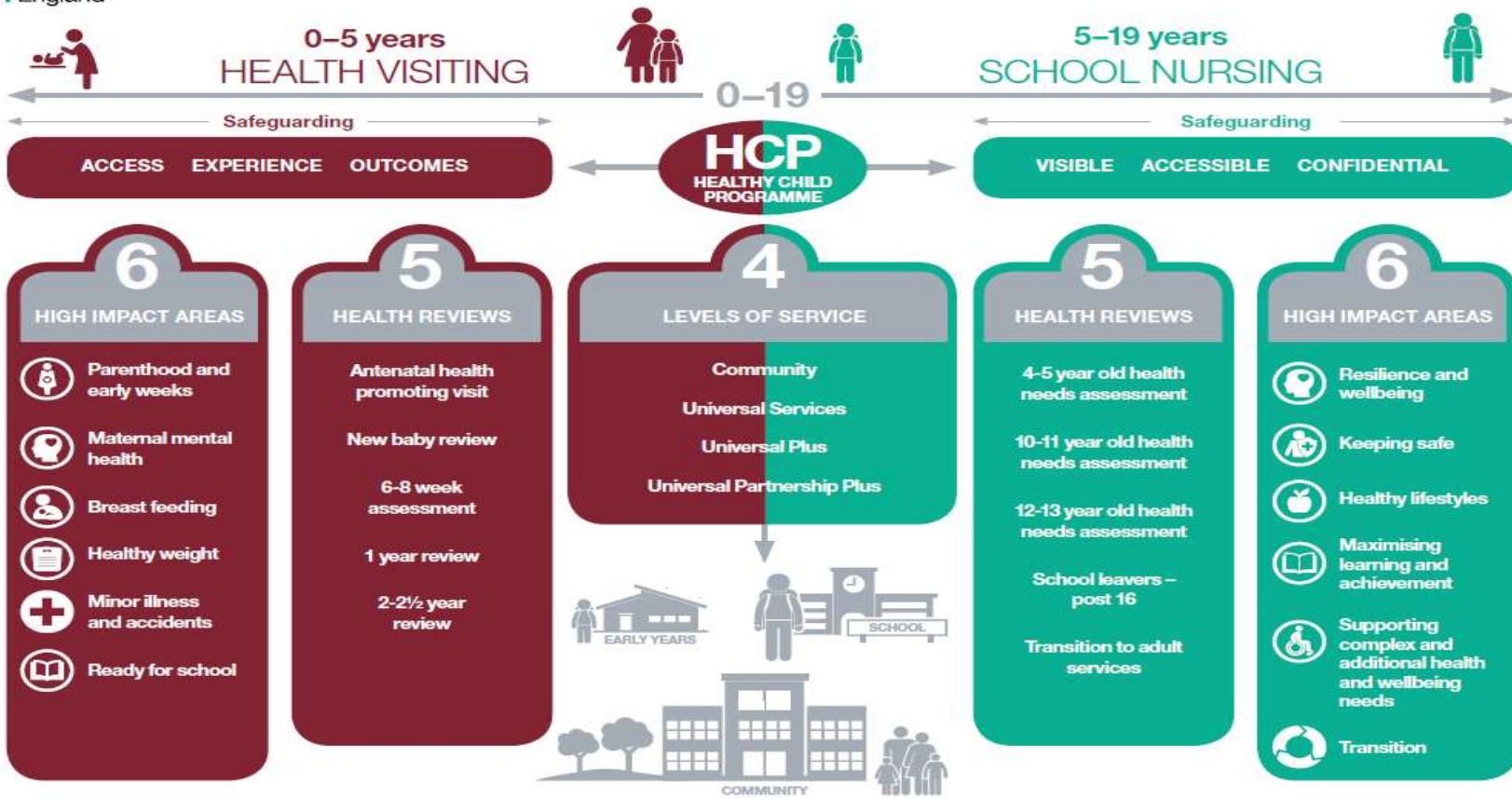


## Homelessness: Applying All Our Health



# Prevention pays – making every contact count

## 4-5-6: Health visitors and school nurses leading the Healthy Child Programme





# Being aware and taking action

Healthcare professionals should:

- be aware that homelessness is a consequence of a complex interplay between a person's individual circumstances and vulnerabilities and adverse structural factors, that requires different levels of intervention
- know and understand the needs of individuals, communities and populations and know who else in the local 'system' has a responsibility for or an interest in meeting these needs
- understand the signs that someone is homeless, at risk of homelessness or otherwise vulnerably housed
- think about the resources available in health and wellbeing, social care, housing, criminal justice 'systems', including the strengths and assets individuals and communities bring
- understand the range of interventions which can prevent, protect, and promote health for people at risk of becoming homeless, and what is in place locally



# Positive actions

Action to prevent and respond to homelessness across the life course is essential, these can include:

- reducing the risk of homelessness to children and young people to strengthen their life chances
- enabling working age adults to enjoy social, economic and cultural participation in society
- breaking the cycle of homelessness or unstable housing by addressing mental health problems, and/or drug and alcohol use, and/or experience of the criminal justice system

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSoCIWtUDHk&sns=em>



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