

Written evidence submitted by St Mungo's (CJB64)

1. Background – About St Mungo's

St Mungo's is a leading homelessness charity with national influence. We work in partnership with local authorities, health colleagues and communities, to end homelessness and rebuild lives.

Last year (2022-23), we supported more than 28,300 people – our clients - who were homeless, or at risk of homelessness through 161 services. We support almost 2,700 people every night.

We believe that policies and interventions can be put in place to end all forms of homelessness for good.

2. Executive Summary

It has been a long-held view of St Mungo's that the Vagrancy Act of 1824 should be repealed without introducing replacement legislation. It is somewhat timely that this year marks the legislation's 200th anniversary. We have worked with sector partners and politicians from all parties and campaigned on this issue in recent years. We have taken this approach in order to support the clients we work with and protect those who are experiencing rough sleeping.

In the 2018 Rough Sleeping Strategy, the Government made a commitment to launch a review of homelessness and rough sleeping legislation, including the Vagrancy Act 1824, to ensure that our laws create the right environment to deliver effective services and engage constructively with vulnerable people.

In response to the consultation on replacement legislation for the Vagrancy Act in May 2022, we made it clear that St Mungo's supports the repeal of the Vagrancy Act as it criminalises sleeping rough and often drives people further from the support they need. It leads to stigmatisation, loss of trust and therefore loss of engagement. It does not help to deal with the root causes of rough sleeping and can also cause further problems by displacing people into more dangerous places or riskier activities, as well as pushing people into a criminal justice system which can create a vicious cycle of homelessness.

We previously commended the Government for committing to repeal this antiquated legislation, but expressed our strong concerns about the proposal to introduce new offences that would criminalise begging.

In 2022, the Government consulted on replacement legislation regarding begging, but rough sleeping was not mentioned. Despite no consultation on this rough sleeping element and very little evidence of support from the consultation on replacement legislation, it is disappointing that the Government is bringing forward replacement legislation via the Criminal Justice Bill. We are concerned about the measures on nuisance rough sleeping and nuisance begging within the Bill.

In February 2022, both Houses of Parliament supported the repeal of the Vagrancy Act through an amendment to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill in a landmark decision to reject the antiquated laws that criminalises rough sleeping. This Act passed in April 2022. However, no commencement date was included so the Vagrancy Act technically remains in place.

We do not think that new replacement legislation is appropriate or needed, as it would result in the continued marginalisation and criminalisation of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Though it is true that someone who is begging may not necessarily be homeless, there is a clear overlap between the two, as well as links of poverty, destitution and poor health. We recognise that some forms of begging can be problematic but the increased severity of the measures in this Bill are disproportionate.

St Mungo's provides the secretariat for the well-respected, cross-party Kerslake Commission which recommended that the Vagrancy Act should be repealed. The Commission recommended that the next administration should repeal the Vagrancy Act and prioritise investment in support services which address the underlying causes of begging and anti-social behaviour and support the delivery of trauma-informed policing. This can be achieved through embedding specialist workers into outreach teams or operating with greater flexibility around registration and appointment times for accessing services. [1]

The Criminal Justice Bill replaces the Vagrancy Act with the reintroduction of the criminalisation of homelessness which is deeply concerning. As part of this, measures include moving people on, imprisoning them and fining them up to £2,500. Some of the provisions go even further than the Vagrancy Act. This is a step backwards and could result in worse criminalisation and persecution of people experiencing rough sleeping.

The proposed replacement legislation within the Criminal Justice Bill will be putting people experiencing illness and destitution through a criminal justice system, potentially re-traumatising them, damaging their trust in services, and not helping any real chance of longer-term recovery or preventing them from moving away from a life on the streets.

Introducing new offences and penalties against people who are begging will distract the police from the valuable work they could be doing to respond to threatening, coercive and anti-social behaviour, and working collaboratively with support services. We recommend that the nuisance rough sleeping and nuisance begging provisions are removed from the Bill entirely. There is also legislation already in force which supersedes the Vagrancy Act, meaning replacement legislation is unnecessary.

The UK is facing a homelessness crisis, with a 26% rise in the number of people sleeping rough [2] and a record number of households in temporary accommodation. Local authorities who commission many homelessness services have reported unprecedented financial pressures which are being felt particularly acutely in homelessness services. London Councils reported that boroughs in London are set to overspend on their original budget plans by around £500m this year (2023-24). Increasing homelessness rates and a chronic shortage of affordable housing have been cited as key cost pressures on Local Authorities. London Councils estimates boroughs will collectively overspend on their homelessness budgets this year by £150m. [3] Against this backdrop it is clear that introducing more punitive measures whilst there is a lack of support is inappropriate and will not help tackle this crisis.

To effectively support people who are homeless and begging, there needs to be an adequate offer that people are supported to take up through coordinated care and approaches.

We also have concerns regarding the proposals in this Bill to increase prison capacity by using overseas prisons. We know that there is a link between homelessness and reoffending. Through our work in our Criminal Justice services, we understand that these proposed changes could have a detrimental impact on reoffending rates and therefore have a knock-on effect on homelessness. We therefore strongly oppose this proposal and recommend removing this from the Bill.

3. Nuisance Begging and Nuisance Rough Sleeping

As we made clear in our previous consultation response, St Mungo's does not agree with the Government's proposal to introduce new offences that would make specific forms of begging illegal.

Begging which causes harm to others, through threatening, coercive, or anti-social behaviour, is already addressed through existing legislation, primarily through the Anti-

social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act (2014). The way in which police could better implement this Act is through updating the Home Office guidance to clarify procedures on rough sleeping and begging.

We do not think that new legislation is appropriate or needed, as it would result in the marginalisation and criminalisation of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Though it is true that someone who is begging may not necessarily be homeless, there is a clear overlap between the two, as well as links of poverty, destitution and poor health.

The Government should recognise that people beg for a multitude of reasons. There are people who beg because they do not have sufficient money to pay for essential items. The impact of the cost of living crisis could force more people to turn to begging, particularly as benefits have not been raised in line with inflation and Local Housing Allowance has been frozen for four years, which will effectively mean that people are being criminalised for being destitute.

This will include destitution of people with unclear migrant status who, due to their immigration status have to beg in order to survive. This group would be criminalised by this replacement legislation, and could face having their application for status rejected, due to being in possession of a criminal record.

There are also people who have deep-seated complex health needs and, for example, beg to source funds to pay for a drug, alcohol or gambling addiction. Addiction is an illness and often a consequence of self-medicating for trauma and mental illness. Evidence shows that a punitive approach can drive people away from the support that could help them recover [4] . It is the role of mental health and drug and alcohol services to help people break the cycle of addiction, but the current offer is overstretched and inconsistent. People should not be criminalised for having needs which are not being met by services, or which have failed to prevent an escalation of their needs.

The proposed replacement legislation will be putting people experiencing illness and destitution through a criminal justice system, potentially re-traumatising them, damaging their trust in services, and not helping any real chance of longer-term recovery or preventing them from moving away from a life on the streets. The Bill could also give them a fine of up to £2500 which they are unable to pay back, putting them at risk of debt and potentially causing a spiral of mental ill health and addiction.

Criminalising destitution and illness goes against the spirit of the repeal of the Vagrancy Act (which Parliament voted in favour of) and will lead to the continuing criminalisation of people living on the streets. The legislation will give the Police more punitive powers and not address the reasons why a person is begging.

We agree that there needs to be consequences attached to begging which involves criminal activity, and our staff and clients support a robust response to this behaviour by the police, by effectively using existing legislation. The Home Office guidance related to the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act (2014) should be updated to clarify procedures on rough sleeping and begging, and support the police to better implement the law.

The types of begging that St Mungo's frontline staff identify as particularly harmful are those which involve threatening or harmful behaviour to others such as; organised gangs that coerce people to beg, and traffic people into the UK and across the country in order to beg and; people who act in an aggressive manner to members of the public, for example by following people down streets.

Begging that involves threatening or harmful behaviour to others is illegal and is enforced through existing legislation. This does not require new legislation for it to be addressed.

Other types of begging that are particularly harmful are those that put an individual's life at risk, such as people who beg by walking through traffic lines and those who beg by moving through London Underground carriages. We do not think that new legislation would address this behaviour.

The definition in Clause 49 (1) of the Bill states that a person engages in "nuisance begging" if they either beg in a certain location, as listed in sub-section (2), or beg in a way that caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress, as defined in sub-section (3). If sub-section (2) is engaged, a person could be in breach, not for causing "nuisance" behaviour, but for simply being in a particular place. And if sub-section (3) is engaged then a person may not have caused harassment, alarm or distress. This could move people on to more dangerous locations, outside of town centres.

Clause 50 as drafted, on arranging or facilitating begging for gain, could criminalise any form of organisation or mutual support among people for sleeping rough. This is also concerning as those sleeping rough can often sleep in a common place for support.

These powers effectively re-introduce powers from the Vagrancy Act for people to be moved on if they appear to sleep rough or intending to sleep rough. If people do not comply with being moved on and not returning for 72 hours, they can be fined up to £2,500 or imprisoned. There is also no provision of how a person could appeal against these measures.

Clause 54 does provide for appeals against a prevention notice however, but only within 21 days from when the notice is given. After that, an individual is subject to the notice, even if unlawfully made. We do not consider 21 days as sufficient time to seek legal advice and prepare a defence. There is nothing mentioned about the provision of legal aid either. The Bill makes three enforcement tools (directions, notices and orders) available to authorities if either the nuisance rough sleeping or begging conditions are met. This is despite the fact that respondents to the consultation on replacement Vagrancy Act legislation were only in favour of enforcement when all other routes have been exhausted [5]. Despite this, the Bill makes the toughest options available from the outset. To more effectively support people away from begging, there needs to be an adequate offer that people are supported to take up through coordinated care and approaches.

In terms of what this Bill calls "nuisance rough sleeping", we are concerned about the addition of this term despite it not being consulted on. The new definition of 'nuisance rough sleeping' which is introduced within the Bill is too wide and could lead to criminalising people too easily for instance, for how they look which would increase stigmatisation. Only 25% of respondents to the public consultation on replacement legislation to the Vagrancy Act were in favour of introducing new offences in relation to rough sleeping. This is not sufficient support for this legislation. [6]

As currently drafted, the definition of "nuisance rough sleeping" means someone could be in breach without sleeping rough or demonstrating nuisance behaviour. Clause 61 (2) states that 'nuisance rough sleeping' can be met if a person is 'sleeping rough, or is intending to sleep rough in a place (or gives the appearance that [the individual] is sleeping rough, or intending to sleep rough , in a place'.

Sleeping in doorways and other forms of cover are deemed 'nuisance' behaviour under this legislation if they are considered as 'obstructing' an entryway. This is a major concern as people sleeping rough, and particularly women, often sleep rough in less visible places because they are more likely to experience violence and abuse. This behaviour should not be considered a nuisance when it is simply for protection.

Recommendations:

- Remove the provisions on nuisance begging and nuisance rough sleeping from the Criminal Justice Bill, which would replace the Vagrancy Act. The Bill should

therefore be amended to remove Clauses 38 - 61, and 64. The Bill should also be amended to provide for commencement of the repeal of the Vagrancy Act.

- Alongside repealing the Vagrancy Act, the Government should amend the Bill to improve the clarity of aspects of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act (2014) to clarify procedures and guidance on rough sleeping and begging, and support the police to better implement the law.

Multi-agency Working

For people who are homeless and living on the streets, evidence shows that a punitive approach drives people away from support and a coercive approach does not help people to engage with services. [7] For people to be incentivised to engage in support, they have to be offered something that they want.

The role of enforcement should be to address criminal activity, providing the 'stick' function, and it is the role of support services to engage people in support, providing the 'carrot' function.

However, the police should play a role in facilitating engagement, by working in partnership with support services. Multi-agency working with the police and joined up approaches between support and enforcement can be transformative, where there are also offers of appropriate accommodation available. For example, if there is an area where there is deemed to be anti-social behaviour, an enforcement intervention can work well in terms of police disrupting the location and support services being there to support individuals in the location. This can be helped where there is a single point of contact between all agencies, which helps inform specialised integrated interventions for people in need.

Relevant and targeted information-sharing with the police, as well as regular meetings, has helped St Mungo's to engage and support clients who would have otherwise been out of reach or resistant to any help.

The police also have a valuable role to play in situations where their presence would give authority to the support service. In high-risk areas without police presence, it can be difficult for our outreach workers to enter and engage with people, and having the police close by can facilitate this.

Most importantly, it is the role of the police to arrest people who are breaking the law, and the police should be taking proactive measures against those who are engaging in threatening, coercive and anti-social behaviour. The police should be resourced and supported to engage confidently with these groups, as our staff and clients have experienced a withdrawn police presence in recent years. [8]

Introducing new offences and penalties against people who are begging will distract the police from the valuable work they could be doing to respond to threatening, coercive and anti-social behaviour, and working collaboratively with support services to effectively help people.

Recommendation:

- Multi-agency working with the police and joined up approaches between support and enforcement can be transformative, where there are also offers of appropriate accommodation available. To improve this, the Government should ensure there is a single point of contact between all agencies, which helps inform specialised integrated interventions for people in need.

Drug and Alcohol Services

There should be changes to the way drug and alcohol services engage with people who are begging. A key reason why street homeless people are forced to beg is because of addiction to drugs and alcohol, as well as poverty. Therefore, the focus of treatment services is how they can stabilise someone's addiction so that they can do therapeutic work with the individual, who otherwise would be wholly occupied with sourcing drugs and funds to pay for drugs.

Addiction services have faced significant cuts in recent years, as identified by the Professor Dame Carol Black Review [9], and this has impacted the accessibility and quality of treatment services. With a reduction in drug and alcohol outreach services, and fewer specialist workers able to engage people where they are, people who want help with drug and alcohol problems often have to attend drop-ins followed by structured appointments.

This presents significant challenges for people sleeping rough, such as the practical difficulties of accessing transport and timekeeping, which are often compounded when drug and alcohol problems are added to the mix. People can also face barriers to accessing a script due to workers having too high caseloads, and underfunding has meant that there are now only a few centres in London where people can go for an on-the-day script. Of 24 substance use services surveyed in 2019 as part of St Mungo's 'Knocked Back' research, only six were able to achieve same or next day scripting. Substance use workers say that getting someone on a script as soon as a so-called 'window of opportunity' is identified is crucial to starting the process of recovery.

If there were more treatment options, this would help address the root cause of some homeless people's begging, and stop them needing to source funds for drugs and maintaining a life on the street. There should be adequate support services available so that people do not need to engage in begging.

The Department for Health and Social Care's (DHSC) investment of £533 million additional funds over three years [10] for community treatment and recovery, as well as the £115 million to support people with housing and employment needs, would be well-placed not only to expand the treatment offer but to ensure that it is accessible to those who are living on the streets.

Recommendation:

- The Government should introduce an expanded treatment offer that is accessible to those who are living on the streets, by delivering flexible treatment services that can be accessed in the moment and where that person is. This can be done through: embedding specialist drug and alcohol workers in generic outreach teams; increased in-reach of drug and alcohol workers into accommodation as happened during the 'Everyone In' initiative; consider a range of options to speed up scripting for opiate problems such as increasing the pool of people who are able to script; and ensuring that services provide flexible appointment times and training for staff to increase understanding of issues related to homelessness.
- The Government should increase training and resourcing of adult social care and mental health assessments for people who are living on the streets. This will reduce delays and barriers to receiving help. This can be embedded through guidance for the integrated care systems, stipulating that Integrated Care Boards, Integrated Care Partnerships and Health and Wellbeing Boards should have a dedicated focus on tackling health inequalities for inclusion health populations.

Impact on Migrants

In regard to changes to support the right environment to deliver services and engage with non-UK migrants with limited entitlements, we would first urge the Government to reconsider changes to the Immigration Rules which introduced rough sleeping as grounds for refusal or cancellation of permission to remain in the UK. There is concern across the sector that the rules deter people from engaging with outreach and other homelessness services for fear of losing their permission to stay in the UK. This rule creates an environment that makes it even more difficult to engage with non-UK migrants.

The expansion of powers outlined within the Criminal Justice Bill may also impact people with limited leave to remain disproportionately. Someone convicted under the provisions of the Bill who has a limited leave to remain, may have future applications for immigration status refused under Part 9 of the Immigration Rules on the basis of 'suitability'. Given the rising numbers of refugees, who have been granted asylum in the UK who are now sleeping rough, this is hugely concerning.

It is also crucial that there is increased availability of good quality, independent immigration advice. Resolving immigration matters is technically difficult and almost always requires professional support, yet independent immigration advice has been cut following the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO) [11].

Immigration advice is a vital tool to help those with unclear immigration status who would otherwise find it very difficult to move on from the streets. It may be that the individual is entitled to funds but is unaware, and therefore is forced into begging.

It is also important that the offers of support are culturally sensitive and informed, to ensure an appropriate environment for people to engage.

Recommendations:

- The Government should reconsider the changes to the Immigration Rules which introduced rough sleeping as grounds for refusal or cancellation of permission to remain in the UK, as they will deter people from engaging with outreach and other homelessness services for fear of losing their permission to stay in the UK.
- The Government should increase access to good quality independent immigration advice which will help to relieve the destitution of people with unclear migrant status who, due to this unclear status, have to beg in order to survive.

4. Proposed Changes to Prison Capacity

St Mungo's offers support to approximately 6,000 service users a year through our Criminal Justice services.

Last year our Criminal Justice in-custody services supported over 3,480 people. [12] Our London Housing advice & Intervention, Housing Advice & Resettlement Project (HARP), Ministry of Justice (MOJ) staging post and integrated Offender Management (IOM) services deliver:

- Housing advice services in all 10 adult male London estate Prisons and 26 London probation sites in partnership with Single Homelessness Project.
- Staging post accommodation for Prison leavers
- In custody: Supporting statutory authorities with Duty to Refer referrals (DTRs), tenancy rescue, safeguarding future options for release, pre tenancy training, advice on housing options, making referrals, identifying priority needs to LA's, access to welfare benefits
- Through the gate support: community re-integration, family reconnections, living skills, links into specialist support services, floating support, light touch move on helpline.

- We work across London and the south of England (including supporting clients across prisons nationally where they have a local connection to a London borough)

There is an intrinsic link between homelessness and reoffending. We know through our service delivery in prisons over the last 20 years that many of those who are released from custody have nowhere to live. We also know that a large number of the clients we see through our services have at some point in their lives engaged with the criminal justice system. In our client survey, around 45% of clients who responded identified themselves as being ex-offenders.

A Her Majesty's Prison Inspectorate (HMPI) report from 2020 [13] identified that after 12 months, 17% of prison leavers remained homeless and a further 15% remained in unsettled accommodation. Furthermore only 17% of people leaving prison are in employment six weeks after leaving prison and after a year this rises only to 17%. 68% of people released to rough sleeping and 55% of people released to other kinds of homelessness reoffend within a year compared to 42% who are released to settled accommodation. Those who are homeless at the beginning of their sentence are at a higher risk of reoffending, and 79% reoffend within a year of release.

In St Mungo's experience of delivering services, prisons where there is an increased focus on addressing each individual's reoffending risk factors means that that the individual is far less likely to leave prison into homelessness, and less likely to re-offend. As part of this it is integral that mental and physical health needs, education and skills and housing situation are considered within an environment which supports an effective transition back into the community,

With this link between prisons, reoffending and homelessness in mind, we are concerned about the proposals made in the Bill around the commitment to increase prison capacity by introducing powers to transfer adult prisoners in England and Wales to rented overseas prisons. Though we understand that increasing prison capacity is important for a number of reasons, these measures raise concerns which lead us to strongly oppose this proposal. We believe that the proposal to increase prison capacity by introducing powers to transfer adult prisoners in England and Wales to rented overseas prisons should be removed from the Bill.

Through the work which St Mungo's delivers in prisons, it is clear that it can be highly damaging for individuals to be placed in prisons that are far away from their home areas. This is because it means that family and friends cannot visit and it can therefore cause relationship breakdowns. This is particularly impactful for children of offenders. To move adult offenders abroad is to disproportionately punish their families as well. This could have a detrimental impact on reoffending as we know that many reoffend as a consequence of the impact of a life in institutions and poor family connections. Currently, St Mungo's is often able to support families so that a prison leaver is able to return to the family home. Separating the person in prison from their family to such an extent with them being abroad, could lead to an increase in those unable to return to family and in turn, drive up those who are homeless on release. We would therefore strongly recommend against the proposal to rent prison space overseas for UK prisoners.

We are also concerned that the proposal within the Bill does not state if any checks would be carried out to ensure that regimes impacting rented overseas prisons are in line with UK standards for the treatment of prisoners. It is vital that safeguards provided within our Criminal Justice system for the safety of prisoners are maintained and this proposal makes this more difficult. This is another reason why we recommend against the proposal to rent prison space overseas for UK prisoners.

The Ministry of Justice have commissioned multiple services through to engage Voluntary Sector agencies to deliver a wide range of services to meet the needs of prison leavers and reduce the likelihood of reoffending. We are concerned that the proposal within the Bill does not state how prisoners in rented prisons abroad would access these services in

a meaningful way. It is vital that UK prisoners have access to these rehabilitation services to reduce reoffending. There are also other complications this proposal creates which will heighten the risk of homelessness on release. The Bill does not state how a prisoner will return to the UK, nor how they will get from a foreign prison to a housing appointment. This proposal would create a barrier to accessing these services and as such, is another reason why we recommend against the proposal in this Bill.

Recommendations

- Given that the distance between prisoners and family and friends can lead to a breakdown in relationships and lead to reoffending, the proposal to rent prison space overseas for UK prisoners should be removed from the Bill.

5. Existing legislation that supersedes the Vagrancy Act

The Vagrancy Act (1824) has already been effectively superseded by modern legislation in a number of ways which are more specific and do not criminalise homeless people. Most relevant is that public bodies have a range of powers through the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act (2014) to tackle anti-social behaviour. This can include Injunctions to Prevent Nuisance or Annoyance (IPNAs), Community Protection Notices (CPNs) and Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) which all avoid criminalisation.

Anti-social behaviour, including threatening words and harassment is addressed in the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act (2014) and Public Order Act (1986). Begging under false pretences of need is addressed in the Fraud Act (2005) and forcing others to beg is addressed by the Serious Crime Act (2007) and Modern Slavery Act (2015).

Section 35 dispersal orders, as set out within the Antisocial Behaviour Crime and Policing Act (2014), provides the police with powers to move someone on from a public place if that person has, or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress.

The powers proposed in this legislation go wider than existing powers in other legislation. This expansion of powers also targets a more specific group of vulnerable individuals in a disproportionate way.

To help to provide further clarity, the Government should update the Home Office guidance related to the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act (2014) to clarify procedures on rough sleeping and begging, and support the police to better implement the law.

Chapter 1 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime, and Policing Act (2014) sets out that Police and local authorities can impose Community Protection Notices (CPNs) on an individual if satisfied that the conduct of an individual is having a persistent or continuing detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality, and that conduct is unreasonable. This broad power could already be used to target nuisance behaviour. Introducing a more targeted version of this in the Criminal Justice Bill aimed specifically at rough sleepers is disproportionate and unnecessary.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

It is clear that there is a broad agreement from across the political spectrum and across the sector that the antiquated Vagrancy Act (1824) should be repealed. The measures which the Criminal Justice Bill proposes as replacement legislation are too severe and punitive, going against the spirit of repealing the Vagrancy Act (1824). In addition to the concerning measures proposed to increase prison capacity and criminalise rough sleeping and begging, these proposals could have a dangerous negative impact on those experiencing or at risk of homelessness at a time when rough sleeping is on the rise. We sincerely hope that our recommendations as outlined below are adopted.

Recommended changes to the Criminal Justice Bill:

1. Remove the provisions on nuisance begging and nuisance rough sleeping from the Criminal Justice Bill, which would replace the Vagrancy Act. The Bill should therefore be amended to remove Clauses 38 - 61, and 64. The Bill should also be amended to provide for commencement of the repeal of the Vagrancy Act.
2. Alongside repealing the Vagrancy Act, the Government should amend the Bill to improve the clarity of aspects of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act (2014) to clarify procedures and guidance on rough sleeping and begging, and support the police to better implement the law.
3. Given that the distance between prisoners and family and friends can lead to a breakdown in relationships and lead to reoffending, the proposal to rent prison space overseas for UK prisoners should be removed from the Bill.

Recommended changes to the Government's approach:

4. Multi-agency working with the police and joined up approaches between support and enforcement can be transformative, where there are also offers of appropriate accommodation available. To improve this, the Government should ensure there is a single point of contact between all agencies, which helps inform specialised integrated interventions for people in need.
5. The Government should introduce an expanded treatment offer that is accessible to those who are living on the streets, by delivering flexible treatment services that can be accessed in the moment and where that person is. This can be done through: embedding specialist drug and alcohol workers in generic outreach teams; increased in-reach of drug and alcohol workers into accommodation as happened during the 'Everyone In' initiative; consider a range of options to speed up scripting for opiate problems such as increasing the pool of people who are able to script; and ensuring that services provide flexible appointment times and training for staff to increase understanding of issues related to homelessness.
6. The Government should increase training and resourcing of adult social care and mental health assessments for people who are living on the streets. This will reduce delays and barriers to receiving help. This can be embedded through guidance for the integrated care systems, stipulating that Integrated Care Boards, Integrated Care Partnerships and Health and Wellbeing Boards should have a dedicated focus on tackling health inequalities for inclusion health populations.
7. The Government should reconsider the changes to the Immigration Rules which introduced rough sleeping as grounds for refusal or cancellation of permission to remain in the UK, as they will deter people from engaging with outreach and other homelessness services for fear of losing their permission to stay in the UK.
8. The Government should increase access to good quality independent immigration advice which will help to relieve the destitution of people with unclear migrant status who, due to this unclear status, have to beg in order to survive.

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[1] [The Kerslake Commission 2023](#)

[2] Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2022 - 28 February 2023, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2022>

[3] Plea for Autumn Statement support as £600m shortfall looms, London Councils <https://beta.londoncouncils.gov.uk/news/2023/plea-autumn-statement-support-ps600m-shortfall-looms>

[4] Crisis (2017) An examination of the scale and impact of enforcement interventions on street homeless people in England and Wales https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237532/an_examination_of_the_scale_and_impact_of_enforcement_2017.pdf

[5] Review of the Vagrancy Act: Consultation on effective replacement, <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/review-of-the-vagrancy-act-consultation-on-effective-replacement/review-of-the-vagrancy-act-consultation-on-effective-replacement>

[6] Government response to the consultation on replacement legislation for the Vagrancy Act, [Government response to the consultation on replacement legislation for the Vagrancy Act - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[7] Crisis (2017) An examination of the scale and impact of enforcement interventions on street homeless people in England and Wales https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237532/an_examination_of_the_scale_and_impact_of_enforcement_2017.pdf

[8] BBC (2020) Have police numbers dropped? <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-47225797>

[9] Independent Review of Drugs by Professor Dame Carol Black, Home Office and Department of Health and Social Care, 28 February 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/independent-review-of-drugs-by-professor-dame-carol-black>

[10] From harm to hope: A 10-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives, 29 April 2022, Department of Health & Social Care, Home Office, Ministry of Justice, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/from-harm-to-hope-a-10-year-drugs-plan-to-cut-crime-and-save-lives/from-harm-to-hope-a-10-year-drugs-plan-to-cut-crime-and-save-lives>

[11] The Law Society, 'LASPO Act'. <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/en/topics/legal-aid/laspo-act>

[12] St Mungo's Annual Review 2022-2023, <https://www.mungos.org/about-us/annual-review-2022-23/>

[13] Accommodation and support for adult offenders in the community and on release from prison in England, HMIP, July 2020, <https://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/inspections/accommodation-hematic/>