

‘Reflections on a rights based approach to homelessness’

Rick Henderson

CEO

Homeless Link

www.homeless.org.uk

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

Article 25 Universal Declaration of Human Rights

You should be considered homeless if you have no home in the UK or anywhere else in the world available for you to occupy..... you don't have to be sleeping on the streets to be considered homeless.

Shelter

Single homeless peoples' rights:

- **The right to advice and assistance**
- **The right to emergency accommodation (if in priority need)**
- **The right to claim welfare benefits**
- **The right to register with a GP**
- **The right to vote**

PLUS Social Services may have a duty to help you (under certain circumstances eg under 18, disability etc)

Implications of Pity Model

- **Pity and resentment towards homeless people**
- **A requirement for homeless people to appear and be grateful**
- **Lack of focus on service quality and outcomes**
- **Poor self esteem and self confidence amongst homeless people leading to addictions, mental health problems and antisocial behaviour**
- **Homelessness services are easy to cut**
- **We have people living on our streets**

**Everyone has the right to respect for
his private and family life, his
home and his correspondence.**

Human Rights Act

The removal of the priority need test (i.e. meeting the 2012 commitment) is estimated to give around 3,000 more people a year the right to settled accommodation. The intentionality criteria allows local authorities to distinguish between the case of a person who has become homeless through no fault of their own, and the case of a person , who through deliberate action or inaction, has contributed to their homelessness. Whether or not someone is found to be intentionally homeless the local authority should seek to find solutions to the person's homelessness and offer support to address any difficulties that they face.

Removal of priority need (Scotland) 2012

It may reasonably be concluded, to borrow a legal metaphor, that the ‘jury is still out’ on the relative benefits and disbenefits of legalistic rights to housing for homeless people.....there is a ‘moral hazard’ intrinsic to the statutory homelessness framework, whereby it generates ‘perverse incentives’ for households to have themselves defined as homeless in order to gain priority access to social housing

The ‘Right to Housing’ for Homeless People Fitzpatrick et al 2010