

Research says tackling homelessness early is cost-effective

July 28 2015



A study by researchers at the University of York and Crisis shows how intervening to help people when they first become homeless makes good economic sense, saving between £3,000 and £18,000 for every person helped.

Researchers in the Centre for Housing Policy used scenarios based on large scale studies of [homeless](#) adults across Britain, to estimate costs to public services incurred as a result of people being homeless for 12 months.

Their report, "The Financial Costs of Single Homelessness in the UK," looked at costs for the same person if their homelessness is resolved

quickly or prevented and compares the results. In all scenarios, the longer someone is homeless, the greater the financial cost.

Its author, Nicholas Pleace, a Senior Research Fellow at CHP, said: "We are only just beginning to understand what the true economic cost of homelessness is to British society. The potential human costs of homelessness, ranging from risks to mental and physical health through to no longer having a fair chance in life once homelessness has been experienced, have long been apparent.

"Drawing on earlier work from the USA and Australia and our own work across the European Union as part of the European Observatory of Homelessness, this new research supported by Professor Dennis P. Culhane of the University of Pennsylvania, estimates the true financial costs of homelessness in the UK.

"A key finding from these estimates of the financial total cost, based on earlier CHP research on Housing First in the UK and the Crisis Skylight Programme for [homeless people](#), is that sustained homelessness can lead to significant, additional financial costs for the public purse. Preventing and resolving homelessness rapidly not only reduces the human costs of homelessness, but may also significantly lessen public expenditure on this most acute form of poverty and social marginalisation. "

Ligia Teixeira, Head of Research and Evaluation at Crisis added:

"Homelessness has a terrible human cost, but it's also incredibly expensive for the public purse. Helping people to stay off the streets and rebuild their lives is about basic social justice – it's the right thing to do – and this study shows that it makes good economic sense too.

"The logic is clear: preventing homelessness saves lives, but also reduces public costs. It's essential that homeless people get help at an early stage. Yet we know from previous research that single homeless people who

ask their councils for help are often turned away with no choice but to sleep on the streets. This can be catastrophic for the individual, but it's also a false economy for [public](#) services. We urgently need a review of the law as it applies to single homeless people so that everyone can get the help they need."

Provided by University of York

Citation: Research says tackling homelessness early is cost-effective (2015, July 28) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-07-tackling-homelessness-early-cost-effective.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.