



Dutch National Action Plan on Homelessness: Housing First

2023-2030



In the photo on the front page, Cloud (24) is playing with dog Tim in the room where she now sleeps. Cloud, who in her day job is a youth ambassador for Amnesty International, cannot live with her parents because it would not be safe to do so. She left home when she was 16.

Paula (68) lives in a large house in the centre of Amsterdam. Because she believes that, given the current housing crisis, it is wrong to leave living space unused, Cloud is temporarily living in the room of one of Paula's sons, who left home some time ago.

Photo: Boudewijn Bollmann
Initiative: Het Beelddepot

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Foreword

There are too many homeless people in the Netherlands. These people don't have a house to go back to. But, like all of us, they need somewhere that they can call their own, somewhere where they can feel at home. Many of these young people and adults have talked to me about their experiences. And the voice of people who have been in this situation themselves is crucial to ensuring an effective strategy to tackle this problem. Because they know more than anyone what is needed.

I was really moved by the stories of what they have been through. The huge obstacle that they faced when seeking help, for example. I also talked to people who were forced, through debts, to give up their homes and people who felt that the authorities weren't listening to them when they were trying to get their lives back on track. Each of these stories is unique but the one thing these people have in common is the need to be seen and heard sooner, and to have (or keep) their own home.

It is time for a new approach. One that takes a fundamentally different look at what is needed. An approach that focuses on the prevention of homelessness and a home for everyone. This calls for a paradigm shift. While the current policy on homelessness often relates primarily to the policy on temporary accommodation, the Dutch National Action Plan on Homelessness: Housing First (2023-2030), requires a shift in focus: from temporary accommodation to assisted living. From homeless people as 'temporary accommodation clients', to people who need a home of their own. From homelessness as an individual problem, to homelessness as a phenomenon that we can only resolve together. Because, clearly, preventing and solving the problem of homelessness involves not just housing but also financial security, prevention and an accessible government.

The Plan therefore considers all these different aspects of life. It is crucial that we all work together on this. Because only then can we ensure that, by 2030, everyone in the Netherlands has a home.



Maarten van Ooijen,

State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sport,

Coordinating Minister for the Dutch National Action Plan on Homelessness: Housing First (2023-2030)

1. Ambition: by 2030, everyone has a home

“I started couchsurfing on my 16th birthday. I was invisible to the system and was sent from pillar to post. I was too young to stay in the night shelter or to apply for benefits. I was ‘too complex’ for a youth care institution. Over that period I was also refused for clinical treatment several times due to the problems that I had developed over the years. Nowhere wanted me.”

Background

Over the past ten years the number of homeless people has increased significantly. As a result of this, the government has focused heavily on preventing and reducing homelessness. Between 2019 and 2021 the government set up two temporary programmes: the broad-ranging action plan ‘A Home, A Future (Een (T)huis, een Toekomst)’¹, and the Action Programme on Homeless Young People (Actieprogramma dak- en thuisloze jongeren)². The advisory report of the Council of Public Health & Society (Raad voor Volksgezondheid en Samenleving) ‘Recovery starts with a home’ (‘Herstel begint met een huis’)³ was an important point of departure for these programmes. The crux of this report was that a structurally different approach to tackling homelessness was required: the foundation of every support pathway must be a home of your own, not temporary accommodation. This was in line with the advisory report of the Dannenberg commission⁴, which states that social inclusion of people with psychosocial vulnerabilities is key.

An effective approach to tackling homelessness requires a sustainable long-term strategy. A strategy in which essential themes such as financial security and sufficient affordable housing are part of the solution. Consequently, this Plan goes beyond one term of government, i.e. from 2023 to 2030. Homelessness is approached in an integrated way, putting the structural causes of homelessness at its heart: financial insecurity and the shortage of affordable housing. This Action Plan relates to all lawful residents of the Netherlands who have social problems and an urgent need for housing. It does not relate to people who do not have a residence permit, they are covered by immigration policy.

This policy plan is unique. It has been drawn up in conjunction with the entire sector and with people who have first-hand experience of the situations involved. Because they know what is needed. Because they have an understanding of the situation that most policymakers in ministries do not. The aim was to draw up a broad plan with which people can readily identify⁵. The guiding principles, action lines, objectives and intended results have been established through an intensive process. Hundreds of people have been involved in the drafting of this Action Plan. With so many partners, interests and perspectives, this was no easy task. We had to find the right balance from a wide range of different views. As will be clear from reading the Plan, not all of the input could be included. But the essence remains: to end homelessness by 2030 by focusing heavily on prevention and housing. You can read more about the drafting of this Action Plan in Chapter 4.

1 See: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2020/06/03/kamerbrief-over-een-thuis-een-toekomst-de-aanpak-van-dak-en-thuisloosheid>

2 See: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2019/03/14/actieprogramma-dak-en-thuisloze-jongeren-2019-2021>

3 See: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2020/04/22/herstel-begint-met-een-huis>

4 See: https://vng.nl/files/vng/van-beschermd-wonen_20151109.pdf

5 Wherever possible, we have tried to avoid the use of overly official language, because this Plan must be understandable and accessible to all.

Ambition

The Dutch National Action Plan on Homelessness: Housing First is committed to achieving a paradigm shift in the way in which we approach and deal with homelessness. The Plan aims to significantly and structurally reduce homelessness in the Netherlands, in line with the ambition of the Lisbon Declaration⁶ to end homelessness by 2030. This requires significant effort and commitment from a wide range of partners, both now and over the next few years. It calls for a different way of working and thinking. By investing in a plan which puts far greater emphasis on a preventive approach, the hope is that, in the future, managing homelessness after the event will be a thing of the past. Many people have become used to temporary accommodation as a short-term, but logical emergency solution. But we must now firmly change the focus to prevention and 'first a house, then recovery'. Prevention and housing, therefore, are the two main pillars of this Action Plan. Because research and experience tells us that a person's own home is the best place to start when working on their recovery and the building of a new future. In addition, in the short and long term, preventing homelessness will reduce expenditure on temporary accommodation spaces, welfare benefits, care bodies, police and justice.⁷

In short, a stable home allows problems to be resolved more successfully. A home is a crucial point of departure for all areas, whether it be tackling an addiction, finding work or resolving psychological problems. Success in this regard is not only in the interests of the individual but also in the interests of society as a whole. So people can re-engage with society as quickly as possible, in accordance with their own wishes and abilities.

The solutions, we believe, lie in giving control, voice and responsibility to the individuals concerned, financial security and prevention, the strengthening of implementation practice and services, and housing as point of departure in policy and implementation. This means a system change which requires the commitment not only of the lead municipalities for temporary accommodation and assisted residential living but of all municipalities and partners throughout the Netherlands. It requires a radical change in the way we think and act, and effective regional collaboration. This Action Plan explains how we will achieve this.

By signing the Lisbon Declaration, the Netherlands has committed itself to the ambition of ending homelessness by 2030 and to working, among other things, on the objectives below. The measures in this Plan contribute to these objectives:

1. Homeless people do not sleep rough due to a lack of accessible, safe and appropriate emergency or interim accommodation.
2. Nobody stays in an emergency or interim facility longer than is strictly necessary for a successful transition to a sustainable stable housing solution.
3. Nobody is discharged from an institution (prison, hospital, care institution) without an offer of appropriate stable accommodation, i.e. not temporary accommodation (homeless shelter or hostels).
4. Evictions are avoided wherever possible and nobody is evicted without help to find an appropriate sustainable housing solution.
5. Nobody is discriminated against due to their homeless status.

Finally, it is important to mention the current housing crisis and the economic and political situation. The war in Ukraine has led to rising energy costs and hyperinflation. Measures are being taken in this regard (e.g. the cost-of-living support package (koopkrachtpakket)), and the National Housing and Building Agenda is designed to ensure more affordable housing. But there still is a risk that more people than anticipated end up homeless. We are doing everything we possibly can to avoid this, but this situation may have an impact on the Action Plan on Homelessness. At the time of writing, it is not yet possible to determine the extent to which these external factors will impact on the achievement of the objectives.

6 See: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_3044

7 See Mackie, 2013; Berry et al., 2003; Evans et al., 2016.



1.1. Six guiding principles as national compass

We know from other European countries that efforts to tackle homelessness are most successful when rigorous choices are made in the thinking around homelessness. Consequently, six guiding principles based on the values of the Housing First approach and existing recommendations such as those of the Council of Public Health and Society (RVS) and the Dannenberg commission have been drawn up for this Plan. Prevention, Housing First and giving the resident control are key here. In this Dutch approach, we refer consistently to *Housing First* ('Wonen Eerst' in Dutch). We use Housing First as a system approach.

The six interrelated guiding principles set out below will form the compass for national policy over the next few years. They will constitute the benchmark for national, regional and local policy on the basis of which we will work towards achievement of the objectives under this Action Plan. This means that we will launch, boost and accelerate the transition process on the basis of the six guiding principles. These principles serve as a dot on the horizon: they are guiding principles towards which we work but which are not yet reality everywhere. The transition will not be achieved overnight because it requires changes in culture, behaviour and attitude from many different partners.

1. Preventing homelessness is always better than temporary accommodation or rehousing

Homelessness is often caused by a combination of events. In almost all cases, with the right approach, homelessness can be prevented. Over the next few years, the government will improve and strengthen financial security. We are working on a situation whereby everyone can participate according to their abilities, with a foundation of financial security for everyone and the prospect of progress and participation. In addition, more specific measures are needed for people who are under threat of becoming homeless. These measures are always better than temporary accommodation or rehousing.

2. Housing is a human right

Housing makes independent living possible. Stable housing prevents homelessness in the first place. Homeless people do not need to prove that they are 'ready' to have their own home or to 'earn' it. People can live in an environment which is as homely as possible for them as quickly as possible, ideally immediately without having to live in temporary or other interim accommodation first. Health and social problems are tackled most effectively when housing is stable and safe.

3. Respect for people's own choice and control

People who are homeless or who are at risk of becoming homeless are valuable residents with rights and obligations just like any other resident. They can make independent decisions on matters that concern them. The person themselves is central to every decision that affects their lives: they make choices themselves and are responsible for them. As long as they fulfil their rights and obligations like other residents, e.g. they pay their rent and don't cause a nuisance to others, they will not be forced to do something or be evicted or threatened with eviction. If a person doesn't want to give up substance abuse completely, they will not be forced to do so. Instead, it is enough to aim to reduce the substance abuse and the damage caused by psychiatric symptoms, so the occupant can continue to live in their own home.

4. Separation of housing and care

(Access to) housing is separate from care and treatment. No requirements are imposed that do not apply to other citizens also, in so far as the safety and quality of life of a community so allows. A home is crucial in enabling people to manage and take control of their own lives, together with their circle of friends and family. Having your own home makes you feel more engaged with broader society. The occupant is given help to maintain and restore contact with immediate networks such as family. It is essential that welfare services form part of the basic package of social care. For some people, the best model for independent living is a standard rented apartment, while for others it is a mixed living project, supported housing or assisted residential living where support is available 24 hours a day⁸. It is important that the resident has a choice and always feels that they are the owner of the decision, and that the decision is acceptable to both the resident and the local community.

5. Support focuses on recovery

Recovery is the process of enabling people to live, work, learn and participate in society in their own way (once again). The recovery process is unique and personal. This requires support which does not try to control but which helps improve people's lives. People with first-hand experience play a crucial role in the shaping of support. Interaction with people focuses on the building of trust, which helps people recover on their own terms. Taking risks is part of the process, making mistakes is part of development: they provide opportunities for growth and increase trust. The aim of dialogue and interaction is always to find solutions together. This often calls for a new way of working.

6. Support is flexible and tailored to individual needs

A home is just the start of the recovery process. If a person is to be able to successfully live independently, support may be required over a long period of time. That doesn't necessarily mean that there is always a need for intensive support but the support that is required is often long term. The needs and life goals of the client are key, in so far as they can be fulfilled within the context of a comfortable, safe living environment. This places considerable demands on the relationship between professional, support provider, friends and family and the person themselves, because the support provided must be in line with these needs and goals. We are committed to effective support and training of professionals, friends and family and recovery groups, the involvement of people with first-hand experience and client-led rehabilitation.

⁸ In line with the respect for people's own choice, care partners, corporation and resident may also agree that a party other than the client will (temporarily) guarantee the rent.

1.2. Six action lines

Six objectives, known as action lines, have been defined for the Action Plan on Homelessness 2023-2030. These are based on the guiding principles and the valuable input from the many partners and stakeholders. The action lines are described in more detail in the next chapter, together with the objective to be achieved by 2030. The six action lines are:



1. Strengthening of financial security

An adequate income is a prerequisite for having a home. Consequently, financial security is an important aspect of housing and the separation of housing and care. It is a condition for working on the prevention of homelessness.

Objective: Guaranteeing of a minimum income.



2. Prevention

A successful preventive approach to homelessness works on social inclusion. This means that housing, income, access to care, empowerment, informal care and basic social services must all be in order.

The image of homeless people must change: it can happen to anyone and it is a problem that affects us all.

Objective: Homelessness is prevented at all times.



3. Housing First

Recovery, relapse prevention and the prevention of homelessness starts with stable housing. This means that, over the next few years, temporary accommodation will be phased out wherever possible. People must be able to access a stable place to live with the support that they need with as few interim stages as possible. Finland is the only country in Europe which has structurally reduced homelessness and this has primarily been achieved by rigorously applying Housing First as a system-wide approach⁹.

Objective: Everyone has a stable place to live or is helped into a solution as homely as possible, with suitable support where necessary.



4. Strengthening of implementation practice: coordination of all aspects of life, speed and the human dimension are key

Integrated working and the provision of rapid support is a prerequisite for reducing homelessness. This applies at every level: national, regional and local. Effective collaboration between the physical, safety, medical and social domains is also crucial. Professionals must be able to do what is needed to provide support quickly.

Objective: Professionals in implementation practice can provide fast, integrated support tailored to individual needs.



5. First-hand knowledge throughout the policy cycle, at local and national level

Making use of first-hand knowledge and experience is the key to more effective policy and better services. The use of first-hand knowledge and experience helps narrow the gap that has developed between the real world and the 'system world' and to increase trust between government and citizen. First-hand knowledge is used throughout the policy cycle, i.e. both when developing policy and when evaluating policy at local and national level. People with first-hand knowledge are also used during implementation, in contacts with people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Objective: First-hand knowledge and experience is used throughout the policy cycle, at local and national level.



6. Additional input for specific target groups

Homeless people and people who are at risk of becoming homeless are extremely diverse. Sometimes, additional actions are needed to meet the needs of specific groups. This Action Plan focuses specifically on the following extra vulnerable groups: young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, homeless members of the LGBTIQ+ community and homeless EU citizens. Evolving insights may mean that a new group is identified during the course of the Action Plan.

Objective: Where the generic approach is inadequate for specific target groups, additional input is provided, and extra vulnerable groups are provided with suitable support.

⁹ See: <https://demoshelsinki.fi/julkaisut/housing-first-a-new-systems-perspective/>



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In this series of photos by photographer Wiosna van Bon, three young people provide an insight into their lives and their day-to-day activities.

1.3. Collaboration with other national programmes and developments

If homelessness is to be tackled successfully, we must collaborate effectively with a number of different areas and programmes within different ministries. Consequently, we are working closely with the following areas and programmes:

Action Plan on Money Worries, Poverty and Debt and A Participation Act that puts people first (Participatiewet in balans) (Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment)

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW) plays a key role in strengthening people's financial security. It does this in a number of different ways. Firstly, financial security features in the coalition agreement "looking out for each other, looking forward to the future". Secondly, it features in the Action Plan on Money Worries, Poverty and Debt. And, thirdly, it features in the measures that the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment is taking to ensure that the Participation Act puts people first. Finally, an independent commission has been set up to look into a review of the 'social minimum'.

Cost-of-living support package (Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment)

At the time of writing, the Netherlands is facing high inflation, due in part to the war in Ukraine and rising energy prices. Households with the lowest incomes are the least able to absorb financial shocks. This group is hit hardest in every crisis. Consequently, in 2022, a cost-of-living support package was launched to provide both one-off and structural support to these groups. This includes, among other things, support for a (temporary) price cap, a reduction in energy bills and an energy allowance. In addition, the care allowance and the rent allowance are being increased and the statutory minimum wage is being increased by 10.15%. This should provide relief for households. Funds have also been released for additional and one-off initiatives in the field of poverty and debt. The funds are intended, on the one hand, for specific measures (such as food banks, initiatives that enable children to participate in school and society) and, on the other, for additional capacity, speed and efficiency in the provision of debt support. For some households this may not be sufficient. The government has therefore set up a temporary emergency fund to help people who, in spite of all the measures taken, still cannot afford to pay their energy bills.

Housing for vulnerable groups: A Home for Everyone (Een thuis voor iedereen) (Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK), in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW), the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS) and the Ministry of Justice and Security (J&V))

The 'A Home for Everyone' programme is an intergovernmental programme which focuses on the housing of vulnerable groups. Homeless young people and adults are one of the vulnerable groups within this programme. The basic principle here is that, as well as agreements around housing, agreements are also made around the care and support that is needed. Because, for a number of vulnerable groups, care and support are a prerequisite for independent living. This Plan sets out further details concerning this vulnerable group in particular, thereby contributing to achievement of the objectives of 'A Home for Everyone', and vice versa.

Assisted Living at Home (Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS), Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG))

The transition from Assisted Residential Living (Beschermd Wonen) to Assisted Living at Home (Beschermd Thuis) cannot be seen in isolation from this Action Plan. The objectives of this transition largely correspond to those of the Action Plan on Homelessness: people with a psychosocial vulnerability must be able to participate as far as possible in society as equal citizens through having their own home in the community. If there is to be a sustainable transition to high-quality, accessible and affordable support in the places where people need it, clearly the Action Plan on Homelessness must be approached in conjunction with the decentralisation of responsibility for Assisted Residential Living to all municipalities and the transition from Assisted Residential Living to Assisted Living at Home. Clearly therefore, the logical thing to do is to coordinate the transformation of Temporary Accommodation and Assisted Residential Living and this is already under way in many regions.

The human dimension and strengthening of implementation practice (Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, Ministry of Justice and Security and Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations)

In order to avoid the recurrence of terrible situations like the childcare benefit scandal, the government is working on improving public services and, thereby, hopefully on the restoration of trust. Rules can and must be simpler and less rigid, so that, for example, people who are entitled to benefits don't immediately run into problems if they receive a small overpayment. The current government is keen to restore trust between citizens and government. The government wants to be reliable, has trust in its citizens and takes into account the human dimension. A democratic legal order is an essential pillar of society and overall prosperity. This is a highly relevant theme under the Action Plan on Homelessness and we seek to work together on this with the Work on Implementation (WaU, Werk aan Uitvoering) programme, which aims to improve public services¹⁰. Among other things, the WaU programme will investigate how collaboration in government-wide services or the organisation of essential tailored services works, any problems that exist in this regard, and how we can improve these integrated services further where necessary. So that citizens know what they are dealing with and what they can expect from the government.

1.4. Reader's guide

The content of this Action Plan follows the experiences of the homeless young people and adults who have helped to draw up this Plan. These experiences are used as the point of departure for each chapter. The sequence of starting points and objectives follows the route that is often taken on the road to homelessness: from a normal life with no or few problems to ever more complex problems and a long way back. Clearly, every individual and situation is unique but, at the same time, there are similarities in their experiences which are important in the context of changes to policy. So, in this Plan, we make the lives of people who are experiencing these problems a little more tangible for those in the 'system world', and we make it clear why specific choices are so important if our ambition is to be achieved. As well as these six action lines, this Action Plan will explore prerequisites such as governance, monitoring, finance and knowledge and innovation.

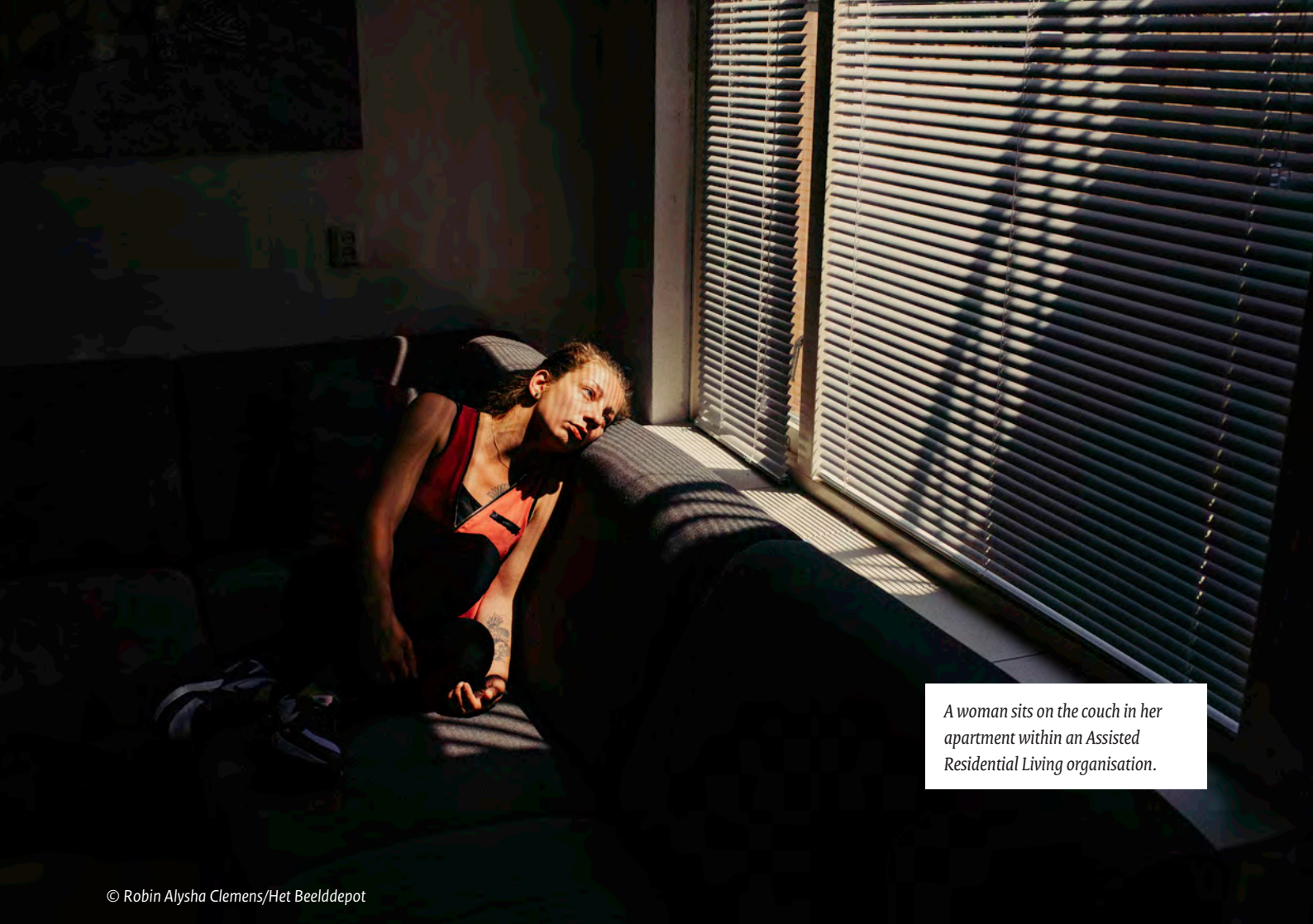
¹⁰ For more information, see: <https://www.werkaanuitvoering.nl/over-werk-aan-uitvoering>

2. Working together on six action lines

In this chapter we present the six action lines, specifying the concrete objectives, intended results and necessary activities for each action line. As far as possible, we have focused more on the 'what' and less on the 'how' – it is up to the local and regional collaboration partners to shape the action lines based on the local context. For each action line, we also indicate which players are the (main) owners and whether the actions are being taken in the short or longer term.

Action lines





A woman sits on the couch in her apartment within an Assisted Residential Living organisation.

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2.1. Action line 1 Strengthening of financial security: guaranteeing of a minimum income



→ **SZW, BZK, VNG, municipalities, implementing organisations, social partners**

“I should have got Wajong benefit, disability benefit for young people. But, according to my carer at the time, if you can make a sandwich you are no longer entitled to it. Even though I had dropped out of school countless times over the years, lost many jobs and ended up homeless on multiple occasions because I couldn’t look after myself. So we basically didn’t apply for that benefit because I needed money quickly and the process for getting Wajong took far too long. Also, I would then have to pay the benefit back retrospectively and I was horrified by that idea because my mother had been in a similar situation and ended up owing thousands of euros. It might have been helpful if both I and the people who worked in the homeless hostel had had more information about my rights.”

Financial problems and lack of participation - often caused by major life events - are key causes of homelessness. With uncertain incomes, rising costs and inadequate financial buffers, many people are finding it hard to make ends meet in 2022. And the complexity of the benefits system and a flexible labour market are also causing people to get into financial difficulties. Having an adequate income is a prerequisite for having a home. So, financial security is inextricably linked with the focus on housing. It is a condition for working on the prevention of homelessness in young people and adults.

2.1.1. Collaboration of Action Plan on Homelessness with Action Plan on Money Worries, Poverty and Debt and A Participation Act that puts people first (Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, SZW)

Within the Action Plan on Homelessness, in the field of financial security, we collaborate in two programmes which are led by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment: the 'Action Plan on Money Worries, Poverty and Debt' (Aanpak geldzorgen, armoede en schulden) and 'A Participation Act that puts people first' (Participatiewet in balans). These initiatives help improve the financial security of many Dutch citizens, particularly those on low incomes. Unfortunately, these people, particularly if they work part time or on a flexible contract, are the most likely to experience money worries, poverty and debt¹¹ and, as a result, are more likely to live in unstable housing and ultimately to end up homeless. In addition to these programmes, financial security is strengthened through the cost-of-living support package. This raises the statutory minimum wage by 10.15%, for example, and also increases care and rent benefit and child benefit.

Action Plan on Money Worries, Poverty and Debt

Under the Action Plan on Money Worries, Poverty and Debt, work is undertaken on the following action lines which aim, broadly, to reduce the risk of homelessness:

1. Greater financial and income security: an adequate, stable income is essential.
2. Prevention of money worries: good information from an early age, in all phases of life and close to hand, so people can make the right financial choices.
3. A government that works for people and provides readily accessible, user-friendly, people-focused financial help and socially responsible debt collection.
4. Take measures to break the cycle of (generational) poverty so everyone can participate and progress.
5. Ensure that more people receive earlier and better debt support and have the prospect of a financially secure future sooner.

In concrete terms this means, among other things, initiating overarching actions, such as a preventive focus on life events in order to prevent money worries. Work is also being done to combat poverty by strengthening income security, addressing failure to apply for benefits to which you are entitled, making work pay and preventing poverty traps. As far as debt is concerned, the focus, among other things, is on the further development of joint public debt collection facilities (whereby a single payment arrangement can be set up to pay all public debts that are owing), and intensification of the early detection of debt problems¹².

Good example: Financial security, Municipality of Tilburg

The Municipality of Tilburg has been working with a new vision for financial security since 2020. The municipality takes a broad approach to financial security. In 2020 the Municipality of Tilburg's welfare advisers started making house visits and actively looking for the target group through various locations. Every year they want to talk to 250 people on low incomes, up to 130 per cent of the guaranteed minimum income. These include, for example, people who are on a small (state) pension or who have a job where they work only a small number of hours. The Municipality of Tilburg actively seeks them out and enters into a dialogue with them over finance, health and any other issues that may be affecting them. The aim is to offer them suitable support or a pathway, each individual will have different needs. The advisers start by looking at how they can improve the person's situation in the short term (through an energy coach, for example, or help with making an application). The adviser and the person concerned then look together for structural solutions and ways of improving the person's income situation.

¹¹ See: <https://www.cpb.nl/stresstest-kosten-van-levensonderhoud>

¹² For a detailed description of actions, see the factsheet on the poverty plan at <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/brochures/2022/07/13/factsheet-armoedeplan>

A Participation Act that puts people first

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment is also taking steps to improve the human dimension of the Participation Act¹³. The aim of this Act is to provide people who are in difficulty with income support through the benefits system and to help them back into (part-time) work. Many young people and adults who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless receive support under the Participation Act. Moreover, it is a well-known fact that people who make use of support available through the Participation Act are often more likely to experience debt, money worries and poverty. The 'A Participation Act that puts people first' initiative will help give people greater financial security. Human dimension, trust and simplification are key values here. By giving implementing professionals more scope for tailoring according to a person's individual needs, they can respond more to people's own particular situation, thereby aligning with the guiding principles of this approach.

One important measure is raising the age for the cost-sharing rule (kostendelersnorm) from 21 to 27 for young adults living who live at home. As of January 2023, the cost-sharing rule will be changed to apply to young people up to the age of 27 who live at home. Work is also being done to make (part-time) work more financially advantageous for people on benefits, with a view to enabling more people to become independent of benefits.

Finally, over the forthcoming period, work will be done to remove obstacles, so that young people in vulnerable situations can be helped quickly and as effectively as possible on the road to independence.

Actions

Actions 1 to 8 below are being tackled in Strand 1 of the 'A Participation Act that puts people first' programme, while Actions 9 to 12 are part of the Action Plan on Money Worries, Poverty and Debt. The packages are more comprehensive¹⁴; we list below the key aspects in terms of the Action Plan on Homelessness, which are expected to have a positive impact on homeless people and people who are at risk of homelessness and professionals who work with them. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW) leads on these actions and is working on them in conjunction with the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG), municipalities and numerous partners throughout the Netherlands.

1. Adjustment of the 4-week search period for young people up to the age of 27 (SZW)

By creating a 'can' clause rather than an obligation, in cases where the 4-week search period¹⁵ has a negative impact, arrangements tailored to the individual's needs can be offered. This is particularly beneficial in the case of the provision of support to young people in a vulnerable position. Young people remain more visible to the municipality, which may help prevent escalation (e.g. homelessness).

2. Codify in law the fact that, in the case of a stay which is presumed to be temporary in nature, the cost-sharing rule does not apply (SZW)

This ensures that the previous appeal to municipalities to ensure that the individual concerned is not designated as a cost-sharer in the case of a stay which is presumed to be temporary in nature is codified in law¹⁶. This means that if someone in a crisis situation lives with someone who is in receipt of benefits for a temporary period of time, from now onwards, that person's benefit payments will no longer be reduced. This may apply, for example, to people in a crisis situation, homeless people or people who are at risk of becoming homeless.

3. Harmonisation of the amount of the additional special benefit paid to young people whose parents are absent or who cannot offer support due to illness or poverty (SZW)

The young adults rule (for 18-21 olds) assumes parental support. If this parental support is not available, the young person is entitled to special benefit. This varies significantly from one municipality to another. This creates legal uncertainty. Harmonising the regulation¹⁷ removes this legal uncertainty. Removing this uncertainty provides a firmer foundation for the services that are provided to this group of vulnerable young people in other areas.

¹³ For a description of all the measures announced to make the Participation Act more user friendly, see <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2022/06/21/bijlage-rapport-participatiewet-in-balans>

¹⁴ For the full package of measures, see the factsheet <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/brochures/2022/07/13/factsheet-armoedepplan>

¹⁵ 4-week search period: Before applying to the municipality for benefits, young people up to the age of 27 must look for training or a job over a 4-week period. After this search period, they can submit a final application for benefits.

¹⁶ Codification is the establishment in legislation of case-law or existing implementation practice.

¹⁷ In this case, harmonisation means creating a minimum amount below which the provision for young people who have to live away from home must not go but, because a tailor-made approach is still important, municipalities can depart from this.

4. Creation of the option to grant category-based special benefits (SZW)

By creating the option of granting category-based special benefits in situations to be designated by Order in Council, it is possible to respond more flexibly to broader requirements for income support, as was the case recently (e.g. the Energy allowance). It also creates greater legal certainty for the individuals concerned.

5. Increase in the limits for additional earnings (measure from coalition agreement) (SZW)

A broader application of the exemption of income from employment makes (part-time) working more attractive. Work is a step on the ladder towards independence from benefits. More work also means more opportunities for the target group to free themselves from the situation they are in. For people for whom part-time work is the maximum that is achievable, there remains a financial incentive to continue working. In addition, municipalities now have the option of applying the exemption to vulnerable young people also.

6. In urgent situations, depart from the principle that application date is start date.

It can happen that people who apply for benefits have had hardly any income for several months before they apply for benefits. This can lead to them building up large amounts of debt. Consequently, in urgent situations, it is now possible to enable benefit payments to be made before the benefit is applied for.

7. Receipts from gifts and occasional hobby-related sales.

Recipients of benefits can receive gifts (including gifts in kind) up to an amount of €1,200.

8. More scope for taking account of individual circumstances when imposing measures.

The current system of measures currently provides for significant standard reductions in benefit payments in the event of failure to comply with obligations. A reduction of 100 per cent has a major impact on someone who is surviving on benefits. Consequently, it is now possible to differentiate these reductions according to the individual circumstances.

9. Early detection and debt support (SZW)

- Intensification of early detection of debt problems. From 2023 onwards, additional structural funding for municipalities for early detection.
- Consider the position of public creditors in the provision of debt support and debt restructuring, so an agreement can be reached more quickly. Spreading the repayment capacity more evenly across all creditors means that private creditors, including small businesses, have to write off fewer debts. This can reduce financial risks.
- Experiment with early detection for additional signs, such as mortgage arrears, municipal tax arrears, tax and benefit/allowance arrears and study arrears.
- Payment arrangements available to everyone. Encourage payment arrangements and personal contact between creditor and debtor.
- In debt collection cases, the court has the option of setting up payment arrangements. A draft proposal for consultation is being drawn up.
- Better regulation of fraudulent debt mediators Regulation (to enable administrative enforcement).
- National Debt Administration Platform (Landelijk Platform Schuldenbewind) - Strengthen collaboration between debt administration, debt support and statutory debt restructuring. Encourage transfer from debt administration to municipal debt support to resolve debts.
- Strengthening of the links between care providers, welfare with debt support and municipal credit banks.

10. Socially responsible debt collection (SZW)

- Socially responsible debt collection and bailiff activities are improved through more intensive collaboration between debt collectors, bailiffs and debt support providers. It is being investigated how a social tariff and business model can be achieved, including the standardisation of out-of-court debt collection charges.
- Joint public debt collection facilities. Intensify collaboration between debt collection facilities with a view to providing joint services in the out-of-court phase, such as a single joint payment arrangement for public debts and an overview of amounts owing to the government for individuals, businesses and support providers. This avoids debts mounting up unnecessarily.

11. Apply tried and tested debt interventions (SZW)

- Identify and scale up tried and tested approaches such as Geldzorgenlab, SchuldenlabNL and Preventie-aanpak and experiment with new forms of finance. Sometimes, with rapid financial support, far more major problems can be avoided. That is why we encourage experimentation with new forms of finance, which can make money available for support or services easily.
- Debt respite - Evaluation of broad moratorium has started. Municipalities have been asked to make use of the debt support notification index (VISH) (free of charge). Municipalities that provide debt support to residents can indicate this in the VISH, so a bailiff knows not to bother them. This creates what is known as a debt pause. Based on the experiences of the municipalities of Amsterdam, Eindhoven and The Hague and the NVVK (Netherlands Association for Debt Relief Assistance and Social Banking) with deferral of payment (pause button (pauzeknop), emergency stop (noodstop)), work out how this approach can be scaled up at national level.

12. Rent reduction for low incomes and rent benefit (BZK)

- The rent reduction for tenants on a low income in a housing corporation property was originally due to take place in 2024 but is being brought forward a year to July 2023. On average, this will reduce the rent for this group by €57 a month. The rent reduction to €550 (price level 2020) applies to tenants living in social housing provided by a housing corporation and with an income of up to 120% of the 'social minimum'.
- Due to a lower own contribution, from January 2023 onwards, recipients of rent benefit will receive an additional rent benefit of €16.94 a month. In addition, the impact of the increase in the statutory minimum wage will result in a further increase in rent benefit for some recipients.

The above actions contribute to:

The results below should be achieved through the comprehensive package of measures under the Action Plan on Money Worries, Poverty and Debt. In this Plan we outline the key points which are relevant to the Action Plan on Homelessness.

1. A halving of the number of people in poverty by 2030 (compared with 2015).
2. A halving of the number of children who grow up in poverty by 2025 (compared with 2015).
3. A halving of the number of households with problematic debts by 2030. This contributes to the goal of halving the number of people in poverty.

"I often take a sandwich with me from the refuge. That way I always have something to eat during the day." - Anonymous



2.2. Action line 2 Prevention: homelessness should be prevented at all times



- **VWS, SZW, BZK, J&V, OCW (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science),**
- **municipalities, corporations, care providers, welfare organisations**

The point of departure of national policy is the prevention of homelessness. A successful preventive approach to tackling homelessness essentially focuses on social inclusion. It is crucial in this context to work on the essentials that people need in their day-to-day lives. I.e.: housing, a purpose for the day (work or school), care and health, secure finances or help with this, and informal support and relationships¹⁸. If the essentials that people need to live and their sources of empowerment and informal care are not in order, people will continue to drop out of society. Since prevention increases people's chances of work, participation and their sense of empowerment, their well-being improves and the likelihood that they will need to rely on support decreases.

If prevention policy is to be effective, it is important that we use a broader definition of homelessness (see also the chapter on monitoring). Because prevention is not about people who are already homeless. We want to prevent people from becoming homeless. So we look at the groups that are at risk of becoming homeless. These are people who are in *unstable accommodation* (who are living on a temporary basis with family or friends, for example, or who don't have a tenancy agreement, and people who are living with the threat of domestic violence) and people living in *inadequate accommodation*, such as people who live at an address that is not officially registered (e.g. holiday homes) or who live in unconventional or unsuitable accommodation (camper vans, squats)¹⁹, and people who are discharged from an institution (prison, a mental health institution, temporary accommodation/assisted residential living and youth care). It is important to work on both prevention and on recovery care so that an effective, comprehensive system of early detection and support types is available and dropouts and relapses are avoided. This starts with effective provision of information, client support and legal protection, access to facilities and services, up to and including investment in social care, assertive community care and outreach support in the community. It is also important to work on changing the image of homeless people and to counter the stigma of homelessness. The actions set out below in the field of stigma and access to good information are more generic solutions which apply more broadly to all citizens and professionals. The others are tailored to the target group: people at risk of becoming homeless and measures to prevent homelessness.

2.2.1. Countering stigmatising images

“I couldn't and still can't identify with the target group that I belonged to. Partly because of the lack of information on the options available to you if you're at risk of becoming homeless and partly because of the image people currently have of homeless people, I didn't realise how serious my situation was. Surely I didn't belong to that group of people? This meant that I started to play everything down, which made access to support and, as a result, recognition, even more difficult.”

Homeless people are extremely diverse. Often you can't tell from the outside that someone is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. A more positive and honest image will help to change ingrained stereotyping. Prejudice and stigma around homeless people does not help the transition that we are aiming for. If the transition to prevention, housing first and a smooth transfer into the community is to be successful, an honest and diverse image of homeless people and people who have been homeless is therefore crucial.

People often regard homelessness as an individual problem, and often think, without saying it, that it's the person's own fault that they are in that situation. As a result, citizens and organisations are inclined to avoid or exclude people who are or have been homeless. In addition, people who are homeless often take on board the negative perceptions that society has of them and apply them to themselves. As a result, stigmatisation can have significant negative consequences, such as anxiety, unemployment, low self-esteem, depression, hopelessness and the avoidance of professional help. Professionals - whether it be policymakers, care professionals, employees of corporations, municipal services or enforcers - often don't take the time to consider whether they themselves are (unintentionally) stigmatising people.

¹⁸ For specific actions designed to strengthen the essentials that people need to live, early intervention, recovery care and various forms of inclusive living, see the Guide for the Prevention of Homelessness (Gids voor Preventie van Dakloosheid) (Wolf & Scheepers, 2022 | Impuls Radboudumc). An appendix to the Guide provides an overview of [Information, interventions and practical examples for working on the prevention of homelessness](#). Both available through: www.preventie-alliantie.nl.

¹⁹ Edgar, B. (2012). The ETHOS definition and classification of homelessness and housing exclusion. *European Journal of Homelessness*, 6 (2), 219-225.

Being aware and changing the way we think and act can help everyone, including volunteers and local residents, play their part more effectively and make society more inclusive.

De-stigmatisation programmes are generally most successful when they do more locally (municipalities, but also in and through associations, community centres, church communities, workplace); set goals and priorities based on what people who are or have been homeless themselves say they need; include a major and ideally leading role for people with first-hand knowledge of the situation; ensure sustainable, local embedding and, as a result, continuity; ideally, focus information and education around stories of people's experiences, based on the power of personal recovery stories and with one or more elements of personal contact.

Actions:

1. 2023-2030: National campaign(s) on talking about mental health problems : links to homelessness and inclusion (tie in with 'Hey, are you okay?' and 'Loneliness' or 'A Healthy Mind') (VWS).
2. 2023: Adapt images used in the media and in Government webpages to photos that depict the current reality and diversity of people who are homeless (VWS, Fontys University of Applied Sciences/Beelddepot).
3. 2023-2024: (Further) develop and disseminate toolkit containing guidance for professionals on addressing the issue of stigma in the community (VWS, HVO Querido, Movisie).
4. 2024: Research into legislation and regulations that contribute to the stigmatisation of homeless people and people who are at risk of becoming homeless (VWS, J&V)

The above actions contribute to:

1. More realistic photos are used in the media and in Government communications (2025)
2. A more positive image of and awareness of homelessness in society as a whole; less resistance/less NIMBY effect²⁰ (2027).
3. Nobody is discriminated against due to their homeless status (Lisbon Declaration) (2030).

2.2.2. Good, readily accessible information on all aspects of life

“I didn't even know that I could do anything about it. I just thought, I haven't got a roof over my head, that's my problem. I didn't know that I could get help from the municipality. You don't know what you don't know.”

Access to good information is a prerequisite for making good choices. In the Netherlands, the healthcare sector, access to housing and financial and employment support is not organised in a user-friendly way. Homeless young people and adults and those at risk of becoming homeless often have problems in multiple aspects of their lives. Making information readily available in a central location, including information on rights and obligations, helps people and their friends and families understand better what is available to them.

Currently, information is provided in a fragmented way or is impossible to find. Information must be findable and accessible to everyone, and provided in a variety of different ways. A combination of digital locations and accessible physical walk-in facilities is essential. Whatever the issue, there must be an accessible walk-in facility in the community or location where people can go if they have a query regarding rights and obligations or if they want information on the five aspects of life. Homeless people and those at risk of becoming homeless live in a world of complex rules and regulations. In this complex legal/bureaucratic reality they often find it difficult to cope. Being able to understand and interpret these rules and regulations (also) requires legal knowledge. Independent client support workers can help homeless people and those at risk of becoming homeless find their way around the system of care and support, so they understand how the regulations work. In Amsterdam, for example, a Homeless Office (Daklozenkantoor) has been set up to act as a hub for the provision of support and information to homeless people and those at risk of becoming homeless and their families. A good example that relates to young adults is Kwikstart: this provides information on all aspects of life at national level and also gives municipalities the opportunity to sign up free of charge and add local information.

It is essential that these accessible walk-in facilities have well-trained independent client support workers who work in conjunction with professionals and experts with first-hand knowledge who are properly trained in positive treatment and early detection and who know their way around the system. This ensures that people (and their families) can find their way around the system more easily and make informed choices, know what their rights and obligations are and are directed to the help they need. In the context of prevention, for the younger target group, facilitating peer-to-peer programmes in schools, through youth support providers or in communities, e.g. MoneyWays and 'ben jij er klaar voor?' (are you ready for this) training courses, which address issues such as stigmatisation and taboo topics such as poverty, homelessness, (parents with) mental health problems or addiction, is also essential.

20 Not In My Backyard

Actions:

1. 2023-2025: Government ensures better communication and information which must be available nationwide at a single logical, findable location (VWS, SZW, BZK)
2. 2023-2025: Ensure that municipalities provide effective digital and physical information on the five aspects of life, rights and obligations and regulatory matters (VWS, VNG, municipalities).
3. 2023-2024: Identify and disseminate best practices in the provision of information which is tailored to the target group (VWS, BZK).
4. Young people: 2023-2025: Ensure that municipalities, schools and youth support providers make information available on becoming an adult, the 5 aspects of life and rights and obligations (SZW, OCW, mbo-raad, jeugdzorg NL).

The above actions contribute to:

1. The effective provision of accessible information by the Government and municipalities, so that citizens can find their way around: health and social care, housing, income and help with finances/debts, work, education and training and relationships, as well as their rights and obligations and the help that is available to them (2026).

2.2.3. Invest in good community support, independent client support and socio-legal advice

“It shouldn’t be that someone who needs help has to fight so hard to be heard. I was rejected because I was labelled as aggressive. You have to go to such lengths just to get help. I get that you have to help those who need help urgently, at that time. But it shouldn’t be that you’re taken away from a station on three occasions because you’re lower down a list. It’s only when you threaten to commit suicide that people take action. Should it really have to go that far before somebody helps you?”

A strong social foundation is crucial for quality of life and health and for preventing problems from escalating. Recovery, relapse prevention and the prevention of homelessness starts with stable housing. This requires the involvement of the local community: give people the chance and, where necessary, a helping hand. At the same time, the provision of good community support close to those who need it is essential. It is important to invest in expanding and strengthening the informal, personal network that surrounds people, the accessibility and quality of the professional network in the community, and a good link between them. Take, for example, independent living facilities with guaranteed community assistance, where community support, GPs and social (community) teams and/or social support hubs (Wmo-loket) work together, and the resident’s social network and volunteers are also involved. Inclusion is the main challenge here. That means living in as normal a way as possible, with community support tailored to the person’s individual needs and focused on independence and participation. If this is to be successfully achieved, it is essential that municipalities, community teams, corporations and care providers are properly equipped with the right knowledge and expertise. So they can provide this target group with appropriate and high-quality support and continuity, whilst maintaining quality of life in communities.

Debt buddies, buddy networks and people who have had mental health problems themselves (peer contact) can also make a valuable contribution to recovery and to preventing problems from escalating. Initiatives such as the Rustplek²¹, Onder de Pannen²² or Kamers met Aandacht²³, in which people make rooms available in their own homes can also make a huge difference, especially given the current shortages on the housing market. One of the guiding principles of this Action Plan is that, in order to ensure that housing and care are effectively separated, the resident is helped to maintain and restore contact with immediate networks such as family. This means that investing in professional support is a prerequisite for the success of the transition and the ambition.

It is also important to make it easier for people on low incomes to access to legal services. This can be done, for example, by providing better access to the municipality’s appeal mechanisms, or by providing independent client support, as a number of municipalities have done for this target group through street lawyers, for example. Municipalities feel an urgent need to improve their services, to provide more support to vulnerable people and to restore trust in the authorities.²⁴

²¹ See: <https://derustplek.nl/>

²² See: <https://www.onderdepannen.nl/>

²³ See: <https://kamersmetaandacht.nl/>

²⁴ The benefits scandal highlighted the fact that fair services and good legal protection cannot always be taken for granted. Since 2022 municipalities have received an additional 150 million euros at structural level to improve the services that they provide to people in vulnerable situations. This funding has been made available in the light of the findings of the Parliamentary Enquiry Committee on Childcare Benefits (POK).

Actions:

1. 2023-2024: Collect, compile and broadly share good examples of collaboration between housing corporations, support services and social services in the community (VWS, BZK, Aedes, VNG).
2. 2023: Identify and disseminate best practices for the provision of independent client support tailored to the needs of the target group (VWS, BZK).
3. Young people: 2023-2025: Encourage work with young people in schools in conjunction with people who have first-hand experience of the situation, identify potential problems and be able to refer to community social care teams (VWS, OCW).
4. 2023-2030: Make room for local meeting places in community building and development plans and integrate accessible (walk-in) recovery spaces/centres/academies (BZK, VNG, municipalities).
5. 2024-2026: In conjunction with the Ministry of Justice and Security (J&V), we are exploring how legal protection and user-friendly socio-legal services for homeless people and people at risk of becoming homeless can be strengthened (J&V, VWS, VNG/municipalities)²⁵.

The above actions contribute to:

1. Improved legal protection for people on low incomes who are affected by (the threat of) homelessness (2028).
2. Corporations, community teams, care providers and municipal services work closely together in communities in the field of allocation, support and access so that residents don't drop out or relapse and end up homeless (2030).

2.2.4. Invest in an outreach-based approach and assertive community care

“When I didn't pay my first month's rent the social housing manager came and asked me if I had other debts. After I reluctantly set up a payment plan, he kept his eye on me a bit. After 2 years and 3 missed deadlines I called him to find a solution to my debts. It was only because I sorted things out myself that I didn't end up on the streets again.”

Early detection of problems at home is important to prevent dropouts, relapses and homelessness. It cannot be assumed that every resident will make contact with a community team or the municipality if they need help. All kinds of factors play a role here, such as not being aware of the help that is available, withdrawal behaviour as a result of loss, trauma and bereavement, the impact of chronic stress on the ability to think and act in the usual way, embarrassment and (self-)stigma and significant mistrust in the government. Assertive community care and a more outreach-based approach by social or youth services can make a difference in this context. It is crucial that assertive community care is no longer seen as a tool that is only used in the event of 'anti-social behaviour' but as an additional service so that people who cannot ask for help themselves are provided with better support at an earlier stage.

It is also important that municipalities provide for specialist expertise, in the field of mental health care, addiction care and care for people with learning disabilities, for example, so that it is available in the community and for professionals in the community in local teams. It is important here that access services look broadly and proactively at what support a person needs. Early detection and, where necessary, preventive support can then help prevent the problems from escalating. The focus is therefore on strengthening municipal access services. Take, for example, expertise around (the threat of) homelessness and effective client support - which can also be provided by people with first-hand experience of the situation. Time-out and respite facilities are important for the de-escalation of tensions at home or to simply give people a break. This can avoid the need for a person to be housed in temporary accommodation (as an emergency) or prevent them from dropping out. There is also a focus on investment in assertive community care and better understanding of successful practices, to prevent problems from escalating and reduce the likelihood of people having dealings with the police or the courts. It is important, therefore, that the police and mental health services work more closely together, so that people with misunderstood behaviour get the right care and are not apprehended unnecessarily.

²⁵ The Government has released 25 million euros at structural level for local strengthening of socio-legal support and legal protection. This funding, which results from the findings of the Parliamentary Enquiry Committee, is intended to be used to support people in vulnerable situations. The deployment of socio-legal advisers for homeless people is in line with Action Line 2: Legal protection: strengthening of the legal protection of residents through additional capacity for social advisers in the municipality and strengthening of the municipal ombudsman role.

Actions:

1. 2023-2025: Encourage the organisation and sharing of good examples of social housing managers in the community, recovery and respite facilities, including peer contact, working with volunteers and people with first-hand experience (VWS, VNG).
2. 2023-2025: Explore how municipalities and regions provide assertive community care and any improvements that might be needed in this context (J&V, VWS).
3. 2023-2028: In accordance with agreements made in the Integrated Care Agreement (IZA), work is under way to create a nationwide network of accessible support points, such as recovery and self-help centres, where every resident, with access to GPs and run by volunteers and people with first-hand experience, supported by social workers and in conjunction with mental health professionals (VWS, VNG, SWN, MIND, deNLggz, ZN, LHV, InEen).

The above actions contribute to:

1. People are identified earlier and get the help that they need earlier, issues can be resolved far more successfully and relapses can be avoided (2027).

2.2.5. Linking of medical and social care and care for the uninsured

“I didn’t have access to medical care. For example, I was once picked up from the street unconscious by an ambulance. But as soon as I came to I left the hospital, even though I could barely stand up and needed urgent medical attention. I did this because I didn’t have any health insurance and I was scared I’d end up running up tens of thousands of euros worth of debts. Because I didn’t have any psychiatric medication, I got really depressed and suicidal. As a result, I sometimes slept rough wherever I was, even when I had a place in a homeless hostel. I just couldn’t face walking to the hostel. I started drinking on a daily basis and went completely off the rails.”

Often it is the GP who is the first to identify spiralling problems. Particularly when it comes to problems in multiple areas of life and the risk of becoming homeless, the GP has an essential role to play in terms of highlighting issues of concern. At the same time, it is not always easy for GPs to refer people effectively and simply to welfare and social services. Although there are many initiatives in the Netherlands that aim to strengthen the link between medical care and social care, it is clear that, as far as (the risk of) homelessness is concerned, there is still much work to be done in this regard. The point of departure is: as heavy as necessary, and if something can be done jointly at community level, then do it! Good examples here include Welzijn op recept, debt support advisers (POH-schulden) and mental health support advisers (POH-GGZ).

Once people are homeless they are often off the radar for care providers, end up uninsured and access to care and support becomes increasingly difficult. In the case of certain problems, homeless people find it extremely difficult to find, obtain and maintain access to care²⁶. Particularly in the case of a learning disability, psychiatric problems, addiction problems or the lack of health insurance, because they don’t have the right documents or for other reasons. Care providers can apply for reimbursement of the costs of medical care provided to homeless people under the scheme for the reimbursement of essential medical care provided to uninsured individuals (‘Subsidieregeling medisch noodzakelijke zorg aan onverzekerden’). The costs of essential medical care to uninsured individuals, both Dutch citizens and non-nationals, can be claimed back, so there are no financial barriers for care providers in providing care. In 2022, the costs of essential medical care overall are broken down as follows: hospital care (55%), mental health care (36%), pharmaceutical care (3%) and GP care (3%).

26 See: Mortality, sickness and access to care among the homeless (Slockers 2021) [digitale-definitieve-versie-proefschrift-marcel-slockers.pdf](#)



"Some days feel never-ending. So I end up just playing games on my phone the whole day." - Anonymous

Actions:

1. 2023-2028: In accordance with agreements made in the Integrated Care Agreement, work on better collaboration between social services, GP care and mental health care. Primary care providers can be given help with identifying and discussing social problems, such as poverty and debt, and good examples of collaboration between primary care and municipalities can be scaled up.
2. 2025: An amendment to the Social Support Act (Wmo) 2015 provides a legal basis for the processing of data of uninsured individuals which care providers submit through the facility for reporting uninsured individuals (Meldpunt Onverzekerden) (set up by GGD GHOR (Association of GGDs (Regional Public Health Services) and GHOR (Regional Medical Emergency Preparedness and Planning) offices)). This also relates to people who are not yet known to municipalities or GGDs. This data can be used by GGDs and municipalities with a view to either setting up an assertive community care pathway or directing the person to regular, paid health insurance. The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, in conjunction with GGD GHOR, is investigating the options for continuing to provide the help needed until this legal basis has been established.

The above actions contribute to:

1. Better link between medical and social care and care for the uninsured (2027).

2.2.6. Being discharged from a residential setting does not lead to homelessness

“Effectively, all the different places I lived in between the ages of 15 and 18 were always decided for me. Over those 3 years I lived in 8 or so different places, I went back to live with my grandma twice and there were 2 periods when I basically went from one bench to another. During that period, an accelerated supervision order was put in place and an order removing me from parental care, which meant that I couldn’t go back home at all until I was 18.”

A major risk factor for homelessness is the point at which people are discharged from a residential setting. This is the case with young people who are discharged from youth care institutions and people who are discharged from prison, temporary accommodation, assisted residential living facilities, women’s hostels and mental health institutions. For this reason, almost all of these groups are designated as key vulnerable groups within the ‘A Home for Everyone’ programme, and additional efforts are made to find suitable accommodation for them. The intention is, for example, that municipalities will be legally required to give people who are discharged from residential settings priority when it comes to housing (see Section 2.4).

The Relocation Guide (Het verhuisboekje), Municipality of Lelystad

Practical tools can help smooth the transition. A good example of this is the Relocation Guide for people who are moving from Assisted Residential Living to independent accommodation, which contains practical tips and the stories of people who have experience of doing just that.

→ **More info** - https://www.windesheim.nl/getmedia/ad9beb8b-0049-4c1f-a2c3-d240681747ab/2021_juni_21_VerhuisboekjeLelystad_Digitaal.pdf

Almost everyone living in an institution knows that, at some point or another, they will make the transition to the outside world. They can and must be prepared for this in good time by these institutions and by the municipality that will receive them. It helps municipalities if they know who they can contact in this regard. This requires effective agreements and contacts between institutions, municipalities and corporations. As far as the young person or adult leaving the institution is concerned, it is essential that the discharge process and preparation for their return home or to other accommodation is gradual and takes place in good time. Before clinical admission, a plan (for the future) must be drawn up with the client for all aspects of life, with a focus on the place where the person will live. This requires effective agreements between Temporary Accommodation/Assisted Residential Living, municipalities and mental health partners and health insurers around the use of FACT (important for community clients), and around the discharge from clinics and prisons (next place of residence and after-care).

The norm is that anyone leaving an institution is assigned a contact (or coordinator) who ensures that the 'Big 5' are in order before the person is discharged. By the 'Big 5' we mean: 1. it is clear where the person will live, 2. continuity of care has been ensured, 3. finances are in order or support is in place, 4. purpose for the day (work, school, daily activities), 5. investment has been made in the network (someone to turn to). The point of departure is empowerment, a stress-sensitive approach and positive treatment of the people concerned. This aligns seamlessly with the guiding principles 1 (right to housing) and 2 (respect for people's own choice and control). One intervention that has proven to be effective, which is aimed specifically at people going through a period of transition, such as discharge from a residential institution, is Critical Time Intervention (CTI). The CTI worker acts as coordinator, supporting people with a view to ensuring a smooth transition into the community. Collaboration partners are jointly responsible for making effective agreements in this regard.

Good example: Aanpak 16-27 (action plan for 16-27 year olds) in the Region of Lekstroom

The Region of Lekstroom is developing a transition plan in conjunction with the newly appointed providers of Youth Support with Accommodation (Jeugdhulp met verblijf). The 'prospect of discharge' ('perspectief op uitstroom') project will form part of this. This project aims to ensure a smooth transition from youth support to follow-up care or independence. When a young person reaches the age of 16, a plan for the future is drawn up together with the young person concerned. This involves identifying which follow-up location is the most suitable for the needs of the young person on discharge from residential care. The discharge profiles defined by the NJI (Dutch Youth Institute) are used in this context. Using these discharge profiles, the care provider organises early monitoring and identification of needs. Identifying what is needed at an early stage allows a proactive response to the situation.

Actions:

1. 2023: Investigation into connection of partners (mental health (GGZ), social support (Wmo), youth, justice, municipalities) to communication platform which facilitates communication between providers and municipalities and whereby the person concerned remains owner of the data (J&V, VWS, VNG, deNLggz).
2. 2024: Coordination and joint agreements around ownership in the lead municipalities: nobody ends up homeless as a result of being discharged from an institution (Valente, deNLggz, VNG, Zorg en Veiligheidshuizen (secure units), municipalities).
3. 2023-2024: Within the 'A Home for Everyone' programme, the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Affairs (BZK) is working on a mandatory emergency regulation under which people who are discharged from residential institutions are given priority (BZK).

The above actions contribute to:

1. Everyone who is discharged from an institution (prison, youth care or mental health care) receives an offer of suitable stable housing, i.e. not temporary accommodation (the Lisbon Declaration).

2.2.7. Eviction does not lead to homelessness

“I was evicted because I was 3 months behind with my rent. At that time, the amount involved was almost €3,000. After judicial costs, bailiff and eviction charges, this quickly rose to more than €5,000. Losing my house was the most humiliating thing that has ever happened to me. I ended up in temporary accommodation. Years later I discovered that my place in temporary accommodation and, subsequently, in assisted living, cost far more than the amount I owed in rent.”

Under the Action Plan on Homelessness, in conjunction with the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Affairs and rental partners, we are committed to ensuring a reduction in the number of evictions. Since 1 January 2021, housing corporations and private landlords have been reporting payment arrears to municipalities at an early stage. As a result, municipalities are alerted to people who are in debt in good time and can offer help with debts in a proactive way. This is important because many people who are in debt ask for help too late or not at all. Landlords notify the municipality if they have tried without success to resolve rent issues together with tenants. In 2015 there were 9,900 evictions and in 2019 there were 5,000. In 2020 and 2021 this figure fell further to 3,100 evictions²⁷. This decrease is attributable to the fact that an increasing number of municipalities are concluding eviction prevention covenants with corporations, and that, if a tenant is behind with their rent, landlords get in touch with them more quickly and do everything they can to avoid evicting them. Rapid contact between landlord and tenant helps avoid further debts mounting up and, ultimately, eviction. This contact is not always easy. Strengthening of social services, and the reinstatement of social housing management and strengthening of outreach-based working and assertive community care in communities (see 2.3 and 2.4) should help ensure the early detection of mounting payment arrears and facilitate contact between tenants and corporations and other landlords.

The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations is in discussion with partners who were involved in the statements on the prevention of evictions due to payment arrears during the coronavirus pandemic. They are VNG, Aedes, IVBN, Vastgoedbelang and Kences; the agreements were endorsed at the time by the tenants' association Woonbond. The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations is keen to conclude new administrative agreements so that evictions resulting from payment arrears due to rising energy costs can be avoided wherever possible. Since 2021 landlords have been required to implement socially responsible debt collection, to make contact with tenants who are behind with their payments and to report these arrears to municipalities. Municipalities must then make an offer of help. The administrative agreements in addition to the statutory obligations imposed upon landlords under the amended Municipal Debt Support Act (Wet Gemeentelijke Schuldhulpverlening) may involve the offering of customised solutions in the event of payment arrears, the setting up of payment arrangements, proactively directing people to support in the form of special benefits granted by municipalities or the provision of alternative (cheaper) accommodation. In addition, the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations points to the value and necessity of exploring, in talks with partners, additional legal measures such as a generic moratorium on evictions of people who are participating in a debt support pathway.

Actions:

1. 2023: One partner takes control following eviction. Partners agree locally who will do this. (VNG, municipalities, housing corporations).
2. 2023: Bring together good examples, guidance and knowledge and share it broadly with municipalities and providers (VWS, BZK).
3. 2023: Explore option of a moratorium on evictions of people who are participating in a debt support pathway (BZK).

The above actions contribute to:

1. House evictions are avoided wherever possible and nobody is evicted without being given help to find a suitable sustainable housing solution (Lisbon Declaration) (2030)..

27 Source: KBvG (Royal Professional Organization of Judicial Officers in The Netherlands) via CBZ (2022).



Amsterdam, 22 November 2021 – Young person with no fixed abode. The photo is a remake of a frequently used photo from the image bank of the ANP of a stereotypical homeless person on the same bench.

© Dingena Mol/Het Beelddepot

Good example: Amsterdam, ‘Geregelde Betaling’

Some twenty per cent of all tenants who are reported to the municipality in Amsterdam due to rent arrears are receiving benefit under the Participation Act. They are eligible for the special early detection initiative, ‘Geregelde Betaling’, which was set up in 2016. A permanent feature of this approach is the deduction of the current rent from the benefit which, with the tenant’s permission, is transferred directly to the landlord. That way, the rent arrears do not mount up further and, in some cases, homelessness is also avoided. The approach has been a success and has seen few failures. The tenants who are in arrears with payment of their rent are invited to a budget advice meeting with a client manager and a debt support worker from the community team. During the budget advice meeting the tenant’s situation is explored in a holistic way: what help is needed? In most cases this contact results in a sustainable payment arrangement for the rent arrears, and also avoids a transfer to the bailiffs. A debt support pathway is ultimately only deployed for one in five. After nine months the situation is reviewed, with a view to stopping the rent deduction where possible.

→ **More info** – ‘Naar nul huisuitzettingen’, Eropaf and Movisie <https://www.movisie.nl/sites/movisie.nl/files/2022-03/Naar-nul-huisuitzettingen.pdf>

2.3. Action line 3 Housing First: everyone has a stable place to live with support that is tailored to their needs



→ **BZK, SZW, VWS, VNG and municipalities**

“Once I got somewhere to live, there were often strict rules and regulations and I was constantly restricted in what I could do and, as a result, in my development. They never thought about what I needed as an individual and about tailoring things to my needs. I was constrained by the system and if I didn’t ‘dance to their tune’, that was the end of my time there.”

Having a stable place to live with the right support is the key to reducing homelessness. That means striving to reduce the use of temporary accommodation and unnecessarily having to go through different stages before you get a permanent place to live. We explore below what Housing First means in a Dutch context and what actions are needed to achieve the ambitions of this plan.

2.3.1. Housing First as national compass

As mentioned in the introduction, Housing First is the policy-related name for the system approach to solutions for preventing homelessness and eradicating it from the Netherlands. It is clear from the literature that investment in Housing First results in cost savings in, among other things, use of medical care, safety, and the social sector (Youth, social support, temporary accommodation, debt support and benefit payments). According to a recent cost-benefit analysis from 2022²⁸, every euro invested in Housing First saves society 2.5 euros. This is because, generically, high costs are saved on, among other things, temporary accommodation, long-term care (Wlz) or Assisted Residential Living, fewer crimes are committed and less enforcement is needed for antisocial behaviour on the streets. In other words: more expensive forms of accommodation or use of enforcement with which this group would otherwise have been involved.

A number of regions are already implementing Housing First. For example, various regions have started phasing out or converting their temporary accommodation and there is a wide variety of forms of Housing First in which permanent housing takes priority over temporary accommodation. In recent years we have seen that this transition is growing from the bottom up. The system approach isn’t just about increasing the amount of housing with support for a sub-group, it is an approach in which all partners work together towards an approach for all homeless people and people who are at risk of becoming homeless. This transition cannot be achieved overnight. In practice we are seeing many differences, intentional or otherwise, in the way in which municipalities are implementing the transition. On the one hand, we want to allow scope for this variation in implementation practice, and, on the other, we want to encourage an acceleration in the transition based on interventions which have proven to be effective.

The success of this transition depends to large extent on the creation of a sufficient supply of affordable housing and the appropriate support to go with it and a smooth transfer into the community. Providers and professionals must be equipped to ensure that this is the case. Hence the focus on the equipping of organisations and professionals who work with homeless people and people who are at risk of becoming homeless.

Temporary accommodation may be phased out or converted more quickly in one region than in another. The idea is that regions - based on their visions for supported housing and the regional approach to homelessness - will take steps to phase out or convert temporary accommodation on the one hand and, on the other, to ensure the availability of housing with support. Temporary accommodation will still be required but will be kept to a minimum and used as short-term emergency accommodation only. As long as temporary accommodation is needed, temporary accommodation organisations, municipalities and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport will monitor the quality of these facilities²⁹. The Housing of Vulnerable Groups funding (Regeling huisvesting aandachtsgroepen, RHA) made available by the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations for the building, conversion or purchase of housing for homeless people can be used to convert existing temporary accommodation facilities.

²⁸ Social costs benefit from the broad approach to homelessness (Cebeon and Xpertisgezorg, 2022).

²⁹ The quality framework for children in temporary accommodation, which is being developed in collaboration with Valente, VNG and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, is also relevant in this context.

"Home" © Wiosna van ©



Good example: Municipality of Den Bosch

The social partners, the Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, Maatschappelijke Opvang Den Bosch (Den Bosch Temporary Accommodation), and the housing corporations of Den Bosch, choose Housing First for all homeless people.

As of 1 January 2023, anyone who reports to temporary accommodation facilities in Den Bosch will no longer be accommodated in the conventional (night) shelter. The large-scale temporary accommodation facility is being shut down. Den Bosch has been using smaller temporary accommodation facilities for some years now. Under the new approach, within a month, people who are homeless are offered suitable accommodation rather than a place in the hostel. Care and financial security are guaranteed by the Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch and Maatschappelijke Opvang Den Bosch. This avoids people being housed in temporary accommodation first and then slowly making their way up the conventional housing ladder. Work on finding a suitable location with adequate financial security starts immediately. In terms of the partnership, this means that the partners, who come from different sectors, are organised as a network organisation. The focus is their shared ambition, not their own organisational objectives. This approach is already achieving better solutions for residents in Den Bosch, among others through the 'Thuis in de Wijk' (at home in the community) initiative. Consequently, the five rules of thumb of 'Thuis in de Wijk' are also the point of departure for the approach to homelessness: good housing, sound finances, the right support, a purpose for the day and a pleasant living environment.

Actions:

1. 2023-2030: The transition is monitored by means of qualitative monitoring (VWS).
2. 2023-2030: In all national communications the Government will make it clear that Housing First is central to the Action Plan on Homelessness and that we aspire to the guiding principles of this approach (VWS).
3. 2023-2028: Municipalities focus on the transition to Housing First and the conversion and phasing out of long-term and large-scale temporary accommodation facilities.
4. 2023-2026: Knowledge around the guiding principles and Housing First and the implications of the approach for regions is increased with the help of support provided by the Expert Team on the Housing of Vulnerable Groups (Expertteam Huisvesting Aandachtsgroepen, EHA) (VWS, BZK).
5. 2023: Develop a (legally validated) addendum to tenancy agreements in the tenant's own name and make it available to landlords (VWS, BZK).
6. 2023-2024: Develop quality framework for Housing First in conjunction with the field (VWS).
7. 2023-2025: Explore with social work degree programmes how the guiding principles could be made part of the curriculum (VWS).

The above actions contribute to:

1. Housing First as a system approach is mainstream and working in accordance with the guiding principles is applied broadly in all regions (2030).
2. Homeless people don't sleep rough due to a lack of accessible, safe and appropriate emergency or interim accommodation (Lisbon Declaration).
3. By 2025, half of the regions no longer have large long-term temporary accommodation facilities³⁰, by 2030 none at all.
4. Nobody stays in an emergency or interim facility longer than is strictly necessary for a successful transition to a sustainable stable housing solution (Lisbon Declaration).
5. To establish, based on qualitative monitoring, how the transition from temporary accommodation to Housing First is progressing (2026-2030).
6. A tenancy agreement in the tenant's own name is the norm, tenancy agreements in the name of a third party are used if this is in the interests of the tenant, who has a say in this themselves (2030).

! NB. Temporary accommodation facilities cannot be phased out unless there is adequate availability of housing with suitable support in the community. This is an important condition for progress on these results.

30 In the future, (short-term) emergency housing will continue to be needed to as limited an extent as possible. These locations will have single rooms.

2.3.2. Collaboration with the National Housing and Building Agenda and the 'A Home for Everyone' programme

Without more available and affordable housing, work on Housing First cannot take place. Under the Action Plan on Homelessness, as far as housing is concerned, we are working together with the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations and all other partners involved in the plans around construction and housing. The priority of the National Housing and Building Agenda³¹ is to ensure that there is a home for everyone, whether rented or purchased. The objective is to boost the availability, affordability and quality of the housing stock in the Netherlands. As the second of the six programmes in the National Housing and Building Agenda, the 'A Home for Everyone' programme is inextricably linked to the Action Plan on Homelessness. This programme aims to ensure that there is sufficient affordable housing for all vulnerable groups, including homeless people, with a fair distribution across municipalities and with the right care, support and supervision. Under the 'A Home for Everyone' programme the Government takes more control and municipalities are required by law to work on visions for supported housing (woonzorgvisies) and to coordinate these visions at regional level, and municipalities must include vulnerable groups in their priority housing regulation³². The number of homeless people who are housed is monitored by the overarching monitor of vulnerable groups, which is being developed by the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations in partnership with IPO (Association of Provincial Authorities), VNG and Aedes (start 2024). This will indicate how much housing has been allocated to each vulnerable group.

Visions for supported housing

The aim is that as of 1 January 2024 there will be a statutory requirement for every municipality to draw up a housing programme, of which an integrated vision for supported housing will form part. The purpose of the vision for supported housing is to develop the outline vision on housing policy further. Part of the vision for supported housing is the housing and care needs of vulnerable groups, including homeless people. These housing, care and support needs are incorporated into this vision. When developing and implementing the vision for supported housing it is also important that municipalities involve people with first-hand experience. In order to include the housing needs of homeless people and those at risk of becoming homeless in the visions for supported housing, based on the Action Plan on Homelessness, the focus will be on including the guiding principles of this approach and on applying a broad definition for the target group - homeless people and people at risk of becoming homeless - in accordance with the ETHOS Light classification. Work on a new definition of homelessness is explained further in the section on monitoring.

Priority housing regulation

The aim is that by 2024 all municipalities will have a priority housing regulation. This requires them to give priority for housing to a number of vulnerable groups, including homeless people. If people from the priority housing categories are granted a priority housing declaration, they must be given priority when allocating accommodation. At the time of writing, work is under way on definition of the various vulnerable groups which will be added to the mandatory priority housing categories in the Housing Act (Huisvestingswet).

³¹ See National Housing and Building Agenda
<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2022/03/11/kamerbrief-over-nationale-woon-en-bouwagenda-en-het-programma-woningbouw>


³² See the full 'A Home for Everyone' programme [Programma 'Een thuis voor iedereen' | Report | Rijksoverheid.nl](#)

Actions

The actions specified below are part of the 'A Home for Everyone' programme, and the success thereof is extremely important for the Action Plan on Homelessness. Points 2 and 4 have been refined to include the specific challenge of homelessness.

1. Expansion of the housing stock, for homeless people and people at risk of becoming homeless, too

If homelessness is to be eradicated, additional housing must be created. Under the National Housing and Building Agenda led by the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, work is under way to ensure an adequate supply of housing by 2030. The Housing Construction programme aims to build 900,000 homes by 2030. Of the total of 900,000 homes, two thirds will be affordable, of which 350,000 will be rented and owner-occupied homes for people on middle incomes. In addition, the aim is that, up to and including 2030, corporations will build a total of 250,000 new social rented properties, in the context of the need for suitable housing for people on low incomes, including homeless people. There is also a focus on achieving a greater balance in the housing stock, with a target of 30% rented social housing. This means that, when building new rented social housing, municipalities with less than 30% rented social housing in their existing housing stock must contribute to this ambition. It must be possible, in extreme cases, to compel municipalities to work towards the aim of achieving a better balance in the housing stock. To this end, provinces will have statutory authority in this regard. In addition, all municipalities will draw up a regulation under which they will give priority for the allocation of housing to homeless people, people being discharged from residential institutions and people with urgent social and medical needs. If municipalities fail to play their part in this, the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations will impose a percentage which will apply as standard for the allocation of housing to specific vulnerable groups.



Mihreteab (22) leaves his home in the centre of Deventer; he had to leave within half an hour because he is no longer a student.

2. Public-private partnership

In addition, the Platform Woonplek (Housing Platform), in conjunction with the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport and the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, will connect public and private partners with each other, thereby helping to accelerate the creation of housing for vulnerable groups. The Platform Woonplek aims specifically to create additional supported housing for, among others, homeless people and people who are at risk of becoming homeless, through public-private partnerships. The goal of the platform is knowledge sharing, matchmaking, encouraging partnerships and arranging additional (private) funding. Thereby facilitating and accelerating projects and increasing the amount of housing that is available for homeless people and other vulnerable groups.

3. Performance agreements for housing of vulnerable groups

Under the Bill giving local authorities greater control over public housing (Wetsvoorstel versterking regie volkshuisvesting) the process around the performance agreements is expanded. As well as municipalities, tenants organisations and housing corporations, care partners also play a role, whereby, as well as agreements on housing, agreements are also made around care and support; this is designed to make it easier for housing corporations to accommodate vulnerable groups more quickly.

4. Allocation and rental in own name

When allocating rented housing, the aim is that the property will be rented by the intended resident in their own name. This is to avoid people being on supported housing tenancy agreements for longer than is necessary. If the tenancy is in their own name straightaway, they can build up rental rights more quickly. This is in line with the guiding principle of separating housing and care in the Action Plan on Homelessness. The autonomy of homeless people and people who are at risk of becoming homeless is encouraged, supported and respected: people's own wishes concerning their accommodation and choice of support is key.

5. Flexible rental through an intermediary and customised housing support agreements: as long and as short as necessary

There may be situations where people choose not to have a tenancy agreement drawn up in their own name immediately but in the name of a third party instead. Although the aim is that, by 2030, wherever possible, people will have their tenancy agreement in their own name, it is still important to provide scope for flexible rental through an intermediary and customised housing support agreements. This provides a safe opportunity for people to make mistakes and learn from them, without running the risk of being evicted.

6. Alternative forms of accommodation and temporary accommodation

In order to provide as many people as possible in urgent situations with a suitable place to live as quickly as possible, it is important to look for alternatives too. This can be temporary and permanent housing, and independent and supported housing. For example: repurposing of empty offices, flexible housing, subletting/room rental (e.g. Kamers met aandacht), house sharing, house splitting, enabling a 'tiny house' to be installed in a garden or a glasshouse to be inhabited, and encouraging the transition to the housing market.

The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations is contributing to this objective, among other things, by:

- Accelerating the construction of flexible housing through an incentive scheme for flexible and repurposed housing;
- Entering into a dialogue with mortgage providers and housing corporations over the allowing of room rental and the promotion of 'friends contracts';
- Using Platform 31 to encourage house sharing, house splitting and room rental;
- Adding a clause in the Environment and Planning Act (omgevingswet) to encourage municipalities to allow 'tiny homes' to be built in gardens without planning permission.

In short, work is under way on a broad range of as homely as possible solutions which meet the varying needs of target groups. As well as additional housing, mixed living, 'housing circles', small-scale assisted living facilities, 'skaeve huse', and alternative forms of accommodation are being explored.

The above actions contribute to:

1. All municipalities have drawn up visions for supported housing using substantiated (regional) statistics, on the basis of which housing is allocated, built, repurposed and/or procured for homeless people (2023).
2. The number of homeless people who have been housed is indicated through the integrated monitor of housing for vulnerable groups (2024).
3. The conclusion of regional agreements between all partners (municipalities, corporations, care providers, the individuals themselves) around suitable care and support based on individual needs and priority housing regulations are in place in all municipalities (2025).
4. By 2030, 250,000 social rented properties have been built.

Housing First proven to be an effective intervention

Housing First has proven to be effective since 1992 in the US, and the rest of the Western world was quick to adopt the approach. The first US evidence indicates that 80-92% of homeless people with complex support needs were permanently housed, and other positive health effects were noted in the long term (Tsemberis and Eisenberg, 2000; Padget et al., 2016)³³. Findings from subsequent Canadian research indicate that Housing First can be successfully adapted to different contexts and for different populations without losing its fidelity. From a comparison, it appears here that people who received Housing First achieved excellent housing outcomes and showed more rapid improvements in community functioning and quality of life than those who received standard care (Aubry et al., 2015)³⁴.

In 2014, five European evaluations also confirmed the high housing retention rate of the HF approach in four out of five projects, which indicates that the approach works in different local contexts and with a number of variations on the original Housing First model, which still, however, followed the core principles of the Housing First approach. This study also indicates positive results concerning the social inclusion of the target group (Busch-Geertsema, 2014)³⁵. Pleace et al (2015)³⁶ conclude that the main objective of the Finnish programme, the permanent reduction of long-term homelessness at national level, was achieved in Finland between 2008 and 2015 through a carefully planned, comprehensive collaboration strategy. A presentation by the Y-foundation illustrates how, between 1985 and 2016, the decrease in the number of hostels and shelters from 2,121 to 62 went hand in hand with the increase in the number of independent clustered properties with Housing First support from 127 to 1,309 and in the number of independent properties in the community with Housing First support from 65 to 2,433.

Dutch research also indicates the effectiveness of Housing First initiatives, and a study on Dutch initiatives indicates that the percentages of Housing First clients who have been stably housed since the initiatives started are high and, with the exception of one initiative, vary from 79-93% (Wewerinke et al., 2014)³⁷. There are currently 74 Housing First initiatives in 93 Dutch municipalities, and work is under way to create a Housing First model fidelity scale (and quality standard) adapted to the Dutch situation³⁸.

33 Tsemberis, S. and Eisenberg, R.F (2000), Pathways to housing: supported housing for street-dwelling homeless individuals with psychiatric disabilities, *Psychiatric Services* 51:487-493, American Psychiatric Association; Padget, D., Henwood, B. and Tsemberis, S. (2016), *Housing First. Ending Homelessness, Transforming Systems, and Changing Lives*. Oxford: University Press

34 Aubry, T., Nelson, G. and Tsemberis, S. (2015), Housing First for people with severe mental illness who are homeless: a review of the research and findings from the at home–chez soi demonstration project, *Can J Psychiatry*, 2015 Nov; 60, 11: 467–474.

35 Busch-Geertsema, Volker: Housing First Europe – Results of a European Social Experimentation Project, *European Journal of Homelessness*, 2014, 13–28.

36 Pleace, N., Culhane, D., Granfelt, R. and Knutagård, M. (2015) *The Finnish Homelessness Strategy - An International Review*, Ministry of the Environment, last accessed 12 November 2022, YMr_a_3en_2015.pdf (helsinki.fi)

37 Wewerinke, D., Al Shamma, S. & Wolf, J. (2018). *Housing First Principles and Practices*. Nijmegen: Impuls – Onderzoekscentrum Maatschappelijke Zorg.

38 See Trimbos: <https://www.trimbos.nl/kennis/maatschappelijke-opvang/housing-first-onderzoek-modelgetrouwheid-en-efecten/>



Halima in the town hall with her social worker collecting mail that relates to her application for benefits.

© Desiré van den Berg/Het Beelddepot

2.4. Action line 4 Strengthening of implementation practice: better coordination, speed and the human dimension are key



→ **VWS, SZW, J&V, OCW, VNG, municipalities, corporations, care providers, welfare**

“Applying for a postal address took over two months. The people in the temporary accommodation also told me that applying for a postal address when I wasn’t actually living in temporary accommodation would be almost impossible because the municipality wouldn’t believe that I was actually homeless. I preferred to stay in homeless hostels for a while, with classmates and on the street near where I was studying, so I kept delaying applying for a postal address until I was actually in temporary accommodation.”

Working together across different domains is a prerequisite for reducing the number of homeless people and people at risk of becoming homeless. The development and implementation of integrated policy which responds effectively to the needs of homeless young people and adults and young people and adults who are at risk of becoming homeless can and must be far better and, for this reason, is a key point of departure of this Action Plan. This applies at every level: national, regional and local. In order to bring about the change that is needed, there must be better collaboration between domains: physical, medical, safety and social. And within the social domain, there must be collaboration between the youth, social support, work and income, debt and poverty domains. The actions set out below build on the lessons learned from previous years, with the necessary upscaling and acceleration measures.

2.4.1. Getting the basics in order quickly through better coordination and ownership

“I had to apply for benefits. But, as well as the endless periods of waiting, I also had to ‘prove’ that things were so bad that I couldn’t work and I could therefore be exempted from the requirement to look for a job.”

We know from previous programmes that it is crucial to get the basics in order quickly. Being able to organise a postal address, accommodation and an income quickly avoids problems escalating further. A permanent point of contact (or coordinator) helps coordinate and keep control over all aspects of the person’s life. Someone who is there for them to manage their support: as coach or confidant but, if necessary, also as representative or personal advocate. Coordinators have overall control over the entire process of the person concerned, from access to the service right up to the point at which the person and coordinator feel that this is no longer necessary. In municipalities that work with it, the impact of this tailored approach, the ‘youth coordinator’, is positive. It appears that pathways are shorter and more effective and that the approach leads to greater satisfaction among both professionals and the young people themselves. A similar approach is used for people who display confused behaviour and have a high safety risk. Here, a Lifecycle coordinator is deployed to set up, organise and monitor support and care in all aspects of life.³⁹

A significant by-product of this way of working is the increase in trust between the professional and the person concerned. This is crucial for the success of pathways, particularly because trust in the authorities is often low among this target group. All the more reason, therefore, to take on board the lessons learned from these approaches and scale them up. This doesn’t just mean adding a role but rather organising things more efficiently. Municipalities and care providers themselves have a choice as to how they set this up. Support must be provided in a flexible way according to people’s preferences. In principle, this means a choice of 1) the support a person receives, 2) where they receive it, 3) when they receive it 4) how often they receive it 5) and from whom.

Good example: Youth coordinator in the Municipality of Haarlem

In Haarlem, homeless young people are supported in an integrated way by youth coordinators. They work at the Centre for Young People and Families (Centrum voor Jeugd en Gezin (CJG)) and work exclusively with homeless young people aged between 18 and 23. The youth coordinators work with the young person concerned to identify rapidly what is needed, exploring all aspects of life in an integrated way: housing, care and support, finance, purpose for the day (school or work) and network. Within six weeks a pathway plan is on the table and this guides the entire support process. The youth coordinators work on the basis of what is known as ‘reverse assessment’ (‘omgekeerde toets’). In other words, they don’t start by determining under which legislation or regulations a young person falls or otherwise. Instead they look at what the young person concerned needs and work out how they can make it happen. There is one contact, one plan and one pathway.

The youth coordinators are known to the various departments within the municipality and they work on the basis of trust. Care is no longer fragmented, so the pathways are shorter. This is better for the young person concerned and also saves the municipality money. It is far better and more effective for young people to work with a single point of contact. Someone who is there if you need them and is also there in the long term.

→ **More info** – ‘De basis op orde’ (The basics in order), Movisie [De basis op orde voor dak- en thuisloze jongeren | Movisie Eén jongerenregisseur, één plan, één traject | Wat er al gebeurt | Iedereenonderendak](#)

Actions:

1. 2024: Broadly share guide to lessons learned and prerequisites for youth coordinators from the municipalities of Haarlem, Alkmaar, Leiden and The Hague (VWS, VNG).
2. Young people: 2023-2026: Coordination and working with a future plan (16-27) embedded in all lead regions to strengthen discharge from youth care institutions.
3. 2023-2025: Facilitate the organisation of regional rule-free breakthrough or custom budgets, based on the research findings of the Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development (ZonMW) on integrated funding (VWS, SZW, VNG).

The above actions contribute to:

1. All lead municipalities work with a form of coordination in order to get the basics in order quickly and in an integrated way.

³⁹ See: <https://www.fvoor.nl/levensloopaanpak/>

2.4.2. Integrated access and support

“I couldn’t afford to make mistakes. What for someone else might have been a good lesson for the next time, for me meant homelessness. So, what is prevention? How could my homelessness have been prevented? One way or the other, prevention is not: months or years of living in a homeless hostel or temporary, shared accommodation. Prevention is not: making applying for benefits, a postal address or an ID card as complicated as possible. From pillar to post, just long enough to ensure that the person asking for help gives up. Not only is this not prevention, it is condoning homelessness.”

Collaboration between work and income, debt support and care (support/treatment) and housing can be better. This will only be possible if people from different organisations are of the same mindset when it comes to the people they are dealing with and understand the approach that they need to take. In addition, in the case of homeless people and people who are at risk of becoming homeless, speed is of the essence. A frequently heard argument is that professionals are hampered by the constraints of legislation and regulations. But experience tells us that, actually, tailor-made solutions are almost always possible. There is also a call to process requests faster and in a less complex way. Take obtaining a postal address, for example, and access to housing, income and debt support. Based on this access, a coordinator as described above can be assigned to people who need one. The organisation of centralised access in collaboration with corporation(s), care, mental health, income and debts may be useful in this context.

As well as access to support, it is essential to work towards the provision of integrated services which are tailored to a person’s individual needs. This applies to the enabling of integrated treatment of mental health problems, addiction and mild cognitive impairment and ensuring that a contra-indication does not mean that a person does not receive the right help. Continuity of support is also important, even if an existing process is temporarily interrupted (due to detention, timeout, admission to a mental health facility, for example). The basics, such as contact with the community team or coordinator, and any benefit payments or debt support pathways, must continue throughout. This avoids problems following discharge and fosters recovery in the community.

Actions:


1. 2023: Raise awareness of the postal address report facility (meldpunt briefadressen)⁴⁰ (BZK).
2. 2023: Referral to and publicising of support hub for tailor-made solutions for multi-problem households and VWS bridging procedure⁴¹ (Long-term Care Act (Wlz), Care Insurance Act (Zvw), Social Support Act (Wmo) and Youth Act (Jeugdwet)) (VWS).
3. 2024: Compile and share good examples of regions which are already working with centralised access in collaboration with corporations, care, mental health and income facilities (VWS)
4. 2024: Agreements on a minimum ‘basic standard for services’ in the case of (potential) homelessness: within x days a postal address and income arranged, an initial assessment of support needs and necessary and appropriate temporary accommodation has been arranged within x days (SZW, VWS, VNG).
5. 2025-2027: All municipalities have set up integrated, user-friendly access (VWS, VNG, municipalities). Ensure that changes to legislation are quickly made known in the workplace (SZW, VWS, BZK, J&V, VNG, municipalities) and ensure that professionals can successfully work with tailor-made solutions, build a good relationship with clients and work on the basis of trust (VNG).

The above actions contribute to:

1. Simpler and quicker access to basic services such as registration in the BRP and income leads to shorter pathways and faster recovery.

⁴⁰ This report facility is intended, on the one hand for organisations that help homeless people and people who are at risk of becoming homeless and municipalities. On the other hand, people can use it to report examples of where things are not going well or to ask for help if they are unclear about the legislation. The report facility is not yet widely known

⁴¹ See: <https://maatwerkmultiprobleemhuishoudens.nl/news/view/68d29406-fo60-4f75-a153-04740adb2856/landelijk-maatwerkloket-multiproblematiek-helpt-professionals-snel-bij-inwoners-in-de-knel>



With 'Gaby Coacht' after dance lessons there is always a circular discussion in which everyone can share their thoughts and ask for advice.



© Robin Alysha Clemens/Het Beelddepot

All Brian's possessions are divided between this bag, a cycle bag that he was given by friends, and a storage unit in Amsterdam Zuid.

2.5. Action line 5 Use of first-hand knowledge throughout the policy cycle



→ **VWS, VNG, municipalities**

“I’ve been championing people’s interests since I was young, now I do it at policy and client level. What attracted me most about the role is that you can make things better for those who come after you. You turn your own negative experiences into positive experiences for other people. To make ‘new’ policy, a policy that’s better, for those who are contending with homelessness right now. Because people with first-hand experience know what it’s like to live in a particular situation, they know all too well where the dark places are and what needs to change. It’s important to share this with policymakers and to take it into account in any solutions that are proposed”

Often policy on homeless young people and adults is drawn up without them being involved. In recent years, the use of the national youth panel De Derde Kamer has demonstrated the impact that involving people with first-hand experience on a long-term basis throughout the policy cycle can have. We talk of meaningful participation when the government – from Central Government down to municipality level - when sitting around the policy table, constantly uses the input of people who have first-hand experience a situation and their advocates. This has a number of advantages. Firstly, it leads to better legislation and regulations that reflect people’s day-to-day lives and better reflect the intention of the legislator. Secondly, it empowers and de-stigmatises homeless people and people who are at risk of becoming homeless, because they themselves sit round the table and can have their say. Finally, involving people who have experience of the situation themselves in a meaningful way helps bridge the gap that has emerged between government and citizen. Drawing up policy together and liaising over the impact of policy on the lives of the people involved may help to repair the breakdown in trust.

2.5.1. National homelessness advocacy platform

→ **VWS, SZW, BZK, national platform and people with first-hand experience from local initiatives**

Between 2019 and 2022 positive experiences were achieved through the use of the national youth panel De Derde Kamer. We are therefore broadening these experiences to include a panel for 27+ year olds, so that the experiences, knowledge and ideas of the target group - homeless people and people at risk of becoming homeless - can be used to inform national policy-making. Both panels are used in drawing up, improving and monitoring policy, legislation and regulations for all the ministries concerned. Both panels are affiliated with (local) advocacy organisations so they are well aware of what is going on at local level. The local advocates and their supporters provide input for national policy lobbying and make it clear if policy is not having the right impact or is being incorrectly applied, help find solutions and share good examples from all over the country.

The youth and adult panels are supported by a national platform which has yet to be set up. The national platform brings together projects and collaborations and constitutes the link between the system world and the real world. Developments from all over the Netherlands are translated into potential solutions and standpoints for the Government. The platform also helps inspire leaders and ministers, keep them focused and hold them to account. It must create circumstances that enable people with first-hand experience to work on a level with implementers and developers of policy, legislation and regulations. The national platform has scope to appropriately assess people with first-hand experience and help them move on to education and/or (paid) work.

Actions:

1. 2024: Facilitate setting up of the national homelessness platform (VWS).

2.5.2. Local involvement of people with first-hand experience in policy cycle and in support

→ **VNG, municipalities, care providers**

“There was a girl who was in a situation where she never felt as though she was seen or heard. I told her my story, and she burst out crying. She said: that’s the first time I feel as though someone is listening to me and that I’m not on my own.”

A number of municipalities are already thinking about how they can involve people with first-hand knowledge and experience in their policy processes around the approach to homelessness. It is estimated that, in 2022, 10-15 municipalities have a collaboration with a local advocacy organisation for homeless people (as well as people who are at risk of becoming homeless and people who have been homeless). In order to ensure effective policy-making, there is a focus on strengthening local advocacy in more municipalities, in order to create a nationwide network. Municipalities can help local organisations make this happen, and enable them to have their say at local level on municipal policy on all themes that affect the lives of homeless people and those at risk of becoming homeless. We know that this works best if these organisations are linked to the local network of client support, client boards and care organisations so that any issues are picked up and reported at an early stage. In addition, municipalities can achieve far more by deploying people with first-hand knowledge in walk-in facilities and community information points, for example, and by encouraging suppliers, in their terms and conditions of purchase, to use experts with first-hand experience in the support that they provide.

Good example: Involvement of people with first-hand experience in policy and implementation in Leiden

When developing the new policy around access to social care in the Region of Leiden, people with first-hand experience have been involved from the outset. Involving people with first-hand experience helps ensure that policy choices respond as closely as possible to the needs and experiences of the people for whom they are being developed. To this end, the Municipality of Leiden is working, among others, with regional client advocacy organisation [Lumen](#).

Actions:

1. Collect and actively share local practices and lessons learned in the collaboration with experts with first-hand experience and/or advocacy organisations (VWS, Movisie).
2. Put the use of first-hand experience on the agenda at local level as one of the components of the learning community (coalition on homelessness).
3. All lead municipalities develop and embed meaningful participation in their lead municipality and/or region (VNG, municipalities).
4. All lead municipalities focus in their approach on actively involving people with first-hand experience in their local provision (VNG, municipalities).

Results

1. 2024: First-hand knowledge in governance structure of Action Plan on Homelessness.
2. 2025: Policy is not created without the input of people with experience, both nationally and locally.



A woman had this tattoo done in memory of her late grandmother. The inside of the heart is her fingerprint and she was always known as 'Augie'.



“This is the corridor of the young people’s area in the emergency shelter. I was there for months.” Jennifer (22)

© Wiosna van Bon/Het Beelddepot



2.6. Action line 6 Specific focus on young people, LGBTIQ+ and EU citizens

Homeless people and people who are at risk of becoming homeless are extremely diverse. The generic approach and the guiding principles set out in this Action Plan apply to everyone. But a number of groups need an additional attention or a different approach. Also, in recent years, additional actions have already been deployed which need follow-up and a structural approach.

Young people

Young people are relatively over-represented in the group of homeless people. It is important, particularly given the stage of life they are at, to continue to focus specifically on the needs of this group. Because, when young adults are at start of their lives, there is still plenty of opportunity for development. Young people already feature in various areas, such as the transition from 18- to 18+ and ensuring a smooth discharge from youth care institutions, the provision of information and the role of education in a strong social foundation. In addition, with young people in particular, the role of education is crucially important: not only in the early detection of problems and in preventing young people dropping out of society but also on the road back into education after a period of homelessness. Consequently, the Action Plan on Homelessness seeks to collaborate with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) in order to serve this target group better.

LGBTIQ+ and homeless

Some LGBTIQ+ young people and adults experience major problems around acceptance, and end up homeless as a result. Consequently, in the context of the Action Programme on Homeless Young people, Movisie carried out research in this regard⁴². Currently, the support that is provided doesn’t always take into account gender and sexual diversity and professionals are reticent in this regard. As far as specific support for homeless young people with an LGBTIQ+ background (and those at risk of becoming homeless) is concerned, the research makes recommendations relating to the provision of safe settings with a suitable individual support pathway, investing in training and education for professionals and volunteers, raising awareness and sensitivity and facilitating in-service/refresher training on LGBTIQ+ themes for employees in youth support and temporary accommodation and the strengthening of peer contact, social contact, buddy projects and digital options. Over the next few years, under the Action Plan on Homelessness, we will continue to encourage the development of services which are sensitive to the needs of this target group.

⁴² See: <https://www.movisie.nl/sites/movisie.nl/files/2020-07/Driedubbel-kwetsbaar-LHBTI-dak-en-thuisloze-jongeren.pdf>

LGBTIQ+ sensitive support

Movisie offers online training courses to help support providers ensure that the support that they provide is LGBTIQ+ sensitive. The training course 'Veilige opvang voor Regenboogjongeren' (a safe space for Rainbow youth) is intended for social care professionals who work in temporary accommodation and emergency shelters. The focus of the course is on raising awareness, sensitivity and reporting around homeless LGBTI young people. A number of training courses and e-learnings on LGBTIQ+ sensitive working have been organised for professionals who work in temporary accommodation, as well as a webinar on reaching LGBTIQ+ young people for interest organisations. Moreover, the information on homelessness provided by LGBTIQ+ interest organisations and self-help organisations has been strengthened, among others on the switchboard of COC Nederland and on www.iedereenisanders.nl. This makes it easier for young people to ask questions about LGBTIQ+-related themes and, at the same time, to discuss problems at home and/or (the threat of) homelessness.

For more information, see <https://www.movisie.nl/artikel/online-training-veilige-opvang-regenboogjongeren>

Homeless EU citizens

During the coronavirus pandemic, a number of municipalities reported an increase in homeless EU citizens applying for temporary accommodation. This led to the presentation, in September 2022, of the action plan on vulnerable homeless EU citizens. This plan⁴³ gives municipalities and the authorities involved additional guidance on identifying, preventing and resolving the specific situation of homelessness among the target group, vulnerable EU citizens. The plan proposes to differentiate between three subgroups, each with their own tailored approach. Both municipalities and social partners believe that this differentiated approach is more effective than an approach that focuses on a generic approach to EU citizens. This is because, among other things, the rights that people have built up under the Social Support Act or the Participation Act are dependent on the length of stay. In 2022 pilots are being launched in 4 municipalities, and in 2023 this will be further expanded to 6 to 8 municipalities which are specifically funded by Central Government. After 2 years, these pilots will be evaluated and we will consider how the lessons learned can be disseminated more broadly.

Other target groups

It is well known that there are many other specific background characteristics of homeless people that make them extra vulnerable, e.g. people with mild cognitive impairment, women, people with highly complex problems and children. In collaboration with the partners from the coalition, over the next few years, signals and good practices from the field will be monitored to establish what additional actions may be needed in this regard. It may be that this leads to new insights on the basis of which actions are formulated. In addition, we are closely involved with other target group focused programmes, such as the programme on people with misunderstood behaviour.

Actions

1. 2024: Collaboration agreements with educational partners around actions for homeless young people (OCW, VWS).
2. 2022-2024: Pilot and evaluation of Action Plan on Homeless EU citizens (SZW, J&V, VWS).
3. 2026: LGBTIQ+ target group more visible and professionals trained in detection and providing suitable tailored support (OCW, VWS).

The above actions contribute to:

1. A more inclusive approach to homelessness.

43 See: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2022/09/13/kamerbrief-over-plan-van-aanpak-kwetsbare-dakloze-eu-burgers>

3. Prerequisites: Monitoring, funding, governance and knowledge

3.1. Monitoring

→ **VWS, CBS, VNG, municipalities**

“I first went under the radar on my 16th birthday. There’s a big difference between being under 18, when you’re under the radar, and being over 18. And when you’re under 18 you have less access to care, and no say or control at all. In other words, you’re totally invisible. You’re not eligible for existing services, you fall between two stools and, because you’re vulnerable, you end up in situations that just make your problems even worse.”

If policy is to be as effective as possible, an understanding of the extent and diversity of the target group is crucial. If you don’t understand the target group, you can’t manage the situation and develop policy interventions that address the situation as it stands. Consequently, monitoring is a key part of this Action Plan and focuses on two aspects: understanding the numbers of homeless people and people who are at risk of becoming homeless in the Netherlands (quantitative) and understanding the progress that is being made in the desired transition: from temporary accommodation to prevention and Housing First. This transition must contribute to the ultimate objective of ending homelessness by 2030. The desired interim results of the action lines are linked to quantitative and qualitative research.

3.1.1. Number of homeless people and people at risk of becoming homeless clearer with the ETHOS Light definition

As things stand, the current system of monitoring is inadequate to enable targeted interventions based on quantitative data. When collecting data on homelessness we will, therefore, work towards use of the ETHOS Light (European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion) definition. This is the European definition of homelessness which is generally recognised by scientists. The categories in this definition demonstrate clearly that homelessness is not something that is static but rather a fluid process involving multiple forms of a lack of stable/unstable housing, with rough sleeping being the most extreme form. This definition is more in line with the vision for preventive policy and the starting point of stable housing.

ETHOS Light defines 7 categories:

1. People living rough
2. People in emergency accommodation
3. People living in temporary accommodation for the homeless (residential)
4. People living in an institution for longer than necessary due to lack of housing (mental health, assisted living, youth care, prison)
5. People living in non-conventional dwellings (campsite, boats, cars) due to lack of housing
6. People living, through necessity, with friends and family (couchsurfers)
7. People who are threatened with eviction

Currently, quantitative monitoring is undertaken in two ways at national level: The estimate of Statistics Netherlands (CBS) and the data supplied by municipalities to the Municipal Social Care Monitor (GMSD).

CBS estimate

The CBS estimates the number of homeless people on an annual basis. This estimate is not entirely accurate because the CBS can only extract people from sources which are actually counted, whereas we know that a proportion of the homeless population remains under the radar. This monitor does not give any insights into the numbers at municipality level, nor into the various types of temporary accommodation or shelter in which these people are living. Since we are working towards a monitor based on the ETHOS Light classification, the aim is that, in the long term, this monitor will become superfluous. While there is no better alternative, however, the CBS monitor is the only source that collects national statistics over a significant period of time.

The GMSD and working towards ETHOS Light counts

The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS) and the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) have commissioned the CBS to set up, in conjunction with VNG-Realisatie, a *structural, municipal* monitor which will give a national and local picture of the number of homeless people. By the end of 2022, this will be providing insights into the number of homeless people known to municipalities through the standard monitoring system of municipalities, the Municipal Social Care Monitor (GMSD).

Currently, most municipalities can only monitor categories 2 and 3 in the ETHOS Light classification. Over the next few years we will work towards local or national monitoring which, by 2030, will be routinely identifying the other categories too. To this end, we must first investigate the best way of scaling up ETHOS Light counts and which partner would be most suited to doing this. In addition, in 2023 an ETHOS Light count will be launched at municipal level in 2 municipalities. The lessons learned from these initial pilots will be used as input in the further development of the national monitor, so that ever more municipalities have an overview of the population based on the ETHOS Light definition.

Actions

1. 2023: First CBS and VNG-realisatie monitor delivered through the GMSD (CBS, VNG Realisatie and municipalities)
2. 2023: Research into ETHOS Light options at national level by category (VWS)
3. 2023: Start of research by Utrecht University of Applied Sciences: count numbers in 2 municipalities in accordance with ETHOS Light.
4. 2024: Municipalities use ETHOS Light classification in visions for supported housing and in local prevention policy (VNG, municipalities)
5. 2025 onwards, annual count based on ETHOS Light classification.

Result

1. By 2030, homeless people or people at risk of becoming homeless are identified using the ETHOS Light definition.



© Rick van der Klooster/ Het Beelddepot

Who do we see here?
A friend or family member could become homeless. Without anyone even knowing.

3.1.2. Monitoring of the transition

Statistics alone don't tell us enough. We want to know to what extent the intended transition from temporary accommodation to Housing First and the actions under this plan is materialising. The objectives of this plan will therefore be monitored both quantitatively and qualitatively.

This will give meaning to what we are seeing and hearing across the country. We know from the monitoring of previous programmes that it is better to have a limited number of good quantitative and qualitative indicators than a large number of questions and indicators. As explained, as far as the monitoring of house building and financial security is concerned, the Action Plan on Homelessness will use the data from existing monitoring under these programmes.

The Ministries of Health, Welfare and Sport, Social Affairs and Employment and the Interior and Kingdom Relations report annually to the Lower House on progress and the results/sub-results of the monitor.

Actions

1. 2023: VNG is developing a dashboard to monitor the objectives of the plan both quantitatively and qualitatively in collaboration with coalition partners (in accordance with administrative agreements).
2. 2024-2026: Research into the progress on the Action Plan on Homelessness and the related objectives from the Lisbon Declaration, including the (necessary) financial resources (VWS, SZW, BZK)⁴⁴. Use this research as interim review to evaluate progress on achievement of the objectives under this plan and, if necessary, make adjustments.
3. 2023-2030: Coalition partners each have their own area of responsibility for specific aspects of the monitoring.

Result

1. Insights into the progress on the Action Plan on Homelessness allow timely and adjustments and amendments to be made.

⁴⁴ As a result of Westerveld motion.

3.2. Funding

Acceleration and scaling up of the transition to prevention and Housing First means not only better but also more efficient allocation of available resources. In short, it pays to invest in prevention and Housing First. At the same time, the 'new style' phased out temporary accommodation must be of good quality and work must be in accordance with the principles set out in Chapter 1.

3.2.1. Effective and appropriate spending of homelessness funding

The pillars of the Action Plan on Homelessness described have been chosen because they have been proven to work. The prevention of homelessness is an effective strategy because it prevents the profound negative impact that homelessness has on individual, community or municipality as well as at the level of society as a whole. Resolving homelessness after the event is far more expensive than investing in prevention, which has significant benefits at individual level in terms of well-being and health. At the same time, the desired transition also requires municipalities to be able to deploy more and longer support in the community. The stable housing of (potentially) homeless people increases the chance of employment and thereby both income and independence from the government. Individual and society benefit from a higher income (productive output) and lower public expenditure on medical facilities, unemployment benefits and other social benefits.

3.2.2. Available resources for Action Plan on Homelessness

The aim is that with the additional structural funding that this government has made available, the increase in the number of homeless people that has been evident over the past 10 years can be reversed and, by 2025, will have fallen considerably compared with 2021. We will focus on achieving this significant decrease by working together, among other things through the coalition on homelessness.

The table below gives an overview of the additional funding which helps support the Action Plan on Homelessness. A distinction is made here between funds that have been released for homelessness (Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, VWS), funds that have been allocated for house building and affordability (BZK (Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Affairs)/VRO (Housing and Spatial Planning)) and funds that have been earmarked for the action plan on poverty and debt and the 'A Participation Act that puts people first' programme (SZW).

Overview of additional funding that contributes to the Action Plan on Homelessness 2023-2030

Amounts in millions

	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Structural
Action plan on Homelessness VWS	65	65	65	65	65	65
Action plan on money worries, poverty and debt SZW	120	114	115	120	120	120
Housing of vulnerable groups BZK	40.6					
Supporting local and regional authorities with flexible pools BZK		40				
Housing construction incentive scheme (Woningbouwimpuls) BZK	227	229	229	129	5	
Public housing fund BZK	150	150	150	150		

At the time this plan was written, some of the funding was still waiting for approval with the Ministry of Finance. Before these funds can be spent, policy proposals must be approved by the Ministry of Finance.

3.2.3. Governance

The strength of the Action Plan on Homelessness is taking action together, learning together, networking and connecting. Better governance and control will help achieve the objectives. The strength of this plan and its chances of success is also very much dependent on the collective energy and ambition to pursue or embark on the desired transition. An important starting point of the broad commitment is the administrative agreement that is attached as an addendum to this plan. Through the agreements laid down in this agreement, all the coalition partners have committed to the plan and agreed to take action together. In order to give direction to the plan on homelessness, the following governance structure has been set up. Wherever possible, use has been made of existing networks or forums.

1. Administrative meetings

Every two years, we organise administrative meetings between ministers and councillors to discuss the progress towards the objectives. Objectives are revised annually at administrative level where necessary.

2. Coalition on homelessness

The coalition on homelessness will continue to play a role in implementation even after this plan has been developed. The exact nature thereof is to be determined. Consideration is being given to a more action-oriented approach in which coalition partners travel round the country encouraging and inspiring people. E.g. regional visits to keep partners focused on the transition and the ambition of the Plan.

3. Short lines of communication between Central Government - VNG - municipalities and other coalition partners

There are short lines of communication between the regions, the collaboration partners and VWS in order to ensure that problems are identified and the various components are interconnected. In collaboration with the VNG (and knowledge and coalition partners), VWS can support, facilitate and inspire through reflection and inspiration sessions and the sharing of best practices. Each lead municipality has a contact who is officially responsible, at lead municipality and/or regional level, for the action plan to tackle homelessness. This contact liaises closely with the team from the various ministries in order to monitor the progress of the plan.

This ensures that:

1. Central Government is aware of local issues
2. National developments can be explained verbally to the local partner
3. More context can be provided around progress at regional level
4. If there is insufficient progress on the objectives, the next steps can be explained

3.2.4. Knowledge and innovation

Through the Action programme on homeless young people and the Broad approach to homelessness (Brede aanpak dakloosheid), a great deal has been learnt about what works at national and local level when it comes to tackling the problem of homelessness. We want to avoid every municipality, care provider, corporation or person with first-hand experience having to reinvent the wheel, so we are encouraging, in various ways, the sharing of knowledge and innovation for and by every professional who is involved with (the threat of) homelessness.

Sharing and strengthening of knowledge around effective interventions on homelessness

More transfer of knowledge between partners at local, regional and national level is needed. Lead municipalities can learn a lot from each other but more knowledge sharing is also needed at regional level. This applies to all three sources of knowledge: academic insights, knowledge from professionals and knowledge from people with first-hand experience. No one of these sources is better or worse than another: it is the combining of and connection between these three sources that leads to a better understanding. The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, in collaboration with partners such as the VNG, will jointly facilitate a learning network, including reflection and inspiration sessions for and by municipalities and sharing of knowledge with providers and people with first-hand experience. The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport will also organise a national event on the Action Plan on Homelessness on an annual basis, with a view to sharing knowledge, networking and inspiring partners to continue to make progress on the ambitions under this plan.

There is also a focus on ensuring that the principles of and approaches to tackling homelessness are embedded by Universities of Applied Sciences and Vocational Education and Training (MBO) colleges. In order to ensure that a basic knowledge of working with homeless people, prevention and Housing First forms part of the curricula of social work degree programmes, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport will liaise with Universities of Applied Sciences and the Netherlands Association of Vocational Education and Training Colleges (Mbo-raad) to ensure that the latest insights around tried and tested interventions for tackling homelessness are incorporated into social work curricula.

Dutch Research Agenda (NWA)

The Dutch Research Council and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport have made funds available for scientific research, from 2023 onwards, into the strategy for tackling homelessness and encouraging assisted living at home (beschermd thuis). This research is being conducted by broad consortia comprising of partners from the field. The progress and the results are being broadly shared in the various knowledge networks. This enables us to understand better which interventions are effective. By opening up this research agenda, in the long term, every professional involved with (the threat of) homelessness will have access to a broad range of effective options.

4. Creation of the Plan

In this Action Plan on Homelessness we align with existing programmes and initiatives such as Assisted Living at Home (Een Beschermd Thuis), A Home for Everyone (Een (T)huis voor Iedereen), the Action Plan on Money Worries, Poverty and Debt (Aanpak Geldzorgen, Armoede en Schulden), A Participation Act that puts people first (Participatiewet in Balans) and Work on Implementation (Werk aan Uitvoering). The aim of the Plan is to ensure that as many Dutch citizens as possible avoid the situation of becoming homeless and that, for those who end up homeless, over the next few years, Housing First will become the norm. Among other things, this will require significant improvements in implementation practice, bringing back of the human dimension, and the involvement of people with first-hand experience when drawing up and evaluating policy. In addition to various ministries, many other partners have contributed to this Action Plan. Partners such as interest organisations, people with first-hand experience, the youth panel De Derde Kamer, youth providers, mental health (GGZ) and social support (Wmo), judicial partners, education, temporary accommodation facilities, municipalities, VNG, Aedes, corporations, Valente, knowledge institutes, among others.

A major national kick-off in May 2022 marked the start of the joint creation of this Action Plan on Homelessness. We deliberately opted for an intensive process of co-creation, an intensive form of participation. This meant that we actually developed and wrote the plan together. At the same time, it meant that the creation of the plan was a process of negotiation and the reconciling of at times opposing views and interests. We have endeavoured as best we can to do justice to everyone's input. Some partners, however, may be disappointed, because actions are less far-reaching than they had hoped, for example. For the Action Plan on Homelessness, the input of the entire chain is crucial, so it is important that we continue to work together closely with the most critical partners.

A Coalition on Homelessness has been formed and has contributed to the vision and ambition and the four national themed sessions, based on all of the input from the national kick-off in May. This coalition has also played an important role in the drafting process. The Coalition on Homelessness comprises of the following partners: VNG, the municipalities of Amsterdam, Zwolle, Den Bosch, the Region of Friesland, Aedes, corporatie Zayas, Valente, de Tussenvoorziening, HVO Querido, SMO Den Bosch, Leger des Heils (the Salvation Army), the youth panel De Derde Kamer, Straat Consulaat, Stichting Zwerfjongeren Nederland, Housing First Nederland, GGZ Nederland, the Ministry Social Affairs and Employment, the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, the Ministry of Justice and Security and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport.

During four national themed sessions where we looked in depth at the issue of homelessness, more than 200 people from the whole of the field discussed problems and solutions. The themed sessions focused on: prevention of homelessness, Housing First, integrated working and getting the basics in order, stigma, monitoring and the involvement of people with first-hand experience in policy. The discussions that took place during these themed days have been extremely valuable to the creation of this plan. The same applies to the subsequent 'pressure cooker', whereby, in two intensive weeks of writing, with interim review sessions for stakeholders from the field, together with coalition partners, all the results from these themed sessions were incorporated into the plan as it stands.

All of these partners not only made an active contribution to the creation of the Action Plan on Homelessness but are, of course, invited to remain actively involved in its implementation. We would like to thank them for their input. Without their energy and commitment, we would not have the plan that we have today.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Action Plan on Homelessness glossary

Financial security

4-week search period: The 4-week search period is the search period for young people that starts after they apply for benefits from the municipality. Over this period, young people up to the age of 27 are expected to look for work or training before the municipality assesses their application for benefits. The 4-week search period is a provision under the Participation Act.

Category-based special benefit: Category-based special benefit is additional benefit granted to an entire target group that falls within the defined category. To receive category-based special benefit, the person concerned must come under one of the categories defined by law.

Young adults rule: Young people between the ages of 18 and 21 are subject to separate, lower benefit rules, known as the “young adults rule” (jongmeerderjarigen-norm). The amount of benefit young people up to the age of 21 receive is based on the parental maintenance obligation. The municipality can supplement this benefit payment with special benefit.

Cost-sharing rule: Under the cost-sharing rule, the more people who have their main place of residence in the same property, the lower the benefit payment. The municipality adjusts the benefit payment accordingly, based on the number of adults living in the same property.

Socially responsible debt collection: Socially responsible debt collection means collecting any amounts that are outstanding in a fair and solution-oriented way. Improving payment behaviour and reducing (problematic) debts among clients are the main objectives here.

Debt respite: People who are in debt can apply for a breathing space from the courts through the municipal debt support services. This delay in payment is known as a moratorium. Over a period of a maximum of six months, creditors, debt collection agencies and bailiffs cannot take measures against the person concerned. This period of debt respite aims to give people who are in debt the opportunity to get their finances in order.

Early detection: As far as debt support is concerned, early detection means identifying people with financial problems at as early a stage as possible in order to be able to provide them with support at an early stage. To this end, outreach support is used.

Prevention

Community Builder: A community builder is committed to bringing a neighbourhood or community together. Community building focuses on creating networks in communities in order to engage people and, as a result, to bring about social change.

FACT: The abbreviation FACT stands for Flexible Assertive Community Team. FACT mental health teams provide treatment in the community to people with serious psychiatric conditions. FACT teams can provide multidisciplinary treatment in the community over long periods of time, wherever the client is based and with the vision that a client recovers best at home, in their own environment.

Recovery and respite facilities: Recovery and respite facilities are accessible facilities where people can stay temporarily to work on recovery and development in the field of social integration, participation, social inclusion and/or stress and then return to their normal lives.

Peer contact: Peer contact is contact between people with a particular experience or problem, with a view to enabling them to support each other. It is a form of voluntary self-help.

NIMBY: NIMBY is an abbreviation for Not in My Backyard. NIMBY refers to the objections that people have if something is built or changed in the area where they live.

Mental health support adviser: A mental health support worker (POH-GGZ) is a support worker based at a GP surgery who can help explain and treat mental health conditions.

Debt support adviser : A debt support adviser (POH-schulden) is a support worker based at a GP surgery who can help identify the help that is needed by the person concerned and, where appropriate, with the provision of support. If necessary, a debt support adviser will refer people to social service bodies such as, for example, debt support provision.

The Big Five: The Big Five refers to five aspects of life: housing, purpose for the day (work or school), care and health, finance and informal support (relationships). In (youth) care, these five aspects of life are often used to draw up an integrated support plan.

'Pilot light' function: A 'pilot light' function or 'pilot light' contact involves a support worker known to the person concerned having periodic contact them for the purposes of follow-up care with a view to prevention and early detection of relapses. Where possible, both basic support services (Wmo) and specialist support services (Treatment in the community - health insurance) are included in the contract (Platform 31, 2018).

Care and support

Community support: Community support is support provided to people in their own home, outreach support. Community care can be provided by a social community team (SWT), an ACT team or a FACT team. Often it is a combination of these teams.

Assertive care: Assertive community care is a specific form of support in addiction care and public mental health care. It came into being because a specific group of people were not being reached (effectively) by standard forms of support. Assertive community care provides (unsolicited) support to clients with (often) complex problems who avoid seeking care. The support provided is proactive, outreach based and accessible.

Outreach approach: Outreach-based working is a proactive approach. The outreach worker empowers clients, focusing on vulnerable target groups who are not being reached (effectively) by existing services, support and care.

Continuity of support: Continuity of support means that clients keep the same support workers throughout the various phases of their recovery process. So, continuity goes further than support being provided by the same organisation, it involves support being provided by the same person.

Harm reduction: Harm reduction aims to limit damage to health as a result of the use of drugs and alcohol, whereby acceptance of this use is key.

Housing

Assisted Living: In the case of Assisted Residential Living (BW, beschermd wonen), 24 hour help/care is available and the client lives in an Assisted Living institution. In the case of Assisted Living at Home (Beschermd Wonen Thuis), help/care is available on demand 24 hours a day and the client's request for help is answered within 60 minutes. Finally, in the case of Assisted Living with Support (Beschermd Wonen Begeleid), help/care is available on demand 24 hours a day and the client's request for help is answered within four hours. In the case of the last two supported housing combinations, housing and care are separated.

Three-way contract, three-point contract, three-party agreement, rental through an intermediary : Tenancy agreement between tenant, corporation and care institution, in the name of the tenant. Specifically for people who need community support for a minimum of a year.

After 1 or 2 years, a decision is made as to whether this should become a standard tenancy agreement and what care is still needed. In this agreement, the parties have agreed to collaborate with each other as effectively as possible. An advantage of this agreement is that, compared with a standard agreement, the care is guaranteed.

Mixed living: Mixed living is used as a potential solution to a number of different housing issues and to enable the smooth transfer of 'vulnerable' groups of residents into a community. These are housing projects where different groups of people live together with a common purpose, have contact with each other and participate in joint activities.

Housing First methodology: Housing First is described by its founder Sam Tsemberis as 'housing as a basic right'. With this approach, the client's wishes are key. People on a Housing First pathway are offered housing immediately without it being conditional upon them receiving psychiatric treatment or being clean.

Housing First as system approach: Unlike the previous deployment of Housing First in the Netherlands, Housing First as a system approach⁴⁵ has multiple housing variants. At its heart is 'an independent, permanent home with your own tenancy agreement' whereby the client's own wishes in terms of their housing come first. This also includes housing concepts that incorporate elements of community building, such as mixed living. In a nutshell: housing variants with care in the neighbourhood or at a distance from it, in a form of a community or spread across the town/city or village.

Rental under specific conditions: In the case of rental under specific conditions (huren onder voorwaarden), the resident has a temporary tenancy agreement with a care clause. The tenancy agreement is drawn up in the resident's name directly. However, the care clause specifies conditions which may vary from one client to another. Often, clients are required to accept care for a specific period of time and not to cause a nuisance. If the resident fails to comply with the conditions, the tenancy agreement may be cancelled. The agreement also states that the care partner and housing corporation can share relevant information with each other.

Performance agreements: Performance agreements are annual agreements between the municipality, housing corporations and tenants organisations regarding the housing market and mutual collaboration. Topics include the availability, affordability and expansion of the housing stock, as well as sustainability and the housing of (specific) target groups.

Separation of housing and care: The separation of housing and care was introduced between 2013 and 2016. In essence, this means that housing and care are funded separately and are no longer both reimbursed under the Long-term Care Act (Wet Langdurige Zorg, Wlz – previously Awbz). The client themselves pays for their housing through rental or purchase. Their care is funded separately through the Care Insurance Act (Zorgverzekeringswet, Zvw), the Social Support Act (Wet Maatschappelijke Ondersteuning, Wmo) or the Long-term Care Act (Wlz) and, where appropriate, through their own means. The separation of housing and care has multiple objectives, such as encouraging people with a care need to live independently for longer and providing people in a residential setting with greater freedom of choice. It also aims to increase the range of different types of (supported) housing available.

Independent living (with community support): A home, with a contract (also) in the resident's name, enabling the person concerned to live in the community in as normal a way as possible and often with (agreements around) community support.

Skaeve Huse: Skaeve Huse is a Danish concept whereby the client lives independently and more remotely from a community and can receive support, also known as supported living. It involves the installation of accommodation units (sometimes containers) on the edge of the town/city, which are used as an alternative for clients who cannot easily be housed (independently) in the community and/or in a group. These are mostly used to house people with a serious addiction problem, whose behaviour causes a nuisance. The aim is that these types of housing are visited regularly by a social housing manager. Care is optional.

Housing circles: Housing circles are independent dwellings around an Assisted Residential Living facility. Here, people can live independently with support at home and live close to the Assisted Residential Living facility. As a result, it is easier to scale up community support where necessary, whilst retaining familiar support workers. Opportunities for meeting others and for taking part in daily activities are also close by.

⁴⁵ Whereas Housing First was previously deployed in the Netherlands as a freestanding intervention that tackled homelessness for a sub-group, the transition has since been made to Housing First as the basis for a system-wide administrative approach to the ending of homelessness. Here, Housing First focuses on prevention also. Ultimately, the higher goal is to have to work on prevention only.

Appendix 2: Overview of action lines, results, time frame, lead partners and collaboration with other programmes

What	By when	Lead partner(s)	Action plan/ programme
Action line 1: Strengthening of financial security			
Objective: Guaranteeing of a minimum income			
Results:			
Adjustment of the 4-week search period for young people up to the age of 27.	2024	SZW	Money worries, poverty and debt programme.
Codify in law the fact that, in the case of a stay which is presumed to be temporary in nature, the cost-sharing rule does not apply.	2023	SZW	
Harmonisation of the amount of the additional special benefit paid to young people whose parents are absent or who cannot offer support due to illness or poverty.	2024	SZW	A Participation Act that puts people first.
Creation of the option to grant category-based special benefits.	2024	SZW	
Increase in the limits for additional earnings (measure from coalition agreement).	2024	SZW, VNG	
In urgent situations, depart from the principle that application date is start date.	2026	SZW	A Participation Act that puts people first
Receipts from gifts and occasional hobby-related sales.	2026	SZW	A Participation Act that puts people first
More scope for taking account of individual circumstances when imposing measures.	2026	SZW	A Participation Act that puts people first
Early detection and debt support.	2025	SZW	
Socially responsible debt collection.	2025	SZW, J&V	
Apply tried and tested debt interventions.	2025	SZW	
Rent reduction for low incomes and rent benefit.	2025	BZK	A Home for Everyone.
A halving of the number of children who grow up in poverty by 2025 (compared with 2015).	2025	SZW	Money worries, poverty and debt programme.
A halving of the number of people in poverty by 2030 (compared with 2015).	2030	SZW	
A halving of the number of households with problematic debts by 2030.	2030	SZW	

What	By when	Lead partner(s)	Action plan/ programme
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Action line 2: Prevention

Objective: Homelessness is ended once and for all

Results:

More realistic photos are used in the media and in Government communications.	2025	VWS	Action Plan on Homelessness
A more positive image of and awareness of homelessness in society as a whole; less resistance/less NIMBY effect ⁴⁶ .	2028		Action Plan on Homelessness
Nobody is discriminated against due to their homeless status.	2030	VWS	Action Plan on Homelessness
Good, readily accessible information on all aspects of life: young people and adults can find their way around the system and can make informed choices because they know their rights and obligations.	2026	VWS, SZW, WaU, BZK, VNG	Action Plan on Homelessness
Legal protection of people on low incomes who are affected by (the threat of) homelessness is improved.	2028	J&V, municipalities	Parliamentary Enquiry Committee (POK)
People are identified earlier and get the help that they need earlier, issues can be resolved far more successfully and relapses can be avoided.	2027	VWS	Action plan on Homelessness, Integrated Care Agreement (IZA)
Link between medical and social care and care for the uninsured is improved.	2028	VWS, VNG, GGD (Regional Public Health Services)	Action plan on Homelessness, Integrated Care Agreement (IZA)
Leaving a residential setting does not lead to homelessness.	2030	VWS, VNG municipalities, J&V, BZK, GGZNL (mental health Netherlands)	Action Plan on Homelessness
Evictions are avoided wherever possible and nobody is evicted without help to find an appropriate sustainable housing solution.	2030	VWS, BZK, Aedes, municipalities	Action Plan on Homelessness

⁴⁶ Not In My Backyard

What	By when	Lead partner(s)	Action plan/ programme
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Action line 3: Housing First

Objective: Everyone has a stable place to live or is helped into as homely as possible a solution, with suitable support where necessary.

Results:

By 2025, half of the regions no longer have large long-term temporary accommodation facilities ⁴⁷ , by 2030 none at all.	2030	VNG, Municipalities	Action Plan on Homelessness
Qualitative monitoring establishes how the transition from temporary accommodation to Housing First is progressing.	2026	VNG, VWS, municipalities	Action Plan on Homelessness
A tenancy agreement in the tenant's own name is the norm, tenancy agreements in the name of a third party are used if this is in the interests of the tenant, who has a say in this themselves.	2030	VWS, BZK, VNG, Aedes	Action Plan on Homelessness
Nobody stays in an emergency or interim facility longer than is strictly necessary for a successful transition to a sustainable stable housing solution.	2027	VWS, VNG, municipalities	Action Plan on Homelessness
Homeless people do not sleep rough due to a lack of accessible, safe and appropriate emergency or interim accommodation	2025	VWS, VNG, municipalities	Action Plan on Homelessness
Housing First as a system approach is mainstream: working in accordance with the guiding principles is applied broadly in all regions.	2030	VWS, VNG, municipalities	Action Plan on Homelessness
All municipalities have drawn up visions for supported housing using substantiated (regional) statistics, on the basis of which housing is allocated, built, repurposed and/or procured for homeless people.	2024	VNG, municipalities	Assisted Living at Home, A Home for Everyone
Integrated monitor of housing for vulnerable groups is operational.	2024	BZK	A Home for Everyone
Wet versterken regie volkshuisvesting (law giving local authorities greater control over public housing) is in force, provinces start evaluating visions for supported housing and homeless people are given priority for social rented properties.	2024	BZK	A Home for Everyone
Agreements between all partners (municipalities, corporations, care providers, the individuals themselves) around suitable care and support based on individual needs and priority housing regulations are in place in all municipalities.	2025	VNG, municipalities, BZK, VWS	A Home for Everyone
By 2030, 250,000 social rented properties have been built.	2030	BZK	A Home for Everyone

⁴⁷ In the future, (short-term) emergency housing will continue to be needed to as limited an extent as possible. These locations will have single rooms.

What	By when	Lead partner(s)	Action plan/ programme
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Action line 4: Strengthening of implementation practice: coordination of all aspects of life, speed and the human dimension are key.

Objective: Professionals in implementation practice can provide	fast, integrated support	tailored to individual needs	.
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Results:

The basics in order: all lead municipalities work with a form of coordination in order to get the basics in order quickly and in an integrated way.	2025	VWS, SZW, VNG	Action Plan on Homelessness
Simpler and quicker access to basic services such as registration in the BRP and income leads to shorter pathways and faster recovery and greater trust in the government.	2027	VWS, SZW, BZK, J&V, VNG, WaU	Action Plan on Homelessness

Action line 5: Policy is drawn up in conjunction with people who have first-hand experience

Objective: First-hand knowledge is used throughout the policy cycle, at local and	national level		
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Results:

First-hand knowledge embedded in governance structure of Action Plan on Homelessness 2023-2030.	2023	VWS	Action Plan on Homelessness
Policy is not created without the input of people with experience, both nationally and locally.	2026	VWS, VNG, municipalities	Action Plan on Homelessness

Action line 6: Additional input for specific target groups

Objective: Where the generic approach is inadequate for specific target groups, additional input is provided, and extra vulnerable groups are provided with suitable support.

Results:

Specific actions which aim to reduce the number of homeless young people are in place.	2024	OCW, VWS, Jeugdzorg NL	Action Plan on Homelessness
LGBTIQ+ target group more visible and professionals trained in detection and providing suitable tailored support.	2026	VWS, OCW	Empowerment and equal rights for LGTBIQ+
Pilot and evaluation of Action Plan on Homeless EU citizens (SZW, J&V, VWS).	2026	VWS, SZW, VNG, municipalities	Action plan on Homeless EU citizens

Prerequisites

VNG is developing a dashboard to monitor the objectives of the plan both quantitatively and qualitatively in collaboration with coalition partners.	2024	VNG	Action Plan on Homelessness
Number of homeless young people and adults and young people and adults at risk of becoming homeless is made clear through with the ETHOS Light definition.	2030	VWS, VNG Realisatie, CBS and municipalities, Utrecht University of Applied Sciences (HU)	Action Plan on Homelessness

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