

# Configuration of a local network of assistance to the homeless integrated into the Public Social Services System

100 arguments and proposals



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# Configuration of a local network of assistance to the homeless integrated into the Public Social Services System

100 arguments and proposals



GOBIERNO  
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# I. Introduction and acknowledgements

The situation suffered by the homeless is considered one of the most extreme forms of social exclusion and poverty. The fact that it does not hold a relevant role in social policy as a whole is problematic, yet is increasingly arousing interest both on the national and European stage. Under the European Union (EU) framework, a number of developments have occurred in recent years, and in various Members States' strategies are being adopted and implemented to combat this phenomenon.

In the case of Spain, the issue is tackled from a number of fronts. In 2009, the Ministry of Health, Social Policy and Equality, via the Directorate General of Social Policy, Families and Infancy, decided to jump-start measures developed to approach this extreme social exclusion problem, for which the creation of a specific, dedicated Working Group was proposed

This Technical Cooperation Group for assistance to the homeless was resolved in the joint meeting of the «National Action Plan for Social Inclusion Special Commission and follow-up commission of projects co-financed by Autonomous Communities (ACs) and the cities of Ceuta and Melilla», of which the Directorate General of Social Policy, Families and Infancy forms part, as well as representatives of social services and social inclusion areas of all ACs, the cities of Ceuta and Melilla and the Spanish Federation of Towns and Provinces (FEMP in its Spanish acronym).

The Group was founded on 12 November 2009 with the aim of continuing inter-administration technical cooperation in order to tackle the phenomenon of homelessness at a state level, as well as the social assistance measures of the homeless as a vulnerable group, as reflected in national action plans for social inclusion in the Kingdom of Spain and in the inclusion plans of practically all ACs and certain city councils<sup>1</sup>.

Autonomous Communities that form a part of this include: Andalusia, Aragón, Balearic Islands, Castile-La Mancha, Catalonia (Catalonia Regional Government and Barcelona City Council), Extremadura, Madrid (Madrid Regional Government and Madrid City Council), Community of Valencia, La Rioja and the Basque Country and the FEMP.

In order to carry out the work planned by the Group in its first meeting, it resolved to collaborate externally with a field expert. This collaboration was undertaken with Gustavo A. García Herrero who

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mspsi.gob.es/politicaSocial/inclusionSocial/inclusionSocialEspana/home.htm>

produced the first draft of a dossier entitled «*100 arguments and proposals for the configuration of a local network of assistance to the homeless, integrated into the Public Social Services System*» (hereinafter, the PSSS): the Dossier was debated in the Working Group and was subsequently submitted to more exhaustive analysis in a «State Seminar on assistance to the homeless»<sup>2</sup>, held in Seville on 25 and 26 November 2010. This Seminar (one of the activities carried out in the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion) was organised by the Ministry of Health, Social Policy and Equality, the Andalusian Regional Government and Seville City Council, and was attended by representatives of numerous ACs, city councils, social entities and experts.

The definitive document now submitted is accompanied by the contributions made by components of the Group and those originating from this Seminar, as well as the proposals of *Federación de Entidades de Apoyo a personas sin hogar* (Federation of Entities Supporting the Homeless, FEPSH in its Spanish acronym).

This dossier is the framework from which future projects to be undertaken shall be taken, following the technical collaboration within the Working Group.

The Directorate General of Social Policy, Family and Infancy wishes to thank all those who contributed to the drafting of this dossier, which is now to be published by the Ministry of Health, Social Policy and Equality; the members of the Working Group; public administrations, social entities that brought their ideas and work to the State Seminar held in Seville; the contributing experts and, in particular, to Gustavo García Herrero, our field expert, and the team of professionals of the Zaragoza City Council Shelter for their excellent work and contributions.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.mspsi.gob.es/politicaSocial/portada/home.htm>

## II. Summary

With the aim of this dossier driving forward strategic social policy for assistance to the homeless, its main objectives are the following:

- To be a benchmark for the debate and adoption of agreements under the framework of the aforementioned technical cooperation group.
- To be a guide for political leaders and technical experts of local and Autonomous Community administrations, in the planning and assessment of resources and assistance services for the homeless, as well as the social intervention professionals and volunteers working with the homeless.

This document is divided into three sections:

- **Premises**
- **Structures**
- **Intervention**

Each in turn comprises various headings, worked into a total of 100 arguments set out in specific paragraphs of proposals which, in view of the end purpose of the dossier, may be subject to debate.

This dossier is a strategic one; its contents are not proposals to be realised immediately, but rather, are guidelines for the future development of a network of centres and services for assistance to the homeless. This development must be taken up by every Autonomous Community and local entity<sup>3</sup> and adapted to their own situation, specific needs in this area, characteristics of their social services network and, of course, their budget restrictions.

It concerns the design of shared reference points and common homogeneous elements for the recognition of this network at State level. It is a public network, because it concerns the materialising of citizens' rights, which must push forward the actions of local entities, developing and recovering in certain cases, the protagonism corresponding to them in terms of assistance to the homeless.

<sup>3</sup> Generally city councils and other local corporations: provincial councils, joint communities, consortia, local public entities.

In addition to public responsibility and local protagonism, not-for-profit organisations that have such strong presence and leadership in the sector cannot be forgotten. These include the traditional non-governmental associations and organisations, as well as the new breed that proposes new intervention models suited to the current characteristics of homelessness. All these must maintain the presence and protagonism corresponding to them, under the framework of the public network of assistance to the homeless. The strategy proposed in this dossier reserves the basic level of assistance in this network to public ownership only. The remaining actions and resources are open to ownership and management by not-for-profit organisations and, where appropriate, other private entities, via the various methods of contracting, arrangement and collaboration driven by a public network with common criteria and homogeneous elements, and by effective public responsibility in assistance for homeless citizens.

It must be stressed that references to the homeless in this dossier are made in the restrictive sense, only including persons lacking accommodation of any type, who sleep in the street or who are temporarily housed in institutions or shelter, as categorised in the first two categories of the European Typology on Homelessness, ETHOS, by FEANTSA (European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless) and FEANTSA ESPAÑA: rooflessness and houselessness, excluding the two other categories (insecure housing and inadequate housing)<sup>4</sup>.

This precision is as such insofar as this dossier exclusively refers to the development of tools to assist those who find themselves without housing. As such, it is not an alternative but just an aspect of what must be a comprehensive homelessness eradication policy, which would require the tackling of the structural causes of homelessness and a decisive focus on its prevention, guaranteeing access to basic social rights for all citizens, and especially for those who are in situations of risk or vulnerability, by way of sufficient social protection, protection of health and appropriate health benefits (particularly in the case of mental illness), quality education, citizens' participation and decent appropriate housing and income guarantee.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.feantsa.org> and <http://www.feantsa.es/spip.php?article105>

# III. Premises

## Local leadership

### 1. Tradition and proximity

Due to tradition and proximity, assistance to the homeless is the responsibility of local corporations. This has historically been the case, although currently many have abandoned this responsibility, instead conferring it to not-for-profit organisations. This public responsibility must be recovered, particularly from a local standpoint.

Only **23.1% of the 615 centres for the homeless are publicly owned**, a percentage that has seen no change in recent years.

In **shelters, 41.2% of beds offered are public**. For beds in flats, this percentage is **21.4%**.

However, **more than three quarters (75.8%) of total financing of all centres is public**

Source: National Institute of Statistics (INE). Homeless Survey. Centres (2008)<sup>5</sup>.

### 2. Diversity

The ways in which responsibility is undertaken must be diverse; as diverse as the situation of each municipality due to its population characteristics, its geographical location and its historical background. A municipality with a population of more than 200,000 inhabitants is quite different to a small, rural municipality or even within rural areas, municipalities where seasonal agricultural work attracts large numbers of day labourers, compared to places where this is a rare occurrence. Likewise, metropolitan areas have, for these reasons, special characteristics that must be taken into consideration. However, all these must be aware that one way or another, assistance to the homeless is their own responsibility.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ine.es/> and <http://www.ine.es/prensa/np464.pd>

65.2 % of centres for the homeless are located in municipalities with populations in excess of 100,000 inhabitants. 12.2% are in municipalities with fewer than 20,000 inhabitants.

Source: INE. Homeless survey. Centres (2008).

### 3. Common minimum

That each municipality must adapt its response to its own specific homeless situation does not rule out the need to establish some principles and general guidelines, as well as a common minimum of benefits and provisions in order to achieve a state-level benchmark that guarantees a common basic protection programme for these people. Furthermore, the roaming nature of many homeless people makes a supra-municipal inter-structure fundamental, the basis of which must be a homogenous provision in its fundamental aspects.

### 4. Responsibility of Autonomous Communities

In order that local corporations may fulfil this responsibility of assistance to the homeless, economic and technical support from respective Autonomous Communities is vital. These must be responsible for defining the scope of municipal responsibility in this area in their regulatory framework, and likewise manoeuvre the necessary coordination between various municipalities and territories.

### 5. Responsibility of the General State Administration

The General State Administration (GSA) must also play an economic support role (by providing funds for the development of basic social services benefits for local corporations or the Concerted Project<sup>6</sup> as well as technical support for local entities via their Autonomous Communities, for

<sup>6</sup> Resolution of 28 February 2011, of the Secretariat General of Social Policy and Consumer Affairs, which published the Agreement of the Council of Ministers of 25 February 2011, for the forming of distribution criteria, as well as the resulting criteria for 2011, of the financial commitments approved by the Social Affairs Conference in its meeting of 27 January 2011, with respect to credit intended for the co-financing of social plans or programmes (Official State Gazette, *(BOE)* no. 66, 18 March 2011).

the development of their responsibilities to assist the homeless and to manoeuvre state-level cooperation in this area, made essential by the nomadic nature of many homeless people. The GSA must also assume responsibility for the design and consensus with Autonomous Communities and local corporations of a *State programme for assistance to the homeless*, which would be a reference point for the planning and intervention by public administrations as a whole with this collective.

**Only 12 shelters were financed in the Concerted Project** in 2008 and 2009: 7 in Andalusia (Jaén, Huelva, Granada, Jerez, Cádiz, Malaga and Seville), 3 in Galicia (Lugo, Ourense and La Gudiña), 1 in the Canary Isles (Santa Cruz de Tenerife) and 1 in Aragón (Zaragoza). In 2009 these Shelters offered a total of **653 beds** (Seville was not included in 2009). In 2010, the number of shelters dropped to 11 when the Jaén programme closed its doors.

Source: Ministry of Health and Social Policy. Report / Presentation of the Concerted Project<sup>7</sup>.

## 6. Municipal planning and coordination

Local responsibility for assistance to the homeless requires tailored planning and coordination in each region, wherein the local entity itself may roll out its own measures parallel to not-for-profit organisations, which they may, in turn, integrate or coordinate into the public Homeless Assistance Network.

## 7. Public ownership

Local responsibility must include ownership of the centres and services dedicated to assisting the homeless in their territory which, due to its basic nature and due to entailing access to the network, are of a strategic nature. The state and autonomous-level agreements on minimums shall specify these basic centres and services that must be publicly owned. By guaranteeing this public ownership, local entities may manage their centres and service by contracting material and technical services that do not affect

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.mpsi.gob.es/politicaSocial/inclusionSocial/serviciosSociales/planConcertado/home.htm>

the recognition or undertaking of that which is considered to be basic social protection of the homeless in the region.

## 8. Support for not-for-profit initiatives

Taking into account the important tradition and presence of social initiative in assisting the homeless, collaboration with these types of entities must be encouraged and supported as a priority in order to develop regional networks of centres and services, without ever substituting public responsibility but, rather, complementing it. This is why collaboration via subsidies or agreements with local entities must not substitute the responsibility for a publicly owned centre or service, the management of which can only be externalised via the accepted forms of contracting. Financing by any public administration, be it state, autonomous or local, to any not-for-profit organisation for assistance to the homeless must be conditioned to its inclusion in local planning and administration.



### **Public Ownership**

The scope that public ownership should have in the Homeless Assistance Network is subject to debate, even more so if there must be a space reserved within it for direct public management that cannot be delegated.

## In the Public Social Services System

### 9. Under the Framework of the Public Social Services System

The network of assistance to the homeless forms part of the PSSS. Within this, a minimum level of primary assistance must be guaranteed which offers citizens who find themselves without housing the information and guidance, technical support and access to benefits and services that may correspond to them. Likewise, basic benefits of alternative accommodation and social inclusion must be guaranteed, as well as, in certain cases, basic home help provisions, which is now becoming practice in certain Homeless Assistance Networks.

## 10. Rights to benefits

Subjective rights that are established in the new social services autonomous legislation must also consider the situation of the homeless. Catalogues or portfolios of benefits and services which specify users, conditions, contents and processes for the effectiveness of these rights are specified must include benefits rights for the prevention, assistance and social inclusion of the homeless. It would be pertinent to reach a state consensus on certain minimal elements of content in this area, as a reference for service catalogues or portfolios that develop social services autonomous legislation.

**8 social services autonomous laws specifically mention «transients» as rights holders** contained therein. In the rest, they are referred to with very similar names, such as «persons in a situation of personal emergency or poverty», «persons in an evident state of need», «vulnerability, exclusion and social emergencies»....

**7 social services autonomous laws specifically mention benefits for «transients» or «the homeless».** All the laws provide for alternative accommodation benefits or residential attention in some capacity, as well as prevention and social inclusion.

**4 social services autonomous laws include specific resources for the homeless** (drop-in centres, shelters, social kitchens...)

**2 ACs have specific regulations for homeless centres:**

Andalusia (Order 28-07-00) and Galicia (Order 25-01-08).

Source: Own authorship from data provided by the Directorate General of Social Policy, Families and Infancy (2010).

## 11. Sufficient funding

It would be opportune for part of the economic resources that could be saved by local entities as a result of funding by the personal System for Autonomy and Care for Dependency<sup>8</sup> (SAAD in its Spanish acronym) for the demands that it has been undertaking to date, to be dedicated to the development of this Homeless Assistance Network, which has been the most underdeveloped area throughout the process of social services

<sup>8</sup> Law 39/2006 of 14 December on the Promotion of Personal Autonomy and Assistance for the Dependent (BOE no. 299 of 15 December 2006) and [http://www.dependencia.imserso.es/dependencia\\_01/index.htm](http://www.dependencia.imserso.es/dependencia_01/index.htm)

modernisation. It would be extremely concerning to see centres and services for assistance to the homeless see their resources cut due to the need to fund SAAD.

Between 57% (INE) and 54% (P. Cabrera) of funding for centres and services for assistance to the homeless in Spain is public. Of this, **40% originates from local councils**, 39% from ACs and the remaining 21% from the GSA (2004).

Source: Cabrera, P. J., *Homeless study* (2009).

## Diversify

### 12. Diversity of situations, diversity of responses

Beyond classifications that can be made to analyse such a complex reality as is that of the homeless, the centres and services dedicated to these persons witness a wide diversity of situations that cannot always be tackled in the same spaces, nor do they require the same standards, expectations or demands. This may include the homeless chronicled in city streets or with nomadic lifestyles, seasonal workers that attend homeless centres on an interim basis, recently arrived immigrants with no resource or linkage, precarious workers who lose their Jobs and no access to subsidies, the mentally ill whose situation makes living in the family home impossible... even single parent families or married couples with children that are deprived of their regular home and lack resources. These are situations whose common element is the need for accommodation and inclusion, but which require adapted responses according to the type of problem of degree of displacement.

### 13. Making diversification non-discriminatory

Under no circumstances can the need to offer specific, differentiated responses to different situations justify discriminatory behaviour or segregation. Only the type of process necessary for each individual or family justifies the existence of different services or centres, with different assistance and different settlement solutions. Origin, nationality, or cultural or religious difference alone does not justify the existence of differentiated centres or services.

## Dignify

### 14. Culminate the reform of centres and services

Given the delay with which the adaptation to the conditions of the new PSSS has taken place, the reform of centres and services for assistance to the homeless must be amplified. Dignify, make flexible and network collaboration must be benchmarks both for the design of new resources for the homeless as well as for the reform of that already existing. All publicly owned homeless assistance centres must have a developed regulatory framework with this criteria, which must be regularly updated, encouraging the participation of users in its creation.

### 15. Review all practices

The review of the operation of centres and services for assistance to the homeless is essential in order to detect any regulation or practice that does not respect people's rights and dignity. Security, also being a right that all centres must guarantee, under no circumstances justifies regulations or practices that infringe the rights of the person or which are to the detriment of users of these centres, and which would never be allowed for use with other people. Supervision and guarantee of the fulfilment of the rights of people who use the centres and services for assistance to the homeless must be carried out via public auditing carried out by inspection services instructed by Autonomous Communities, particularly in centres that form part of the catalogue provided by legislation for this group. Poor practices that entail institutional abuse of the homeless must be condemned.

### 16. Information

Centres and service for assistance to the homeless must offer their users digestible information on the conditions of use and, in particular, on users' rights, beyond than simply stating the restrictions or limitations of use of the centre or service. Information provided to users must also include the resources of the centre or service, its uses, cost and funding, as these are all included in the rights of these persons as users and consumers. Currently, more than half of the users of centres and services for the homeless in Spain are foreign nationals, meaning that this information should be prepared in various languages in order to ease its understanding by these persons. One of the commitments of the professionals and volunteers of these centres

and services for assistance to the homeless must be to enable understanding of this information for all users.

## 17. Data Protection

The registration of personal data or other data that may be required in intervention must be made in accordance with requirements of the Personal Data Protection Law<sup>9</sup>, informing the user, requesting their authorisation and informing them of their right to access and rectification. No transfer of personal data may be made to another centre or service that is not expressly authorised by the subject thereof. This personal data shall be taken into special consideration when designing any centralised information system or network.

## 18. Claims, complaints and suggestions

All homeless assistance centres and services must have accessible and efficient mechanisms in order that their users may submit claims, complaints and suggestions, as well as mechanisms to facilitate their swift response.

## 19. Sanctions

All homeless assistance centres and services must establish and respect sanctions or procedures in line with the law. Expulsions or any other disciplinary measure as a result of the unilateral decision of senior management or certain employees, to the margin of this procedure, are forbidden. The sanctions procedure may include summary actions when the circumstances require as such, always respecting the separation between instigator and resolver, as well as the process of prior hearing of the interested party. Sanctions may never imply the suspension, be it temporary or otherwise, from the right to emergency accommodation, except when for safety reasons, which must be reported for the corresponding police intervention. Regulation in these areas in homeless assistance centres and services must be carried out with the necessary legal advice to ensure user rights with the practical execution of sanctions when they occur.

<sup>9</sup> Law 15/1999, of 13 December, on personal data protection.



### **Sanctions**

Great care must be taken to find a sanctions procedure appropriate to the law that meets with administrative procedure in this matter, combined with the basic protection that must be endeavoured for all, as well as the safety of all other users and employees.

## 20. Participation

Homeless assistance centres and services shall established participation mechanisms adapted to users and the centre itself, going further than tradition forms of participation in social services centres by employing creative means, something difficult to apply in certain homeless assistance centres and services, particularly drop-in centres and low demand centres. Participation is necessary both in order to improve the quality of service as well as for the self-esteem of users, which is essential in homeless assistance centres and services. This is why information and consultation with users must be a regular practice in all the network's centres and services, and must also favour joint decisions and the effective involvement of users in their operation, particularly in medium to long stay processes. The most essential is the necessary guarantee that each person be a participant in the decisions and changes that affect his/her own life.

## 21. Removal of barriers

Homeless assistance centres and services must be designed with criteria for accessibility, removing architectural barriers and favouring their use by persons with functional limitations. Current centres and services must make all possible efforts to make their facilities accessible and to remove architectural barriers, always in accordance with universal accessibility regulations in force.

## Flexibility

### 22. Flexibility of regulations

The characteristics of persons that use homeless assistance centres require their regulations to be designed in such a way as to allow enough flexibility

in their application. The persons in charge of these centres must establish internal protocols in order for flexibility to be applied with technical criteria in each intervention, and avoid opportunities for discretionary decision making.

## 23. Adaptability of the centre to people

Likewise, the characteristics of people that use centres and services for the homeless mean that they must be managed whilst allowed the greatest capacity for adaptation to its users special circumstances and to social changes, as well as the sufficient permeability in order to allow for collaboration with other centres and services in the Homeless Assistance Network and, in general, with the social services network.

## Integral nature and network collaboration

### 24. Network collaboration

Intervention with the homeless requires the capacity to approach very diverse fields. Assistance, relationships, work, healthcare, education... no centre, service or institution can attempt to respond to all these needs. This is why the coordination of a network capable of establishing agile and simple circuits is so important, which allows for action in areas which require varied responses to the needs of each person. Integral interventions for integral centres, which require all public and private resources available for channels to enable the homeless to overcome their situation, which must always be the ultimate goal towards which all these centres intervene. Network collaboration must not only be coordinated in daily interventions, but must be carried out from spaces of shared responsibility that materialise in strategies and ways of organising this intervention. The local field must be the privileged, essential stage for this network collaboration, although before this can be so, coordination difficulties must be overcome with non-local services.

### 25. Activate standardised responses

In terms of healthcare or labour insertion, homeless assistance centres and services must use the structures of the corresponding public systems, even when specific temporary actions can be established for the homeless,

provided that they do not substitute the responsibility of these systems, but rather, are geared towards easing the access to its structures, services and benefits. Also in terms of education, cultural, sport and particularly in terms of leisure and free time, specific actions for the homeless must not impede the aim of favouring the integration of the persons, whenever possible, in standardised areas. Likewise, the need to provide interim accommodation in a homeless assistance centre must not be a reason for a person to cease to be helped by the corresponding basic social services structures. The homeless must be guaranteed their right to evaluation of their dependency situation, when necessary, and that this is treated as a priority, as well as their receipt of economic benefits or services that may result from this evaluation. In the case of women suffering from domestic violence, the loss of housing must not impede their assistance in dedicated centres for victims of domestic violence.

## 26. Comprehensive assistance

In the specific scope of social services activities, these must offer the homeless a wide range of available options, from assistance for their basic accommodation needs, food, clothing and hygiene, information and guidance, low demand and alternatives to insertion. The motivation for overcoming homelessness must be constant in all levels of intervention, particularly in initial stages, and always respecting the free decision of the person. The Homeless Assistance Network must design the most agile and effective circuits to guarantee access to centres and services of all other public systems, particularly the Public Healthcare System (PHS), the housing system and income guarantee and other external resources.

## Prevent and eradicate homelessness

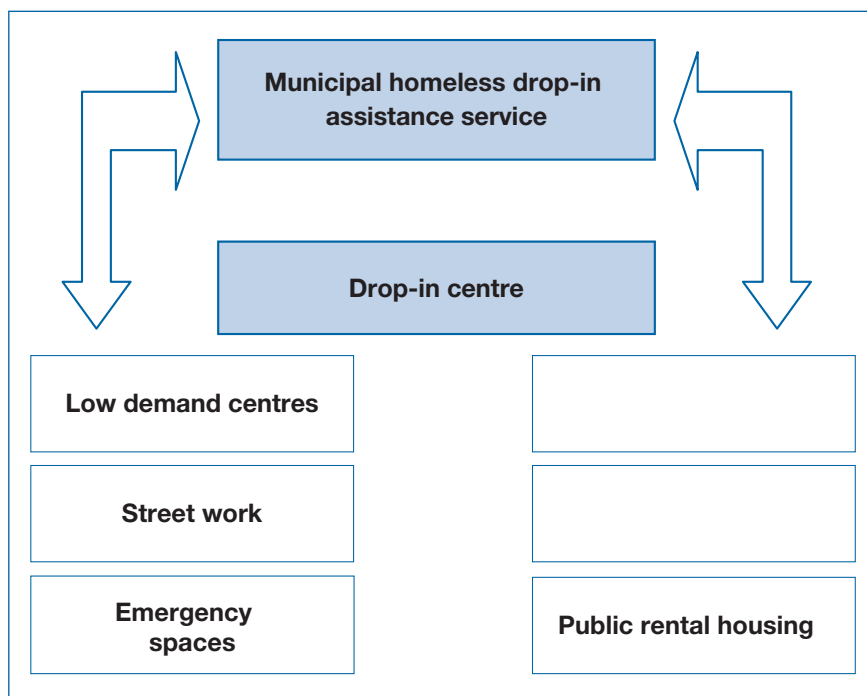
### 27. Prevent situations of homelessness

The reasons why a person becomes homeless are not always treatable by social services. This does not exempt us from the responsibility of indicating and instructing public administrations to intervene in the specific areas that correspond to them. Furthermore, we are responsible for intervening in areas of personal, family and social vulnerability, which are treatable by social services, intensifying all professional support and dedicating the necessary resources to avoid exclusion processes that may lead to a person becoming homeless.

## 28. Support of strategies to eradicate homelessness

The development of a Homeless Assistance Network, part of the strategy that this dossier intends to define, must be inserted in the framework of strategies geared towards the eradication of homelessness, such as those promoted at European level by a number of social entities, with comprehensive measures in the diverse policies and initiatives that may lead to this. These strategies must give special importance to employment and housing policies, as well as in the upgrading of all social policies in order to make the universality of rights that should be guaranteed to them a reality.

## IV. Structures



### 29. Local homeless assistance programme

Local entities obliged to undertake responsibility for assistance to the homeless in accordance with regulations, need a dedicated programme to establish their intervention model, as well as the network of centres and services for accommodation and social inclusion, with the features and dimensions required by each.

### 30. Comprehensive network of centres and services

To achieve this, the local network must have a *Municipal Drop-in Service* as a reference point to coordinate the various centres and services for accommodation and assistance for basic needs such as street work and emergency spaces. The traditional intervention model for the homeless

must be transformed, which was formerly exclusively based on shelters, accommodations centres, to establish tools more favourable to social inclusion and improvement processes.

### 31. Homogenising terms

Progress in the conceptual and terminological homogenisation of the various centres and services of the homeless assistance work is fundamental, as well as the characteristics and minimum contents of each of these.

### 32. Participation and collaboration of private entities

Being a public responsibility network, not-for-profit initiatives with strong presence and protagonism in the sector can be integrated by undertaking ownership of management of centres and services via contracting or arrangement methods, or impulse and collaboration measures such as subsidies and agreements, except in centres and services which, due to their basic nature or due to being a benchmark and primary access point, must be municipally owned, even when they can be managed by private entities via one of the contracting methods provided for in the Public Sector Contracts Law<sup>10</sup>.

### 33. Location and impact analysis in the region

The decision to locate any homeless assistance centre in the region must be made with detailed analysis of the most immediate surroundings and, where appropriate, establishment of the measures necessary to reduce the negative impacts that may be occasioned in the neighbourhood. Homeless assistance centres and services must be located in a region which is nearby (not in far from city centres and with access to resources, transport, etc.), equal (the whole municipality must jointly respond to these needs) and well rooted (in the area where the centre is located and the nearest neighbourhood).

<sup>10</sup> Law 30/2007, of 30 October, on Public Sector Contracts (*BOE* no. 261, of 31 October 2007) and Royal Decree 817/2009 of 8 May, for the partial development of Law 30/2007, of 30 October, on Public Sector Contracts (*BOE* no. 118, of 15 May 2009)

### 34. Differentiate social emergencies from assistance and help for the homeless

The lack of specific facilities has meant that in many cities, the specific facilities that exist for assistance to the homeless are used to tackle social emergencies of persons and families that for certain circumstances have been deprived of their regular housing, and urgently require alternative accommodation. It is essential that these persons and families do not inappropriately incorporate themselves into a network that assists the homeless, but rather, they have differentiated spaces for their accommodation and assistance in the most standardised way possible. The Homeless Assistance Network cannot nor should it be an option in these situations, but rather, it must exclusively be dedicated to the immediate meeting of basic needs, and the social assistance appropriate to the characteristics and needs of the homeless person in his/her particular situation, always geared towards improving their situation and achieving social inclusion. Consequently, social emergency assistance and homeless assistance must be maintained as differentiated networks, with specific criteria and different resources.



#### **Social emergencies vs. homeless assistance centres**

This issue is a frequent subject of debate, due to the tradition of many places and, at times, the difficulty of differentiating various situations.

## Municipal drop-in service for the homeless

### 35. Primary assistance by social services for the displaced and homeless

Each municipality must have its own *Municipal Drop-in Service* which fulfils the primary assistance functions of the public social services network for non-residents —the displaced, transients, etc.—, as well as for those residing in the municipality either in the street or in non-habitable spaces. This service shall be the reference of the municipality’s network of centres and services for the homeless and will provide technical assistance to municipal structures for the planning and coordination of activities in this

area. In municipalities that, due to their low number of inhabitants, cannot justify the existence of a specific service with these characteristics, their functions shall be taken on by basic social services structures. Municipalities may work jointly or work together in regional groups or consortia to manage and provide the Municipal Drop-in Service for the homeless.



### **Municipal Drop-in Service**

Whether or not this Service should exist is subject to debate, as well as its strategic function in the Homeless Assistance Network and, in any event, the need for it to be not only publicly owned, but under direct management that cannot be delegated.

## 36. Independent or integrated into a drop-in centre

The Municipal Drop-in Service for the homeless may be incorporated into an accommodation service, becoming its admission service, or may be organised independently according to the characteristics and needs of each municipality or areas. In any event, it must be the place of reference in the region for the various drop-in models that may co-exist within.

## 37. Professionalism

The Municipal Drop-in Service for the homeless shall have the social workers and other professionals necessary to guarantee primary assistance for this group. Each Autonomous Community must determine the minimum composition that these services must have according to the size or characteristics of each municipality or area.

## 38. Management of economic subsidies

The Municipal Drop-in Service must have economic subsidies available for expenses that the people it assists must assume, and which are included in the intervention carried out with these. These subsidies must have an agile management procedure in order to be able to credit these immediately, which is essential in order to serve their purpose.

## 39. The end of mass assistance spaces

In the design of the local assistance service for the homeless, mass assistance spaces (macro shelters or macro drop-in centres) are resources that must be disposed of. In the new design, either by new construction or by the reform of existing centres, this model of a mass centre must be made redundant.

## 40. Immediate and temporary assistance to basic needs

Local entities must use their drop-in centres or other establishments to permanently cover accommodation, food, clothing and hygiene needs —24 hours a day, 365 days a year—, and assist all those in need immediately and temporarily. When an drop-in centre for the homeless has to attend to social emergency situations that affect persons who are not considered to be «homeless», their time in drop-in must be limited to the time strictly necessary to process a standard accommodation and social assistance response, in order to avoid saturating the tools specifically dedicated to the homeless and, above all, in order to not oblige persons and families to use spaces and services that are not suited to their circumstances, that suppose an added risk to the situation of emergency that affects them.



### **Centrality of accommodation centres for the homeless?**

Some criticise what they deem to be an excessive *centrality* of shelters or drop-in centres for the homeless too closely linked to the need-resource dynamic, and propose that, instead, a local accommodation programme should be supported with diverse options to provide the sufficient amount of residential places in each locality.

## 41. Social inclusion services

Drop-in centres for the homeless must not be limited to the provision of accommodation and material assistance, but, rather, they must include the necessary technical services, with qualified professionals, in order to evaluate, diagnose, guide, design insertion plans, as well as all other interventions to motivate, support and technically accompany change processes geared towards social inclusion.

#### 42. Duration of stay according to the circumstances of each technically evaluated person

The stay in drop-in centres should not be pre-determined, but must be adjusted to the specific situation of each person, using professional evaluation and a personalised insertion plan, with generally established time limits. Accommodation in these centres must provide for situations and protocols to extend the stay for the necessary amount of time, when the exit of the person may suppose their rupture from an insertion process either begun or imminent, particularly for access to employment or receipt of a benefit.

#### 43. Coverage of the whole territory

In order to meet basic needs, drop-in centres must offer total coverage of the territory, which means that each Autonomous Community must establish the corresponding plans to define territorial boundaries and their capacity to attend to the needs of the homeless.

#### 44. Municipal ownership

Municipalities with populations in excess of 100,000 inhabitants must have at least one drop-in centre for the homeless, managed either directly or by contracts, agreements or arrangements with not-for-profit entities, for the provision of certain services or the centre's overall management. Special attention must be paid to metropolitan areas, in which a number of municipalities may manage a single drop-in centre jointly in order to attend to the needs of the homeless in their territory. In lesser populated municipalities, the drop-in centres may be replaced with specific spaces for material assistance, which likewise may be contracted, agreed or arranged with not-for-profit entities or companies, even with hospitality establishments. ACs may establish the drop-in centre of a municipality as a reference centre for a territory that comprises a number of smaller municipalities, thus establishing the funding commitments that this entails.

#### 45. Access free of abusive controls. Personal identity details, the sufficient requirement for access to accommodations centres

Access to drop-in centres for the homeless must be allowed with the sole condition that the person is identified and fulfils with the centres' regulations. Police-type control prior to access to these centres that indiscriminately considers this group to be potential criminals cannot be allowed. Under no circumstances may other information that is not personal be requested as a condition for access to these centres. It is neither ethical nor useful to the intervention or the organisation of the centre; likewise this does not guarantee trustworthiness. Not establishing a compulsory questionnaire for access to the centre that contains no more than the information necessary to identify the person does not mean that further information cannot be requested during other more specialised interventions, as required. Yet in low demand centres and emergency situations, the submission of documentation must not be even considered as a requirement for admission.

#### 46. Spaces and regulations to favour privacy

Accommodation in homeless drop-in centres must have privacy conditions for all users, since this is a condition that will encourage co-inhabitancy and insertion. Rooms must be private, even for short term stays, and as far as possible, with shower or WC. Space for co-inhabitancy must be designed to encourage relations. Group rooms must be an exception in homeless drop-in centres, and only for use in emergencies. The importance of spaces that favour privacy is so great that regulations in these centres allow their use not only during the night, but also for daytime use, as the possibility of privacy during these hours also provides opportunities to strengthen attitudes and skills for co-inhabitancy and insertion, and avoid the enormous deterioration of having to spend the day in collective spaces, with rigid timetables, or in the street.

# Low Demand Centres

## 47. Assistance minimums

«Low Demand» must not be considered an alternative to drop-in centres, but a complement to these for those whose circumstances make staying in these centres or any personal autonomy or inclusion process alternative unviable. Low Demand Centres must offer coverage for the most basic needs of accommodation, nutrition, clothing and hygiene for these persons, with no other demands in order to avoid posing a threat or risk for other users.



### **Concept and practice of *Low Demand***

The diversity of concepts and practices encompassed under the term *low demand* makes homogenous content in this area particularly complex and difficult to define, as well as pinpointing the intended users of this and their access conditions. Consequently, these are still objects of debate.

## 48. Diverse types of «low demand centres»

This assistance can be offered continually, with no limit of stay for the individual, according to their circumstances, or as spaces for sporadic use and free access to anyone who wishes to use it, as a damage reduction method. Between the two extremes, low demand centres can span a wide variety of centres and services adapted to the characteristics and needs of each municipality, even including daytime users, nocturnal accommodation, or both. Low demand may be isolated as a dedicated centre, or a specific centre or service within homeless accommodations centres. In any event, it must coordinate with the corresponding Municipal Drop-in Service, as even the chronically homeless are entitled to a level of primary assistance within the Public Social Services System.

## 49. Without renouncing personal improvement and insertion targets

Low demand centres in no way entails giving up on progress in the incorporation into centres and services that may allow users to overcome their situation, without this being a condition to continue receiving minimal assistance. It must be an opportunity to motivate and, whenever possible, processes to improve the lives of these persons, to allow them to use more standardised resources. Even when processes are longer and slower in Low demand centres, they must never be a «one size fits all» or the end of the road. No-one can be considered a permanent, undefined user *per se*, regardless of their characteristics and personal situation upon entering the centre or service, nor can the achieving of target to improve their situation ever be abandoned.

## Insertion units

### 50. Privacy and autonomy for co-inhabitancy

The Homeless Assistance Network must offer mid to long term accommodation in conditions of privacy which make personal and, at times, family, co-inhabitancy adequate, with the aim of optimising the development of the autonomy of each individual, and their protagonism in their own decision and the responsibility they hold. Spaces for collective use must be limited as far as possible in this type of unit, as well as any limitation to access and the use of space that each person or family unit is assigned, if not justified due to the demands of the insertion process itself.

### 51. Accompaniment

The professionals of the Municipal Drop-in Service or the centre or service that managed these units must carry out an accompaniment to these processes, as well as a follow-up to guarantee that targets are met and that their continuity is advisable. Insertion processes shall be coordinated from the Municipal Drop-in Service with the centres, services and entities included therein.

## Accommodation for families

### 52. Family co-inhabitancy, insertion paradigm

Family co-inhabitancy is an individual right and a paradigm of social insertion, under any of the forms freely chosen by the individual. As such, it must be respected and encouraged within the social services scope, creating conditions in order that it may be suitably developed. No social centres may break-up or restrict family co-inhabitancy as a condition for access or use of services. Likewise, homeless assistance centres cannot do so due to the very organisation of their centre, unless there are circumstances within the family living situation that advise as such.



#### **Are there homeless families?**

One of the most intense debates is that concerning the accommodation of families in the Homeless Assistance Network. Not only suitability is questioned, particularly when involving minors, but the very concept of a family becoming homeless.

### 53. Spaces for family co-inhabitancy

The homeless accommodation programme must include spaces that allow for the accommodation of family units in suitable conditions, particularly when the family includes minors. It is essential that a family is not kept in the Homeless Assistance Network for longer than strictly necessary to respond to the urgency of their situation, when this does not specifically concern the homeless, but social emergency situations that may affect people that until then had their own housing.

### 54. Accompanied minors

Accommodation for minors in Homeless Assistance Network centres and services, and particularly in drop-in centres, even on a temporary basis in emergency situation, shall only occur when these minors are accompanied by a father, mother or legal guardian. Under no circumstances will a non-accompanied minor be accommodated, a circumstance which, should it occur, shall be communicated immediately to the corresponding Autonomous

Community service for minors for their intervention. Protocols shall be established with juvenile prosecution service and with the children services of the corresponding Autonomous Community in order to arrange access and a stay for minors in these centres, with special attention to situations of risk that may be detected beyond the lack of housing and resources that led to their arrival at the centre.

## Sheltered housing and other accommodation

### 55. Strengthening of personal skills

Sheltered housing is a necessary resource in many insertion processes and, consequently, it is essential in the Homeless Assistance Network as an interim step to autonomy for co-inhabitancy in standardised housing, both for single persons and family units. Stays in these dwellings must help to strengthen personal co-inhabitancy skills. This is why they must be considered in the medium and long term and must provide the most privacy and personal autonomy possible. Professional accompaniment of processes and the education component are essential in order for stays in sheltered housing to fulfil their intentions.



#### **Greater centrality of sheltered housing in the Homeless Assistance Network**

Questioning what they consider to be the *excessive centrality* of accommodation centres, some call for greater protagonism of sheltered housing in the Homeless Assistance Network, separating their access from the intervention undertaken in other network tools, particularly in drop-in centres.

### 56. Economic collaboration of users

As yet another element in the personal autonomy process, economic collaboration of users in the maintenance of housing expenses must be established, insofar as their economic circumstances allow and under no circumstances constituting the total or partial payment of rent. Likewise, users must pay daily costs, including food, even when they are provided with subsidies for this from social services itself.

## 57. Reserving of municipal housing according to needs and not groups

City councils must reserve a sufficient number of dwellings for their use as sheltered housing. Likewise, they may extend this number by arrangements or agreements with not-for-profit institutions, always in coordination with the municipal accommodation plan for the homeless. Sheltered housing must be planned and must be available to the Municipal Drop-in Service to respond to accommodation needs for any person or family that may need it, rather than just be limited or typified by collectives.

## 58. Special access to public rental housing

City councils must establish mechanisms that allow prioritised access to municipal rental housing to people that fulfil insertion processes in the network of homeless centres and services, under the undertaking and accompaniment of professionals of the Municipal Drop-in Service. This collaboration by city councils to provide sheltered housing and access in special conditions to public rental housing is an essential element to complete the Homeless Assistance Network and its inclusion processes, thus avoiding the network becoming reduced to an enclosed and residual space in the social services framework. The joint responsibility of housing departments of local entities is fundamental to complete this along with other homeless accommodation options, such as mini-residential centres, shared flats, etc.

# Emergency accommodation for the homeless

## 59. Emergency accommodation

It must be the responsibility of city councils to create spaces and media for the urgent, flexible accommodation of needy persons for whom sleeping or remaining in the street may entail serious risk, either for climatological conditions or specific circumstances of those persons, when ordinary resources of the Homeless Assistance Network are full.

## 60. Protocols in emergency situations

Action protocols shall be established with local police and other citizens' services to intervene in emergency situations caused by climatological conditions (cold, heavy rain, very strong winds, etc.), in order to guarantee accommodation and basic necessities.

## 61. Organisation of emergency tools

The provision of spaces for emergency accommodation in low demand facilities and drop-in centres is a good option to respond to emergency situations. However, in accordance with the circumstances of each location, specific spaces could be established for these types of situations, always in coordination with the Municipal Drop-in Service.

# Specific spaces

## 62. Standardisation

Assistance for the specific needs of the homeless and development of the insertion process for each individual must be carried out, wherever possible, using standardised resources, in order to avoid situations that may strengthen the stigma of the situation in which the person lives. In particular, workshops in homeless drop-in centres must not be considered as alternatives to employment nor as a source of income for persons that could perform a remunerated job.

## 63. Specific spaces

With this standardisation criterion, the Homeless Assistance Network may be completed with specific facilities for working with insertion processes with the homeless in the circumstances that require as such. In particular, day centres for the homeless with mental illness, centres for homeless persons in the process of overcoming alcoholism, or centres for recovery of labour skills for homeless persons experiencing serious deterioration in this area, are some of the specific centres that the Homeless Assistance Network could consider, all in coordination with the corresponding Municipal Drop-in Service.

## Street work

### 64. Street work

The network of assistance centres and services for the homeless in a given location must be completed with street-level intervention services which allow the maintenance of permanent contact with homeless persons who decline to use these services. These services may be both daytime and night-time and, as is the case for the rest of the network's centres and services, they will be coordinated with the Municipal Drop-in Service. It is essential that street work with the homeless is coordinated with the intervention that can be carried out by other systems, particularly the Public Healthcare System<sup>11</sup>, in order to meet the needs of the homeless and particularly those suffering from mental health problems.



#### **The strategic nature of «street work»**

Some consider the strategic nature of «street work» to be the gateway to the system for many homeless people and, consequently, call for it to be publicly owned and compulsory in all locations where there is a homeless presence.

### 65. Continuity and in-setting intervention

In street work with the homeless, continuity is an essential condition in order to be constituted as a permanent reference point of the Homeless Assistance Network for those that decline the use of any other centre or service of the network, which could become for these people a gateway not only to the Homeless Assistance Network but to the Public Social Services System as a whole, as well as other social protection public systems. Street work with the homeless must include the immediate neighbourhood in order to avoid attitude of rejection and promote supportive attitudes and behaviours with these individuals.

<sup>11</sup> Law 14/1986, of 25 April, on General Healthcare and Law 16/2003 on the cohesion and quality of the Public Healthcare System.

## 66. Discourage street presence

Street intervention with the homeless must not be considered an alternative to the assistance that can be offered in assistance centres and services for this group, neither can the presence of homeless people in the street be indiscriminately enabled, as this may demotivate certain persons from using centres and services and would put these initiatives into conflict with the neighbourhood community. Excessive street-level assistance carries a risk of further strengthening these persons' habitual settlements, and their rejection of centres and services, as well as encouraging them to see professional assistance as an isolated opportunity of assistance rather than motivators for change.

## 67. Voluntary and professional action

Maintaining contact with the homeless in the street is a task that can be effectively incorporated into the work of professionals with volunteer teams. In any event, in order to fulfil street intervention targets with the homeless, both the work of professionals and volunteers must be fully integrated into the Home Assistance Network, particularly with drop-in centres and low demand services, and coordinated by the professionals of the Municipal Drop-in Service.

# Shelter for all

## 68. Mid-term target

In accordance with the EU Target that by 2015<sup>12</sup> no homeless person has to sleep in the street, there should be a commitment in place between all administrations to ensure that, in the mid-term, sufficient resources exist so that no person must pass the night or live in the street against their will, albeit in low demand conditions, but providing a shelter place to sleep, and providing nutrition to all those in need. Developing low demand centres and equipping specific spaces for this purpose in drop-in centres is the best option to reach this target. Under no circumstances can this be considered demotivational for anyone potentially beginning

<sup>12</sup> Statement of the European Parliament of 16 December 2010, on EU homeless strategy.

the process allowing them to overcome their situation, but to the contrary, by avoiding the greater deterioration of their capacities and favouring contact with the network of assistance centres and services for the homeless via effective identification of the person, proximity, motivation and linkage.

# V. Intervention

## Comprehensive, integrated processes

### 69. Voluntariness

Voluntariness is an essential, vital condition to begin or maintain any social intervention. Intervention with the homeless must be qualified by developing technical contents to motivate persons to begin and maintain these processes, as well as offering understandable, realistic information on conditions and perspectives in order for the decision to be informed and conscious.

### 70. Unitary processes

The Homeless Assistance Network must be capable of intervening with the specific requirements, needs and capabilities of each person in the most suitable way possible. In order to do so, using the network collaboration that these centres and services must coordinate, the traditional follow-on mechanism must progress to the design of unitary intervention processes to which the various centres and services that comprise the homeless assistance centres and services in each location are committed. A comprehensive process must share diagnostics and undertake the process to the extent corresponding to each centre or service, using the results of intervention that have been realised in these centres and services. Likewise, the intervention of each centre or service must be carried out whilst bearing in mind that it could also continue in another centre of service in the network.

### 71. Commonly agreed technical design and networked IT system

In order to make these unitary processes possible, advances must be made in technical design that homogenises project concepts and contents, in order to enable professional practices that can provide continuity to intervention of a person at various stages therein. Likewise, information systems shared between the centres and services involved in these processes are necessary with IT application compatible with those used in the special service

primary assistance network, always respecting personal data protection rights of users and under the conditions established to such end.

## 72. Support and accompaniment

In intervention with the homeless, comprehensive development processes for each person must be carried out, with their needs, capacities, and «comings and goings». And this must be done comprehensively in terms of spaces, resources and actions, as well as for the professionals and volunteers that intervene in the daily reality of the person. This intervention must always consider the strength and support of the motivations of change, as well as accompaniments for access and use of resources that may be necessary throughout the process towards personal autonomy and even social inclusion targets. In terms of access to resources, the limitations that hinder access to insertion minimum income for the homeless must be overcome, almost always caused by lack of own housing and lack of circumstances that guarantee the development of insertion procedures.

## 73. Stable and emotional personal references

In order for support and accompaniment to be effective, the homeless must find stable, emotional personal references in the network's centres and services. All homeless persons must have these references, as they are essential to begin and maintain the process or change and to recover previously failed processes.

## 74. Integrate personal facets

Intervention with the homeless requires integration of the various aspects in which their situation of exclusion manifests, particularly that concerning the need for accommodation and housing, employment, access to economic resources — minimum income, pensions and subsidies— to which they may be entitled, and to healthcare; but it must also include leisure and relationship aspects as, without these, the inclusion would lack an effective basis. The homeless are not only in need of the means to live, but also the reasons to live; and these can only come from positive contact with other persons and with their surroundings, as well as opportunities to develop personal hobbies and interests.

## 75. Cyclical processes

The characteristics of the homeless require long term intervention strategies which include the possibility of setbacks and relapses. In order to be able to approach these interventions, network collaboration is once again essential, to the extent that cyclical processes can be dealt with in which the persons always find an opportunity to hook onto the network of centres and services and there within, recover intervention possibilities possible at any given moment.

## Favour settlement

### 76. Do not facilitate unjustified movement

The interventions carried out in the Homeless Assistance Network must be geared towards the settlement of these persons, except in cases in which their need is for purely circumstantial accommodation, due to being in a location only temporarily. Centres and services for assistance to the homeless must not, under any circumstances, facilitate movement that is not justified by the needs of the intervention itself. The indiscriminate payment of travel tickets or any other with the sole purpose of the person leaving the location of intervention must be abolished as practice in all centres and services.



#### **Stop the indiscriminate payment of travel tickets**

There is no discrepancy in this aspect, only the demand that once and for all the practice of indiscriminate payment of travel tickets in order that a person may leave their location is abolished. This poor practice must be reported whenever detected.

### 77. Arranged movement

The only movement that may be paid for is that which has previously been arranged with the Municipal Drop-in Service of another location or with the social services network, which supports the movement for the wellbeing or insertion process of a person or their family regrouping. In such cases, the

payment of transport must be made to an end destination and never with intermediate stopovers for the person to continue requesting help to continue their movement.

## 78. Municipal registration

Centres and service for assistance to the homeless must facilitate municipal registration (*empadronamiento*) in their locations, as collective domiciles, for those who lack any other location with which to register and who regularly inhabit this location. Likewise, municipal registration of those for which it is recommended for their intervention process must also be facilitated, contributing towards the target of their settlement in that location. Under no circumstances may municipal registration be facilitated for persons who are already registered in another location, without previously stated justification, as this may entail the loss of their right to certain social benefits for a number of years.

**Municipal registration of marginalised persons** (...) the Municipal Register must reflect the address where each municipal resident really lives (...) Consequently, sub-standard housing (slums, caravans, caves, etc. or even the total absence of a roof) can and must figure as valid addresses in the Municipal Register, as the reality of the situation is often as such. The most extreme situation may give rise to doubt on the validity of their inclusion in the Municipal Register. The criteria that must prevail in this decision is determined by the possibility or otherwise of sending a notification to the registered party's address as it figures in their registration form (...) The correct application of this criteria determines, on the one hand, whether any address where residents effectively reside can be accepted, and, on the other hand, that a fictitious address can and shall be used in cases where the homeless person regularly resides in the municipality and is known by the corresponding social services. The conditions that must be fulfilled for this type of municipal registration are the following:

- That social services are integrated into the organic structure of a public administration.
- That the responsible parties of these services report on the regularity of residence of the person attempted to register in the municipality.
- That social services indicate the address that must be included in the Municipal Registration entry, and that they undertake to notify when a notification from another public administration is sent to this address.

Under these conditions, the address of the municipal registration shall be that indicated by social services: the address of the service itself, that of a municipal shelter, a specific geographic point where the resident habitually sleeps, etc. Evidently, for this type of

registration there is no need to guarantee that the notification arrives at its destination, but simply that it is reasonable to expect that in a prudent time frame it can arrive.

Source: Resolution of 21/07/1997, of the Sub-secretariat, establishing the publication of the Resolution of 4 July by the Chairman of the INE and Director General of territorial cooperation, ruling on technical instruction to city councils on the updating of the municipal register (excerpt).

## 79. Accrediting residence

For persons who have continually resided in the street or occasionally in homeless centres, always or regularly in the same location, but who are not on the municipal register, their continued residence shall be accredited from their own centres or from the Municipal Drop-in Service in order for the City Council Secretariat to certify as such and for this to be admitted by the corresponding Autonomous Community with the same value as municipal registration, particularly for the effects of their right to receive social benefits (insertion minimum income, insertion income, non-contributory pensions or NCP, etc.). ACs must establish protocols in which these procedures are regulated. Likewise, the need for a flexible exclusion period required for receipt of certain local or Autonomous Community benefits must also be evaluated, to establish exceptional circumstances in order that the homeless may access these.

## Legal protection

### 80. Non-voluntary interventions

Protocols must be established with public prosecution services to determine the intervention criteria for the homeless in an extreme state on deterioration who decline the use of social or healthcare resources, in order to attempt to achieve legal guardianship. These procedures must be as agile as required by each situation, and which must have the effective involvement of the local and national police forces, as well as healthcare services, particularly those of mental health. The degree of personal deterioration and risk to inhabitancy or health of others must be taken into account when evaluating these situations and deciding to carry out involuntary interventions, in order to guarantee safety, health and most basic living conditions. The professionals who carry out involuntary

interventions with the homeless must receive the necessary legal assessment in order to carry them out with guarantees, both for the subject and for themselves.



### **Are there enough mechanisms in place to carry out involuntary interventions with the homeless?**

The debate arises between those that consider there to already be enough mechanisms in place to carry out involuntary interventions necessary with the homeless, and those who believe that these mechanisms fall extremely short in practice, and must be further developed and adapted to the circumstances of each person.

## 81. Active involvement of guardianship bodies

For those with guardians, their accommodation in the Homeless Assistance Network must be on an exceptional basis and at the request of the entity holding the guardianship, which will be responsible to providing the most appropriate accommodation for the situation of this person. This must never be a stay in a homeless assistance centre or persistent roaming through centres of this type.

## Coordination

### 82. With basic structures of the social services network

Centres and services for assistance to the homeless must be integrated into the social services network of each location, with the Municipal Drop-in Service being the reference of this integration, as well as the coordination of its most important mechanism with basic structure of social services. Homeless drop-in services must be a support for interventions carried out by social services in the location, providing alternative emergency and interim accommodation whenever required, always attempting to avoid persons and families in situations of social emergency prolonging their stay beyond the purely essential in centres specifically intended to accommodate and assist the homeless.

### 83. Not replace the responsibility of social services' general structures

Accommodation of a person or family group in a situation of social emergency in a drop-in centre for the homeless must not entail that the responsibility for their intervention must be undertaken in these centres, or by the municipal homeless drop-in services, if they reside in that location and are being assisted by the social services network. This must be the responsibility of the Social Work Unit (SWU) that corresponds to the location, in order to continue undertaking the intervention. Their stay in a homeless drop-in centre can only be understood as a purely urgent and temporary to complement and support to this intervention, and under no circumstances shall replace it. It is essential that appropriate coordination takes place with the primary assistance social service network of the location itself, in order to guarantee standardised assistance to the people of its own municipality who, when in situations of social emergency, are forced to resort to a centre or service of the Homeless Assistance Network. Likewise, the case of women suffering domestic violence, homelessness must not impair their assistance in specific centres and services for these situations.

### 84. Coordination with social services' specific centres and services

Homeless assistance centres and services and, in particular, immediate assistance facilities, such as drop-in services and low demand centres, respond to situations that, due to their characteristics, required direct coordination with specific Public Social Services System centres and services. In particular, agile and efficient protocols must be established for services for women, protection of minors, assistance for immigrants in first reception, and access to residential facilities for the elderly.

### 85. Coordination with healthcare centres and services

Receipt of healthcare is a universal right for all; including foreign nationals, under the established terms. Homeless assistance centres and services, in particular drop-in centres and low demand centres, must not offer healthcare assistance that the person is entitled to receive in the Public

Healthcare System, even when they are outside their usual place of residency or in need. The serious health problems that affect many users of homeless assistance centres, even more so for those who regularly live in the street, mean that intensive and agile coordination with health care services is essential, both in terms of primary assistance and hospital care.

The **Law on access to public coverage healthcare assistance under the Catalan Healthcare Service** (Law 21/2010, of 7 July) **specifically mentions persons at risk of social inclusion as entitled parties** (Article 2) **and the guarantee of access for the homeless** (Second additional provision):

**Article 2. Parties entitled to healthcare assistance**

2. Persons belonging to one of the following groups are also entitled to healthcare assistance under the Catalan Healthcare Service:

b) Those belonging to groups at risk of social exclusion, regardless of whether or not they re-registered with any municipality in Catalonia.

**Second additional provision. Application and development**

The Government is authorised to establish the following regulatory provisions necessary to apply and develop this law, and in particular to establish the groups included in the scope of application of Section 2.b of Article 2, with the condition that the homeless must be included, without prejudice to the inclusion of other groups in a situation of risk of social exclusion, in order to guarantee the right to access to public healthcare assistance equally and free of charge.

## 86. Convalescence of the homeless

Homeless drop-in centres or low demand centres cannot be considered suitable places for hospital convalescence, at least not in their current configuration. However, the exploration of an agreement with the PHS would be interesting in the sense of establishing units in these centres that would allow this type of stay, and assistance of a social-healthcare nature, funded by the PHS, which would entail a significant saving in healthcare costs. In particular, these savings would come from hospital stays that are prolonged beyond the strictly necessary, ambulances and repeated hospitalisation caused by the same lack of convalescence facilities, notwithstanding the quality of assistance and care that the person may need. When including at-home assistance service hours to these units, it would clearly be a useful complement to favour this convalescence.

## 87. Mental health action protocols

The establishment of action protocols with mental health services must be undertaken with special interest, due to the high incidence of these disorders among the homeless, due to the deterioration caused by their displaced lives, and due to the difficulties that this situation carries for the commencement or maintenance of any treatment. It is essential that mental health services establish specific measures in coordination with homeless assistance centres and services, particular for chronic and low demand centre users, as well as those complementary to street work, including specific teams to intervene in this way.

## 88. Protocols with the national police force and the municipal or local police

As a result of their intervention in emergency or conflictive situations, the national, municipal and local police are an extremely useful resource for contacting persons who may be in need of assistance in the network of centres and services for assistance to the homeless, particularly drop-in centres and low demand centres. This gives rise to the importance of establishing action protocols with all police forces in order that they know how to appropriately deal with these persons. This collaboration particularly useful when responding emergency situations due to climatological circumstances, when accommodation and assistance for all those lacking shelter is necessary.

# Knowledge

## 89. Homogenous information system

The planning of the sector and rationality in assistance strategies for assistance to the homeless requires the existence of a homogenous information system in the whole territory, with compulsory use by all public centres and services. This must be a system of basic information that respects the right to privacy and the protection of personal data of users, that is agreed by CAs, and has the participation of local entities directly in charge of this network. The information system of the Homeless Assistance Network must be integrated with existing social services information systems, at local, autonomous and state level.



### **The lack of basic network data**

The impossibility of registering the most basic information of the Homeless Assistance Network in municipalities with populations in excess of 100,000 inhabitants has, and continues to be, a growing frustration. An attempt has been made to do so in conjunction with the drafting of this dossier.

## 90. Series of basic indicators

The existence of a homogeneous information system is as fundamental as the definition and maintenance of a homogenous series of indicators that provide important, useful information at local, autonomous and state level. This information must be published at all levels and be available to all institutions as a basis upon which to plan their homeless assistance resources.

## 91. Specialised research

It would be extremely useful to agree on specialised research on the homeless and the assistance they receive, to complement the information of the Information System<sup>13</sup> and the series of basic indicators. The GSA, CAs and local entities alike must encourage specialised research under the framework of these agreements.

## 92. Training

The attitude and capacity of professionals is a fundamental requirement of the quality of homeless assistances centres and services. This is why profound changes that need to be made in centres and in interventions carried out therein require very special attention to the recycling and training of professionals. A basic, state level training plan is needed<sup>14</sup> and its development and exploration at autonomous level. Training must be extended to the professionals of centres and services of not-for-profit organisations and companies intervening in the sector, as well as specifically, volunteer acting therein.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.mspsi.gob.es/politicaSocial/inclusionSocial/serviciosSociales/siuss/home.htm>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.mspsi.gob.es/politicaSocial/servicios/formacion/home.htm>

## Coordination between local entities

### 93. Local network of assistance to the homeless

A characteristic of the Homeless Assistance Network is that a significant amount of its users are shared between numerous locations. This gives rise to the use of direct coordination between local entities, administrations responsible for the basic structure of assistance to the homeless, and the coordination of its network in the territory. In order to do so, the creation of a local network across the State is proposed, driven and supported by CAs and the GSA, and with the specific protagonism of the FEMP, due to its role as a coordination structure between municipalities.

### 94. Collaboration agreements for homeless assistance between different locations

Under the framework of this local network, it would be extremely useful to reach a reciprocal agreement that encourages the continuity of assistance to its users, mutually recognising and, according to the conditions agreed to such end, the capacity to intervene at any time based on previous interventions carried out in other centres and services in the network; all this would be with the respect of the free decision of the users themselves, and guaranteeing the protection of their personal data.

### 95. Bi-annual meeting

As an addition to the coordination of local homeless assistance entities, a bi-annual meeting carried out on a rotation basis is proposed, led by local entities themselves via the FEMP and with the presence of CAs and the GSA. As a support to this meeting, a technical working group shall be established comprising professionals of various municipalities, which would draft documents and proposals on specific issues, including training. Likewise, this group would, on alternate years, organise a technical meeting for professionals of local entities, CAs and social organisations, in order to reflect on the interventions being carried out with the homeless.

## 96. Self-monitoring mechanisms

The profound reforms and adaptation that centres and services for assistance to the homeless must undertake require permanent reflection and improvement. To contribute to this, it would be very useful to agree on self-monitoring mechanisms between centres and services, in order that, on demand or with a certain regularity, a small group of experts in self-monitoring from centres and services of other city councils would form a group to analyse the situation and practices of a given centre and issue the corresponding evaluation report, for internal use.

## Communication with the citizen

### 97. Common communication strategy

The stigma that still surrounds all that concerns the homeless, and the consequential rejection by society which gives rise to the need to implement centres to assist these people, call for a common communications strategy and the carrying out of local, autonomous and state campaigns in order to discover the true situation of these people and of the centres and services that assist them. It is important to include this strategy in social initiatives, as it is an effective communicative bridge with society.

### 98. The importance of the media

Media relations must hold a decisive role in this strategy, giving rise to the need for a fluid relationship based on positive concepts and normality, in the face of communication exclusively based on the defence of traumatic or conflictive circumstances or as a response to movements favouring the rejection of centres and services.

### 99. Civic interest

Faced with arguments that exclusively support the collaboration with the most needy, with the most serious aspects of the situation of the homeless standing in the foreground, the communication strategy must stress the standardised character and utility of the Homeless Assistance Network not only to tackle poverty, such also its primary assistance function for the displaced in terms of social services, and the security that they provide to

citizens as a whole as centres and services that cover the basic needs of accommodation, nutrition, clothing and hygiene for any person that, in a given moment, may need it, at times of personal crisis or emergency.

## 100. Open doors

Transparency and the opening of citizens' centres and services may be a good measure in this communication strategy. The holding of open days or events that allow citizens to approach, visit and discover homeless assistance centres and services, always respecting the privacy of users, can be very usefully in order to improve the image of these centres and services, and to overcome stereotypes and negative connotations surrounding these and their users.



# Initials and acronyms

GSA	General State Administration ( <i>Administración General del Estado</i> ).
BOE	Official State Gazette ( <i>Boletín Oficial del Estado</i> ).
CAs	Autonomous Communities ( <i>Comunidades Autónomas</i> ).
ETHOS	European Typology on Homelessness.
FEANTSA	European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless.
FEMP	Spanish Federation of Towns and Provinces ( <i>Federación Española de Municipios y Provincias</i> ).
FEPSH	Federation of Entities Supporting the Homeless ( <i>Federación de entidades de apoyo a personas sin hogar</i> ).
INE	National Institute of Statistics ( <i>Instituto Nacional de Estadística</i> ).
NCP	Non-contributory pensions.
SAAD	System for Autonomy and Care for Dependency ( <i>Sistema para la autonomía personal y atención a la dependencia</i> ).
PHS	Public Healthcare System.
PSSS	Public Social Services System.
EU	European Union.
SWU	Social Work Unit.



This dossier is intended to be a guide for a strategic social policy for assistance to the homeless, and a point of reference and debate for politicians and technical experts of local and Autonomous Community authorities in the planning and assessment of resources and services for assistance to the homeless, as well as professionals and volunteers working in the field of social intervention with the homeless.

This dossier is a strategic one; its contents are not proposals to be realised immediately, but rather, are guidelines for the future development of a network of centres and services for assistance to the homeless.

This development must be taken up by every Autonomous Community and local entity and adapted to their own situation, specific needs in this area, characteristics of their social services network and, of course, their budget restrictions.

It concerns the design of shared reference points and common homogeneous elements for the recognition of this network at State level. Its public nature is owing to its concern for materialising citizens' rights, which must push forward the actions of local entities, developing and recovering (in certain cases) the protagonism corresponding to them in terms of assistance to the homeless.



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