

# A duty to assist: exploring the global mobilities of homelessness prevention policy

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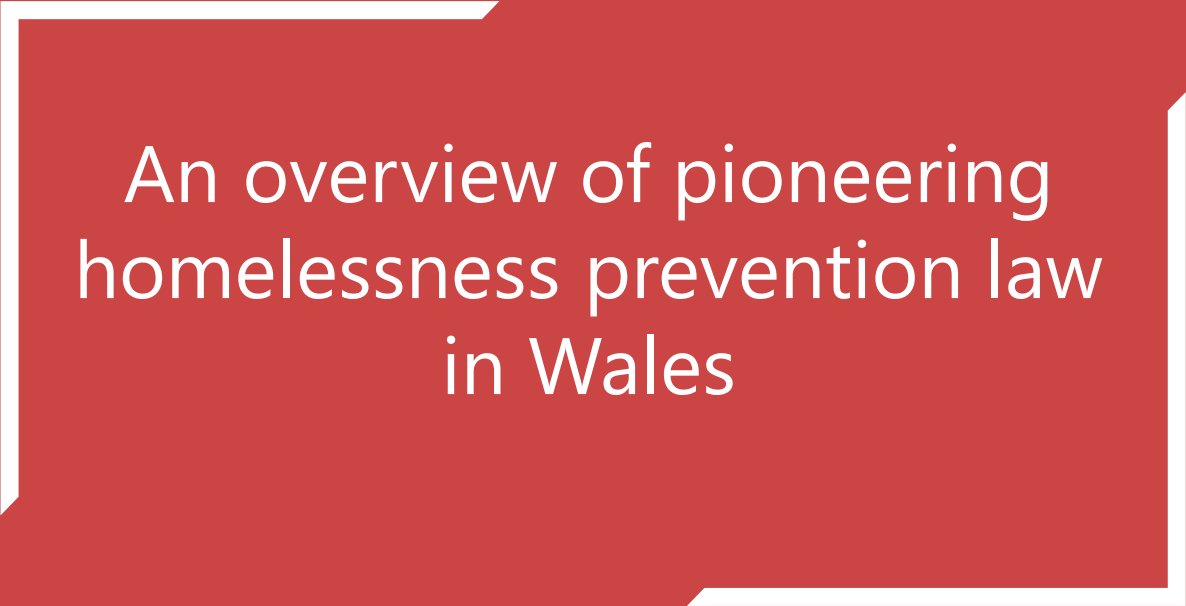
# Overview

## **Policy: homelessness prevention law in Wales**

- An overview of pioneering homelessness prevention law in Wales
- Implementation successes

## **Policy mobility: from Wales to England...now Canada**

- A framework for exploring homelessness policy mobility
- Policy legitimisation
- Policy enablement
- Policy impediment



An overview of pioneering  
homelessness prevention law  
in Wales

# The Housing (Wales) Act 2014

- Attempts to **prioritise homelessness prevention**, reorienting services, entitlements and funding
- Makes access to prevention services a **universal right** – challengeable through the courts.
- The **duty to assist**: local authorities must take ‘**reasonable steps**’ to **prevent** and **relieve** homelessness and should have recourse to a wide range of different mechanisms of assistance.
- Local authorities should consider the most appropriate intervention or range of interventions **for each person**
- Homelessness is prevented if accommodation is available for **at least 6 months**
- People are also expected to **cooperate**

# Interventions local authorities ought to have in place

## Accommodation-based

- Options to facilitate access to the PRS
- Arranging accommodation with relatives & friends
- Access to supported housing
- Crisis intervention – securing accommodation immediately

## Advice

- Housing Options Advisors
- Specialist advice on benefits and debts
- Independent housing advice
- Employment and training advice

## Joint working

- Joint working between Local Authorities & RSLs
- Joint approaches with services such as Social Care and Health

## Specific population groups

- Welfare services for armed forces / veterans
- Options for the accommodation of vulnerable people
- Action to support disabled applicants
- Working in prisons prior to release
- Domestic abuse services

## Support

- Mediation and conciliation
- Intensive Family Support Teams
- Housing/Tenancy support
- Action to resolve anti-social behaviour

## Financial

- Financial payments
- Action to intervene with mortgage arrears

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Implementation successes

# Success 1. System reoriented towards prevention



## Success 2. Equal outcomes for single people and families (ALMOST!)

**Table.** Outcomes of Homelessness Assistance Provided Under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 By Household Type, 2018/19

|              | Stage One       |        | Stage Two      |        |
|--------------|-----------------|--------|----------------|--------|
|              | Help to prevent |        | Help to secure |        |
|              | Single          | Family | Single         | Family |
| Successful   | 66              | 69     | 39             | 44     |
| Unsuccessful | 14              | 16     | 36             | 41     |
| Other        | 19              | 14     | 24             | 15     |



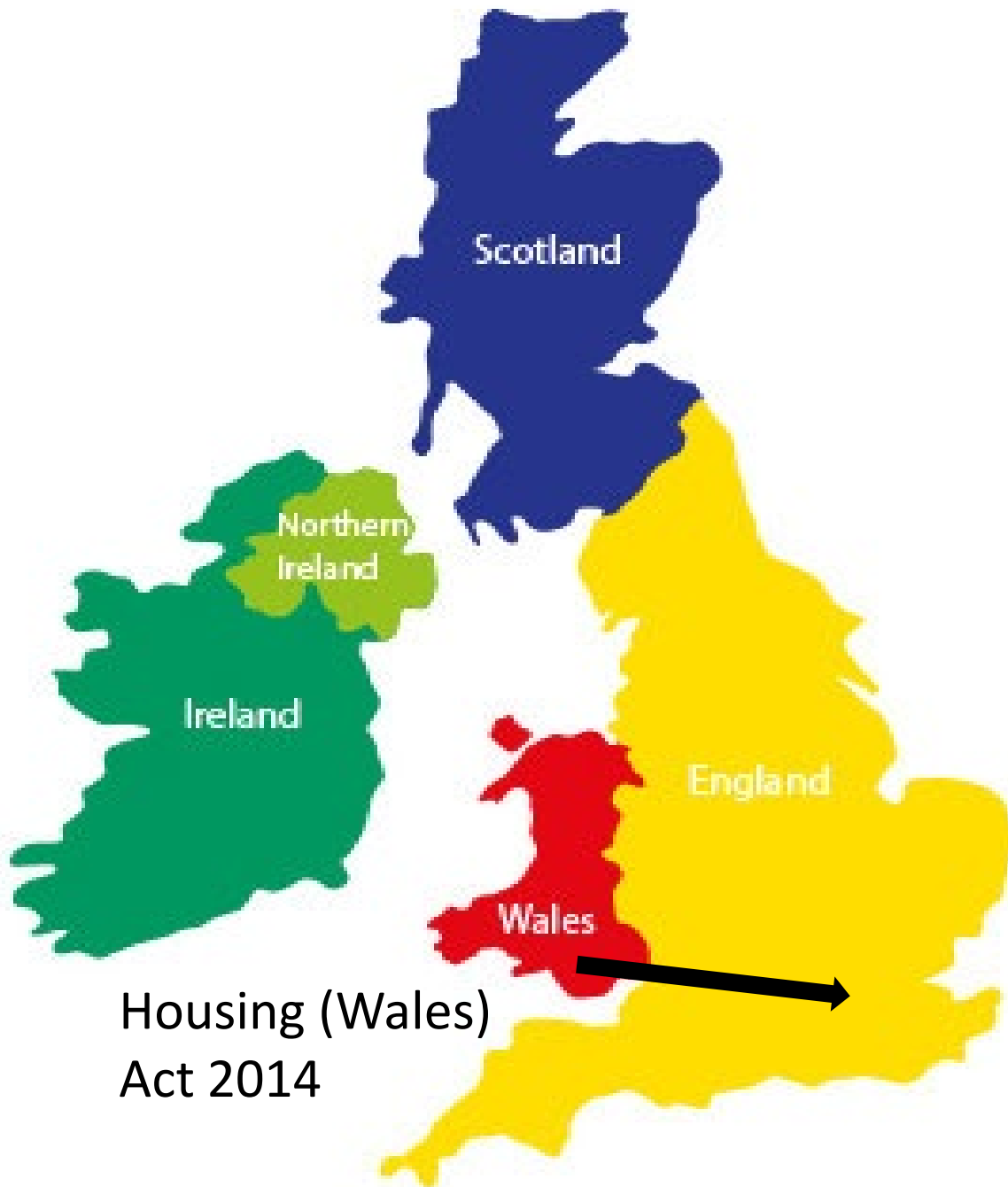
## Success 3. Services and service culture

*“We’re definitely doing better than we were five years ago. We’re definitely providing more of a wraparound service and we’ve definitely got a lot more options available to support people. I think in terms of the services we’ve provided, it’s improved a lot and there’s still room for improvement.”*

*‘This time round it has been totally different. Before I would have had to take my sleeping bag and my flask because you would be there for the duration of the day. The staff would have faces down to their asses, in and out of rooms moaning, you know. This time, totally different. They speak to you on a personal level, a better basis.’*

A white L-shaped graphic element consisting of a horizontal line at the top and a vertical line on the right, both with a small diagonal cut-off at their ends. The text "On the move..." is centered within the space defined by these lines.

On the move...



Scotland

Northern  
Ireland

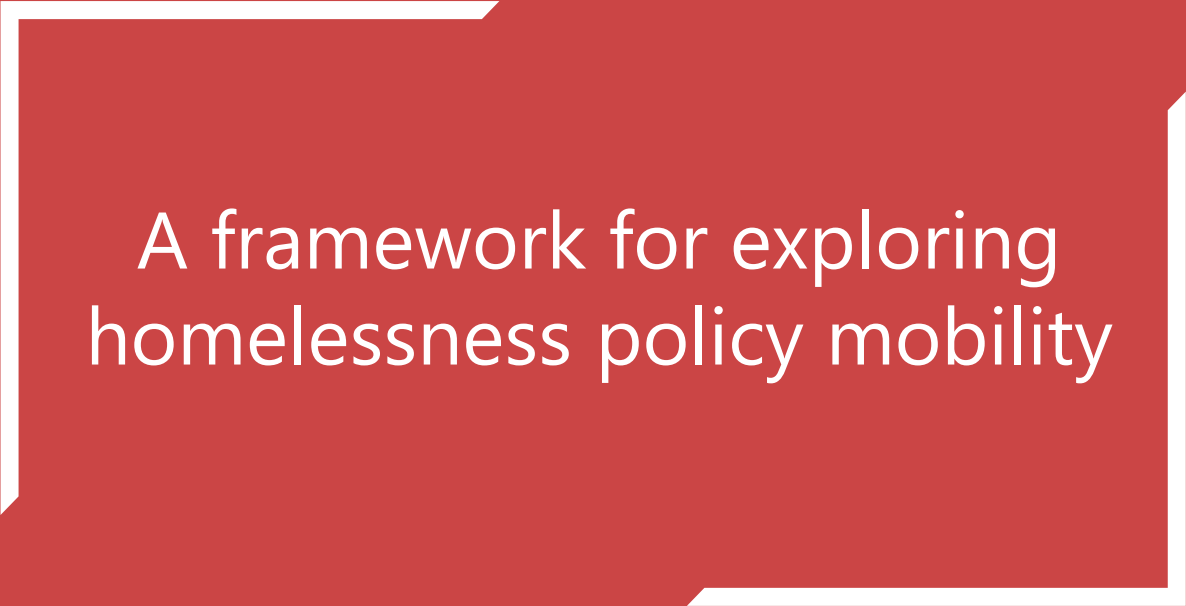
Ireland

England

Wales

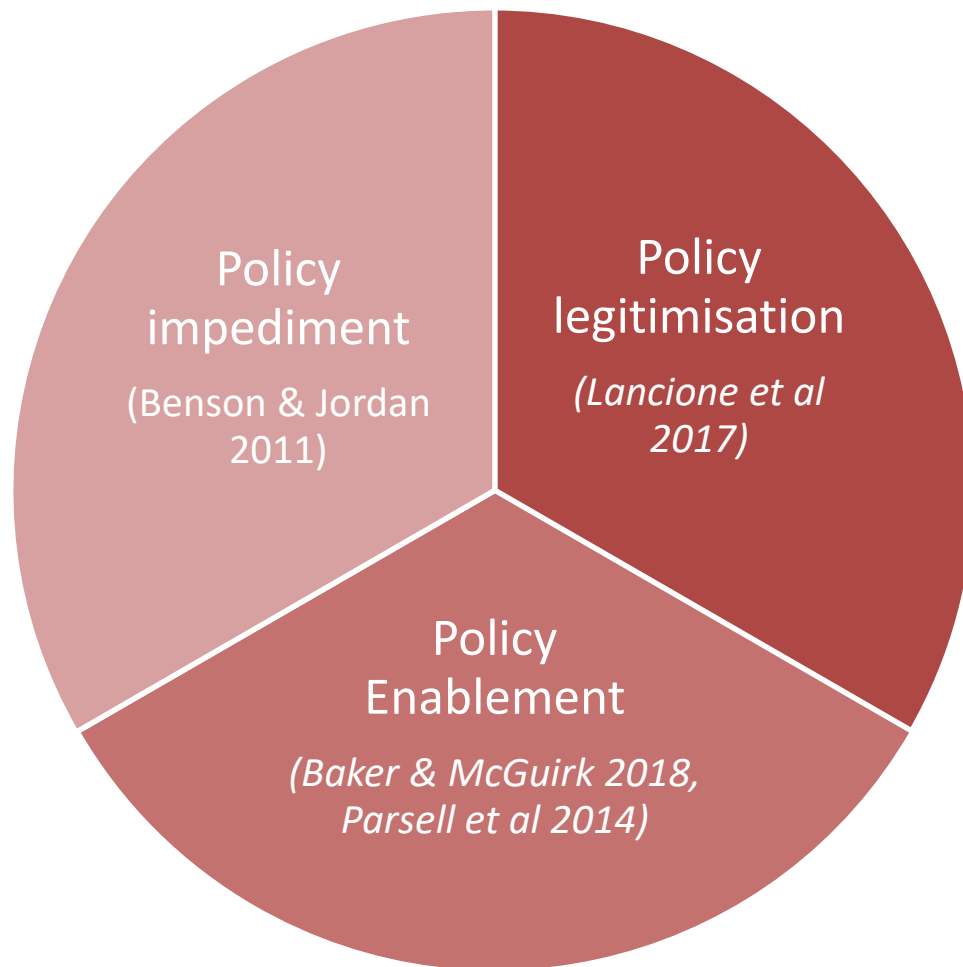
Housing (Wales)  
Act 2014

Homelessness  
Reduction Act  
(2017)



A framework for exploring  
homelessness policy mobility

# Homelessness policy mobility framework



# Policy legitimisation

*Lancione et al (2017) argue that once the 'truth' has been established by researchers and policy makers, the policy can move on.*

## **An evidence base**

- Welsh Government homelessness statistics demonstrated success
- Welsh third sector research showed qualitative success
- Academic scrutiny reached similar conclusions

## **Political appropriation**

- Supported by Housing Ministry in England fairly early in the mobility process
- Ultimately supported cross-party and put forward by an MP as a private members bill
- But, political appropriation followed some of the key wider actions under *policy enablement*

# Policy enablement

*Research points towards 5 key enablers of policy mobility.*

## **Policy actors (policy elites, civil society, key thinkers)**

- Crisis and academics – particularly Suzanne Fitzpatrick, were main drivers

Lord Richard Best, charged with piloting the Bill through the House of Lords, opened the Second Reading debate thus:

*“The Bill... is indeed ground-breaking because of the fundamental change it brings to the way that homelessness is tackled in this country, but also because it has followed a unique route through Parliament. The story began two years ago with a report from an inquiry initiated by the well-respected housing charity Crisis, chaired by the leading academic in this field, Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick.*



# Policy enablement

*Research point towards 5 key enablers of policy mobility.*

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## **Policy mobility technologies**

- Independent panel review of homelessness law in England

## **Relations and networks**

- Relative to literatures on HF and CG mobility, this case was unusual in the relative absence of a coalition or network driving change.

## **Policy windows**

- Government searching for solution, select committee inquiry, private members bill opportunity

## **Policy tourism**

- Proved crucial to implementation, rather than mobility



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*I think there was certainly a lot of learning, England took a lot of learning from Wales. There was a period of about a year I think where like I think every week I had another email saying, can you tell me who is doing it really well in Wales so we can make links with them. (Key informant, Wales)*

*This is where I was the popular boy before the homeless reduction act. We had three or four local authorities in England and so I've had a number of boroughs rock up and go through things. (Key informant, Wales)*

# Policy impediment

*Research points towards 4 key impediments to policy mobility*

## **Demand side**

- Policy makers may be unwilling to move beyond the status quo unless forced to by... huge failure in an existing policy (Stone, 1999)

## **Exporter context**

- Sometimes the uniqueness of the policy context in the place of policy origin impedes its mobility. (Benson and Jordan, 2011)



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*Not a lot of buy-in by local authorities to the notion that they could learn anything from the Welsh experience. They were very clear on this point. Local authorities across England would say that they had a completely different housing market, and entirely different context from Wales. There was very little that they (LAs) felt they could learn from Wales. (England, Key Informant)*

*The fact that it was Welsh experience was enough for English local authorities to, effectively, reject it as being useful... the idea of there being explicit influence from Wales, the notion that the ideas came from the Welsh legislation was actively unhelpful (England, Key Informant)*

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## **Importer context**

- A potential impediment is the context in the place receiving the policy. However, this proved less problematic given similar legislative frameworks.

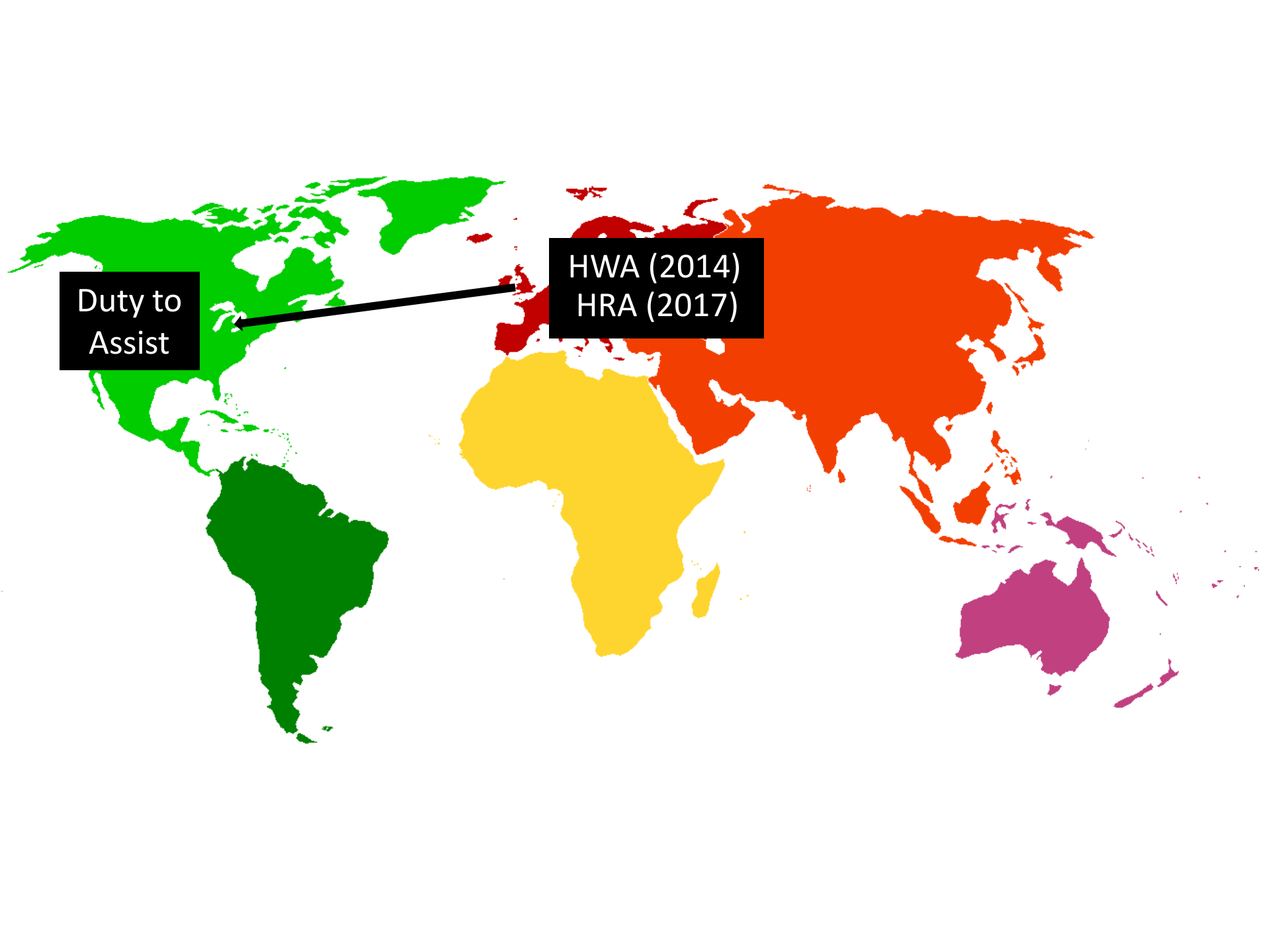
## **Application**

- In brief, this is about the work and resources required to implement the policy. Ultimately, the 'cost' of significant legislative change was low.

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On the move again...





Duty to Assist

HWA (2014)  
HRA (2017)

# Conclusion

- Wales developed pioneering new homelessness prevention legislation that has proven to have a positive impact and has begun to ‘move’
- The policy mobility framework proved highly effective in enabling us to interrogate the Wales-England movement of homelessness policy
- We saw the importance of the *third sector and key thinkers*, using a very particular *technology* to exploit a *policy window* with *very little impediment* to policy mobility
- Next, we will aim to test a) whether the framework is equally applicable to the Canadian experience and b) to understand how the mobility process may differ

Thank you

Diolch yn fawr

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