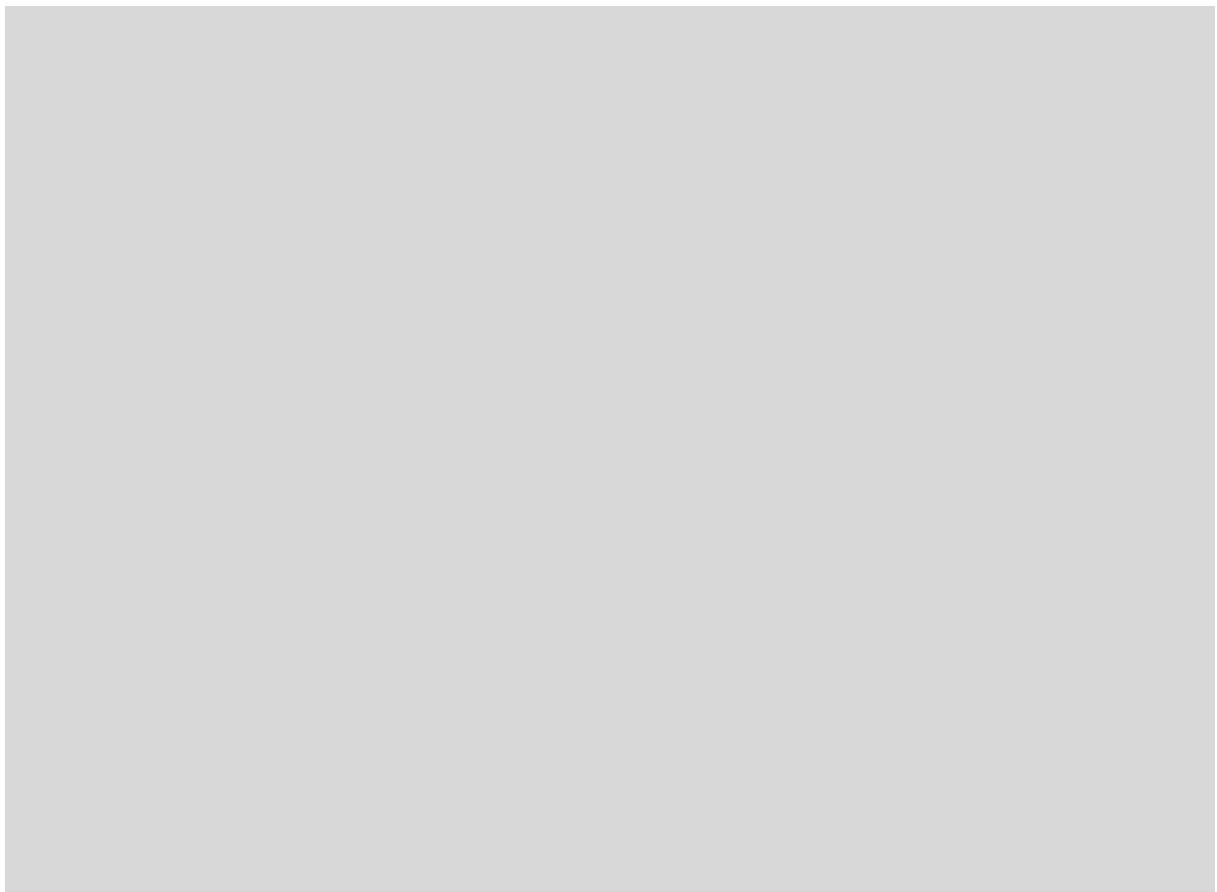


Review and Engagement process – Updating North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention Strategy



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North Tyneside Council

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1. Achievements

Delivery of our third homelessness prevention strategy has been at a time of competing priorities, reduced funding and increased housing and support need from some of our most vulnerable residents.

Throughout this period we have continued to work with stakeholders and service providers to achieve the following:

Funding:

- £48,000 secured from the North East Regional Homelessness Group for the introduction of the Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) approach as a one year pilot. The success of the pilot led to MEAM being mainstreamed;
- £40,500 received from the North East Regional Homelessness Group for a two year, part time Outreach and Engagement service through Changing Lives to work with rough sleepers to get them off the streets and accessing services. The first time such a service was available in the borough, it ran from September 2014 – September 2016 and achieved some positive outcomes;
- Part of a £203,000 pot from the Help for Single Homeless Fund to enable delivery of an In-reach service into the bed and breakfasts and hostel accommodation that accommodate non statutory placements across North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland. Changing Lives provided support to individuals to access services and move to a more suitable, permanent home and to engage with owners to improve their accommodation standards;
- An allocation from the £1.9m secured through the Fair Chance Fund for Tyne and Wear, Northumberland and Durham to enable Life Coaches to work with 18 – 24 year olds who were not in settled accommodation, training, education or employment to access accommodation and services. Delivered through Depaul UK the number of young people supported in North Tyneside exceeded the target figure;
- Depaul UK secured additional funding from the then Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), now Homes England (HE) to increase the number of bed spaces at Depaul House. Originally extending from 8 shared rooms to 11 en-suite bedrooms, this increased to 14 en-suite bedrooms with shared living facilities;
- Home Group secured HCA funding through the Affordable Homes Programme 2015 -2018 to purchase properties for ex-offenders; and
- Registered providers received £7.2m from the HCA Affordable Homes Programme 2015 - 2018 to increase the supply of affordable homes in the borough.

Supported housing provision

- YMCA North Tyneside received funding from a benefactor to purchase a community house for young singles with on-site support;
- YMCA North Tyneside converted part of their 'Y' building (now known as Sir James Knott House) to provide 15 x 1 bedroom flats with on-site support for single young people;
- Accessing the private rented sector to provide homes for young people, including care leavers with outreach support; and
- Pilot of a Housing First scheme for people over the age of 25 years. Success of the pilot led to the provision being included in a procurement exercise.

Improving existing accommodation services:

- The award of £78,000 to the YMCA North Tyneside for the creation of 3 emergency en-suite bed spaces with a communal kitchen for 16 – 24 year olds at Sir James Knott House;
- Additional HCA funding secured by YMCA North Tyneside to enable a further 6 x 1 bedroom flats to be delivered in Sir James Knott House;
- Working with a private landlord, YMCA North Tyneside secured 9 bedsits to use as part of a staged housing process for 16 – 24 year olds;
- Through procurement exercises for supported housing and housing support, providers formed partnerships to deliver a more effective service for a range of housing and support needs making better use of existing schemes; and
- Children's Services increased their in-house accommodation and support offer to looked after children and those leaving care.

Move on

- The delivery of 1,130 affordable homes in the borough to meet an increased housing need, with a further 880 affordable homes projected by March 2021;
- Changing Lives secured the lease of a property from Square Build Trust. The property was converted to provide 5 homes for former armed services personnel;
- Improving access to the private rented sector; and
- Lettings policy revision to ensure that housing need is met and residents receive a banding for local connection (helping local people).

And.....

- The introduction of a Gateway service for statutory bed and breakfast placements, to ensure all referrals are through one single point of contact and households are placed in a safe environment;
- Through partnership working established a 'sit up' service for those rough sleeping in periods of poor weather. Delivered by the Whitley Bay Street Pastors at a local resource centre it provides a place of safety;
- With funding from the regional homelessness group, Depaul UK expanded Nightstop to include provision to over 25s. A regional resource, North Tyneside is an area that is considered a 'super user' of the service; and
- Depaul UK and YMCA North Tyneside visited local schools and colleges to deliver homelessness awareness sessions.

2. Current picture

2.1 The Housing Options Team (homelessness)

The Housing Options Team (homelessness) is the first point of contact for any household in need of free, independent advice regarding their current housing situation. The team operates a face to face triage system, identifying those who need to be seen and those queries that can be dealt with on the day through the provision of advice. Anyone who presents as roofless is seen the same day.

2.2 Presentations, opened cases and acceptances

The number of presentations to the Housing Options Team (homelessness) fell between April 2013 – March 2017; although this last year has seen a rise in presentations. There were also fewer opened cases over the last five years, with priority homeless acceptances increasing over the last year.

Presentations:	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
a) Triage	2239	1755	1686	1832	2084
b) Roofless	551	485	453	480	434
Total Presentations	2790	2240	2139	2312	2518
Total opened cases**	1105	852	772	796	815
Total priority acceptances	177	191	149	167	179

**Total opened cases: the figure supplied is the total number of homelessness decisions during the year, plus the total number of preventions. This represents the number of cases that were opened and progressed beyond the triage/roofless stage to a formal outcome.

Following the national trend for reasons for homelessness, termination of an assured short-hold tenancy continues to be the number one reason for a household being accepted as homeless and in priority need.

This is followed by a violent breakdown of a relationship involving a partner, with the number of households being accepted with this reason for homelessness rising over the last two years.

Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate slipped out of the top three reasons for homelessness between 2014 -2017, however it reappeared for 2017 -2018.

Reasons for homelessness:	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Termination of an assured short hold tenancy	53	63	52	58	61
Violent breakdown of a relationship, involving partner	30	37	28	42	46
Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate	20	10	6	2	10
Violent breakdown of a relationship involving associated persons	6	12	6	5	9

Households including a person aged between 25 – 44 years of age remain the largest group accepted.

Age of priority homeless	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
16 – 24	43	34	24	32	30
25 – 44	100	118	93	101	114
45 – 59	29	31	28	23	28
60 – 64	3	5	1	3	2
65 – 74	2	1	1	3	3
75 & Over	0	2	2	5	2
Total	177	191	149	167	179

2.3 Prevention and relief

The number of households assisted to have their homelessness prevented has reduced in recent years. This can be attributed to fewer resources, in terms of service sustainability and funding availability to support successful prevention. The top three prevention reasons are:

Successful positive action taken to prevent homelessness	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Conciliation including home visits for family/friend threatened with exclusion	242	154	149	97	106
Providing other assistance to remain in accommodation in the private or social rented sector	140	87	77	89	111
Debt advice	28	10	9	8	7

If preventing a household's homelessness has not been achieved then work has taken place, where possible, to relieve a household's homelessness situation. Securing hostel or a house in multiple occupation (HMO) accommodation or accommodation arranged with friends or relatives no longer feature as one of the top three relief approaches. The current top three relief methods are:

Homelessness prevented to relieved households assisted to obtain alternative accommodation	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Social housing: offer of local authority accommodation or nomination to a registered provider	48	48	55	43	80
Supported accommodation	28	24	20	24	47
Private rented without landlord incentive scheme	27	24	24	19	36

2.4 Temporary accommodation

There is a specialist temporary emergency accommodation team that arrange accommodation for the households and support them during their placement.

Households are placed in temporary accommodation if there is a duty to do so, i.e. they are believed to be eligible, homeless and likely to be in priority need while their application is dealt with, or it has not been possible to prevent or relieve their homelessness and they have been accepted as homeless and in priority need. Temporary accommodation is provided until the council's statutory duty comes to an end, this is normally through a household moving into a permanent home.

Temporary accommodation is provided through our existing social housing stock, dispersed throughout the borough. Only in exceptional circumstances is bed and breakfast or hotel accommodation used for homeless applicants. With so few establishments in the borough willing to accommodate a homeless household, this placement is frequently made outside of North Tyneside. This can limit the support that the household can receive from the team, isolates them from their family and social networks and increases financial outlay with additional and increased travel and associated costs.

For the last few years the number of households housed in temporary accommodation has remained fairly static, with around 20 at any one time. However the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has seen this figure start to increase.

2.5 Rough sleeping

It is a government requirement that all local authorities submit an annual figure to MHCLG indicating the number of people sleeping rough in their area on a typical night.

The typical night is between 1 October – 30 November and can either be a count or an estimate. The North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention Forum makes the decision and to date this has always been an estimate.

At a North East regional level, one night is identified and agreed for the 12 authorities to conduct this work on with their partners. The principle reason for this is to avoid any double counting of some rough sleepers who are known to travel between local authority areas.

A multitude of stakeholders and organisations participate in the survey. Very low levels are recorded for the typical night, although it is acknowledged that rough sleeping does occur in the borough.

At any time rough sleeping or suspected rough sleeping can be reported direct to StreetLink by calling 0300 500 0914 or visiting www.streetlink.org.uk. This information is then forwarded to the Housing Options Team (homelessness) to investigate and verify the referral. If anyone is found, a housing options (homelessness) appointment will be offered to them. Posters advising the public how to report any rough sleeping concerns have been circulated to supermarkets, GPs, hospitals, customer first centres and placed on bins in known hot spot areas.

Alternatively rough sleeping can be reported direct to the Housing Advice Team. Their email is housingadvice@northtytneside.gov.uk and their contact number is 0191 643 2520.

During periods of severe weather there are no legal protections for people sleeping rough and no statutory duty to provide shelter.

However, there is a humanitarian obligation on all local authorities to do all that they can to prevent deaths on the streets caused by severe weather. This includes the cold, but also conditions such as high wind and heavy rain. A Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) is in place during the winter months, typically November – March, or periods of poor weather.

The protocol sets out the arrangements that the Council will put in place to avoid death on the streets through prompt action being taken to ensure that all rough sleepers have the opportunity to access a safe shelter during periods of severe weather.

2.6 Youth homelessness

The term youth homeless relates to any young person aged between 16 – 24 years of age, however what youth homeless is and who it relates to is open to interpretation, depending on individual service areas and organisations.

Over the last few years the number of young people presenting to the Housing Options Team (homelessness) and being accepted as homeless and in priority need in North Tyneside has decreased. This is representative of fewer young people presenting at a regional and national level. From April 2014 - March 2017 being asked to leave by family and/or friends did not feature in the top three reasons for homelessness acceptances, but reappeared as the third top reason for 2017 – 2018. This is mirrored by conciliation including home visits for family and friends threatened with exclusion being the constant number one prevention reason since 2013 until 2017 – 2018.

A joint protocol is in place between Children's Services, Housing and providers that sets out the action and responsibility towards any young person aged 16 or 17 years old who presents to the local authority with a housing need. This protocol will be reviewed to ensure that the needs of the young person are met by the most appropriate service area.

Changes to the way in which housing and support services for young people are delivered may have also attributed to fewer young people being accepted as statutory homeless over the last five years. An emphasis has been placed on prevention and there has been an increase in supported housing provision, including specific supported housing for looked after children and care leavers.

3. Engagement

3.1 The North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention Forum has an independent Chair. It meets on a quarterly basis to share good practice and learning and discuss the impact that housing and homelessness related legislative and policy changes may have for service users and services and explores how these can be mitigated. Membership of the forum is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it is reflective of the priorities and issues.

3.2 A homelessness review event took place in February 2017. Principle aims of this event were to highlight achievements over the lifespan of the third homelessness prevention strategy, identify legislative and policy changes that will impact on how homelessness is responded to in the future and what priority areas need to be focused on.

Around 50 people from a range of organisations attended the event, with positive feedback received on the content of the sessions and delivery. Information and feedback from the event concluded that:

- Tackling homelessness is a collective responsibility;
- A need to enhance a partnership approach at a local and regional level;
- Identify where service gaps are and how they can be overcome;
- More appropriate, affordable, secure move on housing is needed. This includes reviewing use of existing stock and engaging with private sector landlords to make best use of properties;
- Develop working relationship with Health to improve access to services;
- Effective communication and access to good quality information for all; and
- Support individuals to develop independent living and life skills to sustain a home.

3.3 A third health needs audit of single homeless people established the most prevalent health conditions, access to services and levels of substance use amongst this client group. 88 returns were received, a huge improvement on the previous audits, although not every question was answered. Key points from the audit include:

- The need to carry out some additional work with participants to understand why they feel their current support and treatment is inadequate for their perceived need;

- Identify an appropriate pathway to enable those who feel they require support and treatment to be assessed and an outcome obtained;
- Educate those who use emergency services about alternative mechanisms to access support; and
- Increase the numbers that are registered with a dentist.

The information has been shared with relevant stakeholders to help raise awareness of the health needs of single homeless people and current issues in accessing health services.

3.4 In developing the priorities for this strategy a range of **engagement approaches** to gather the views of those who have direct experience of homelessness, who work in services that aim to prevent and reduce homelessness and organisations whose work cuts across homelessness have been used.

To understand a client perspective, group sessions were held with current and former clients. Five key questions were asked:

- What happened to make you need help with housing?
- What support do you currently use from the local authority?
- What could have stopped you needing help?
- What do you want to do or be in the future? What are your dreams?
- What does a home mean to you?

Relationship breakdown, domestic abuse, rent arrears, addiction and lack of knowledge and support were the main reasons for requiring help with housing, individuals relied on family support and appropriate service support, knowing who to contact and how to access services could have prevented the situation, having good mental health, family and friend networks, abstinence from substances and own home were the aims for the future and having a home meant security, independence, self-worth, stability and a sense of belonging through being part of a community.

A short video presentation was made from one of the sessions.

<https://youtu.be/OfbimsKHyWA>

An electronic survey was circulated around stakeholders and organisations for participants to answer 13 questions linked to homelessness and submit their responses. There was also a face to face option offered. Those who took part in this were asked questions around:

- Success in reducing homelessness;
- Main causes of homelessness;
- Advice, information and signposting;
- Support for those at risk of or actual homelessness and access to support;
- Seeking assistance at an earlier stage;
- Existing prevention and support services;
- Gaps in services, areas for improvement and priorities; and
- Factors that may impact on delivery of the homelessness prevention strategy.

For some questions the responses were mixed, it was felt that for some client groups there had been success in reducing homelessness, but not for others, relationship breakdown, financial issues and lack of affordable housing were cited as the main

reasons for homelessness, the view was unanimous that current services did not meet need, in terms of people knowing how to access services and sufficient support available to meet client need. Government policies, lack of suitable move on housing and short term funding were the main concerns that could impact on being able to successfully reduce homelessness. Priorities were more appropriate and affordable homes, earlier intervention and improved support services.

3.5 A presentation of the work undertaken as part of this review and the identified priorities for the strategy were presented to **Housing Sub Committee** on 11 February 2019. Feedback from the Committee has been included in the strategy.