

Housing and homelessness prevention

'Trigger point conversation' – for staff and volunteers

Why is preventing homelessness so important?

Being homeless has negative impacts on the emotional, physical and financial wellbeing and health of individuals and families. In addition to this, the cost of housing or accommodating homeless people can be significant. Newcastle City Council has a relatively good record on preventing homelessness, based on recognising the signs that someone is at risk of losing their accommodation at an early stage and offering support to stop this happening.

Homelessness covers a range of circumstances where people have no secure accommodation. If someone is homeless or at risk of being homeless within 56 days, the Council has a duty to agree a plan with them to prevent or relieve their risk of homelessness. In Newcastle we aim for it to be 'everyone's business' to prevent homelessness before 56 days. You can find out about how we aim to prevent homelessness here: [Active Inclusion Newcastle partnership approach](#)

What are the causes of homelessness that you can look out for?

When someone becomes homeless it can immediately be preceded by a crisis in their life. However, there can also be advance signs which indicate that someone is struggling and at risk of homelessness. Below are some of the common situations that can lead to a resident losing their home:

- Struggling to pay rent
- Problems with benefits administration
- Having a benefit sanction
- Leaving the parental home in a crisis
- Marital or relationship breakdown
- Leaving care, hospital or prison
- Deterioration in mental health
- Problematic drug or alcohol use

Sometimes when people feel desperate they think that a move will resolve their situation. However, this doesn't always solve the problem or fit with the Council's statutory duties.

Let's talk about housing

If we make it our business to talk to our clients and customers about the housing aspect of the above issues, or other issues that we work with residents on, we will make it easier for them to ask for help and could prevent homelessness. If someone you're working with is experiencing similar difficulties, you can start conversations about housing by asking questions such as:

- How long do you expect your current housing arrangement to last for?
- Can you afford your current housing arrangement?

Encourage residents to check letters about benefits

Problems can occur when there are changes to the income or benefits that someone receives. It is important to encourage residents to carefully check any letters they receive regarding benefits, so that they can seek advice if they don't understand the changes or if the changes will cause a problem for their household income.

Prompt residents to report changes in circumstances – when they happen

For example, reporting a change in the household like a new child or new partner, or someone moving out, can avoid a Housing Benefit overpayment or underpayment which can cause a problem further down the line. To report a change, phone Newcastle City Council's Housing Benefit section on 0191 278 7878.

Know who to contact

Staff at Newcastle City Council's **Housing Advice Centre** can:

- Prevent a homelessness situation from occurring, if possible
- Explain homelessness prevention and what happens at each stage
- Assist in locating alternative accommodation, such as a housing association, local authority or privately rented property, if staying in the current home isn't possible

There is a wide range of advice and support available in Newcastle. The Housing Advice Centre can help you, or the resident you're working with, to understand the different options available to solve their housing problems. The earlier someone gets in touch, the more likely it is that they can get help.

Phone: 0800 1707 008 (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 12 noon and 1pm to 4.30pm)

Email: housingadvicecentre@newcastle.gov.uk

Website: www.newcastle.gov.uk/homeless

Other local housing advice is provided by:

Citizens Advice Newcastle

Address Floor 4, City Library, 33 New Bridge Street West, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8AX

Phone 0800 144 8848

Email citycab@newcastlecab.org.uk

Your Homes Newcastle

Your Homes Newcastle tenants can contact an Advice and Support Worker at their nearest Community Housing Office by phone on 0191 278 8600 or email yhn@yhn.org.uk

Private Rented Service

Private rented tenants can contact Newcastle City Council's Private Rented Service by phone on 0191 277 1438 or email privaterentedservice@newcastle.gov.uk

More information

Please use this information to talk about housing and help our aim to support more residents with housing problems at an earlier stage to prevent homelessness. For more information, visit www.newcastle.gov.uk/housing/housing-advice-and-homelessness

For information on benefits, debt and money advice, visit www.newcastle.gov.uk/welfare-rights. If you have any queries relating to the support available to promote financial inclusion and prevent homelessness, email Newcastle City Council's Active Inclusion Newcastle Unit at activeinclusion@newcastle.gov.uk