

Active Inclusion Newcastle

Newcastle Homelessness Prevention Briefing Q2 2014-15

We want all partners in the city to play a part in preventing homelessness. Our quarterly briefings help to build consensus and a cooperative approach by providing information on:

- **data and narrative that tell us about what works and the causes of homelessness**
- **the perceptions of clients, partners and workers on this data**
- **the outcomes for people supported by homelessness services**
- **new initiatives, policy and legislative changes**

This will help to us to work together to consider how to:

- **make the most of our resources to prevent homelessness and to respond to crisis**
- **build on what is working well to identify and meet our challenges**
- **create opportunities to intervene earlier, build resilience and prevent homelessness**
- **revise the City's statutory Homelessness Strategy action plan**

The emphasis of our Homelessness Strategy is on maximising the value of our resources to prevent homelessness. To aid analysis we have created 4 groupings of homelessness:

- **people owed the full homelessness duty**
- **people living with housing support**
- **people at risk of homelessness**
- **multiple exclusion and rough sleepers**

We recognise that these groupings have limitations and that people may not exactly fit the definitions but differentiating between the risks of homelessness helps to develop realistic options that include the wider aspects of social and financial inclusion, health and wellbeing. We have found that homelessness is best prevented through coordinated support that provides consistent information, advice and support that enables people to secure:

- **an income**
- **somewhere to live**
- **financial inclusion**
- **employment opportunities**

Our primary challenge is to maintain our high levels of homelessness prevention in the face of the largest public sector and welfare cuts in 60 years. We will work with partners to innovate, reduce duplication, increase prevention and provide more effective responses for vulnerable people. More information is provided in the Newcastle Homelessness Strategy 2014-19 which can be found [here](#).

Headlines

- Universal Credit accelerated rollout – 27/4/2015 for new Job Seekers Allowance claims
- Fair Chance Fund – up to £2m funding to support young homeless people into work
- Loss of private rented accommodation remains the main cause of homelessness
- Households with children remain the biggest group owed the full homeless duty
- Evictions from Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) remain low
- Evictions from supported housing remain a concern
- An apparent increase in rough sleeping linked to begging and legal highs
- Homelessness risk due to reduced benefit access for European Economic Area nationals

1. People who are owed the full homelessness duty

1a. Table 1 - household types and social needs

Total households	2013-14	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2014-15
Households owed the full duty	165	44	54			98
Household type (top 3)						
Lone parent with dependent children	93	26	32			58
Couple with dependent children	34	4	12			16
Single person household 18+	31	12	9			21
Social needs						
Physical health	45	13	13			26
Persons from abroad	37	3	8			11
Mental health	44	12	15			27

Table 1 shows the numbers and household types for all those clients the Council owed the full homeless duty to. The numbers of people who fall in to this category is limited by the statutory definition of the full duty, which means that the households in this category are predominantly those with dependent children or who are acutely vulnerable in some way.

1b. Table 2- causes of homelessness and outcomes

Causes of homelessness	2013-14	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2014-15
Loss of private rented	36	11	16			27
Relatives / friends asked to leave	18	7	6			13
Parents asked to leave	28	5	6			11
Non-violent relationship breakdown			6			6
Violent relationship breakdown			6			6
Required to leave NASS			6			6
Outcomes (top 3)						
Re-housed by YHN	146	30	35			65
Re-housed by housing assoc	9	1	2			3
Re-housed in private rented	3	0	5			5

As with previous quarters the main reason for households presenting as homeless is the loss of private rented accommodation. We review all cases where we have accepted the full homeless duty where leaving private rented was given as the reason for presenting. In all cases the correct notice was served and the reason given by the landlord for serving the notice was either in order to sell the property, or because they wanted to move back in to the property. It is indicative of the lack of security in the private rented sector that once a correct notice is served there is little room to negotiate for that household to be able to stay in their home. Government policy has been to encourage use of private rented accommodation but in Newcastle we have availability in Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) therefore we provide people with options of where to find a secure home with a supportive landlord.

The other causes of homelessness are equally split. Of note is the 6 households accepted after being required to leave National Asylum Seekers Support (NASS) accommodation. This is of concern as it has meant that in those cases there has been a breakdown in previously agreed processes, with the Home Office contractors, that allows for these households to be rehoused without the need to come via the Housing Advice Centre (HAC). In most cases this has occurred due to late notification regarding the granting of leave to remain and has meant that the YHN Move On Team have not had time to be able to arrange accommodation.

The main outcome for people who are owed the full duty is for them to be rehoused to a YHN tenancy as this is the most suitable and effective way for the council to discharge its duty. The 5 households owed the full homeless duty who moved to the private rented sector did so of their own volition and none were a discharge of duty to private rented accommodation under the Localism Act 2011.

1c. Table 3 - statutory use of temporary accommodation

Statutory temporary accommodation	2013- 14	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2014-15
Cherry Tree View	171	38	49			87
Other accommodation	141	33	30			63
Domestic violence refuges	20	5	5			10

There has been a rise in the use of Cherry Tree View (CTV) due to more households with children becoming homeless this quarter.

1d. What we are doing

• **Reviewing all acceptances**

We consider all presentations to HAC as homeless where an earlier intervention from HAC or another agency may have prevented homelessness. We also use exception reporting to create a feedback loop with partners to target support earlier to where there are higher risks.

• **AIN offer and matrix**

Information from these reviews is fed back in to the development of the Active Inclusion Newcastle offer and helps us to plan targeted work around training, briefings and publicity of the consultancy lines available for Welfare Rights, Debt and Homelessness, [see here](#). This has led to our conducting an appreciative enquiry with the Community Family Intervention Programme to review a potentially preventable case of a large family becoming homeless.

• **CTV prevention hub**

CTV also acts as a “prevention hub” by accommodating people who can’t access voluntary sector accommodation and by providing preventative support to community based services.

• **Recommendations for managing high risk complex needs cases**

A combination of cuts in services and the easier legal challenge of homelessness decisions have led to concerns about people presenting with high levels of risks being supported by homelessness services who do not have the capacity to manage their risks. We will be liaising with the Safeguarding Board about how to best mitigate these risks.

1e. What should we do next?

We will review how we can better align support vulnerable people in private rented accommodation. At present the disparate nature of the private rented market with over 13,000 landlords means that support is often offered more as an incentive to landlords to engage and we need to consider people’s pathway into unsecure private rented accommodation and how we can better target advice and support to those at risk.

2. People at risk of homelessness

The numbers of people presenting to HAC seeking advice remains constant for the first 6 months of the year. This figure relates to the numbers of people who have received full casework assistance. Limitations in our capacity and IT mean that this is not the full picture of people presenting at HAC but it is a large enough sample to provide indicative data. The largest group are single adults, with more men than women presenting.

2a. Table 4 – people at risk of homelessness receiving casework interventions at HAC

People at risk of homelessness	2013-14	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2014-15
HAC Casework	2,209	587	576			1,163
Household type (top3)						
Single male 18+	1,210	315	314			629
Household with dependent children	470	133	122			255
Single female 18+	350	104	112			216
Social needs (top 3)						
Offending	833	192	165			357
Mental health	700	186	187			373
Physical health	570	166	140			306

Again the loss of private rented accommodation (table 5 below) is the spur for the majority of the presentations to HAC. Our last briefing note reported a much higher figure for this category, which prompted us to look in more detail. We have reassessed that figure and include the updated number for Q1. The discrepancy can be accounted for by the fact that in the previous quarter we had counted all those who were living in private rented whereas now we have been more circumspect to count only those who were at actual risk of losing that accommodation in the near future. We think this is a better reflection of the true levels of need. In discussions with Shelter this trend of presentations from people leaving private rented was repeated for them although they did have a high number of people presenting from social housing but this was felt to be a result of cases being picked up at court stage where traditionally people in social housing will challenge a notice more than those in a private tenancy where the grounds for possession are more fixed.

2b. Table 5 - causes of homelessness and outcomes for people at risk of homelessness

Reasons for presenting (top 3)	2013-14	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2014-15
Relatives/ friends asked to leave	367	28	72			100
Parents asked to leave	278	20	57			77
Loss of private rented	364	71	82			153
Outcomes						
Advice – remained in accommodation	358	177	184			361
Rehoused to supported housing	373	111	142			295
Rehoused to YHN	176	63	85			148
Rehoused to private rented	103	2	27			29

It remains positive that large numbers of people are able to remain in their home following advice from HAC and again, bearing in mind those presenting to HAC, it is unsurprising that a large number of people are rehoused in to supported accommodation. The numbers of people moving in to private rented has increased this quarter. For some people private rented is a positive outcome, in terms of location and accessibility but we need to consider the appropriate level of advice and support to help vulnerable people moving in to the private rented sector to help them maintain that accommodation in the long term.

We asked members of the Youth Independence Forum for their experiences of private rented accommodation and a number were positive about the choice it gave them particularly around location of the property, but also felt that you could move quicker in to private rented than waiting for something to become available through YHN and that properties were often furnished. For those less comfortable with it as an option, one of the main concerns was the lack of security but also that success could well be dependent on how well you got on with an individual landlord, not something that the group thought was as relevant with YHN. They

were all in agreement that the important thing was knowing where to go for help or advice if you were unsure of something and some of those for whom private rented wouldn't have been their first choice said it was something that they would consider more readily if there was support available to them.

2c. Table 6 - Homelessness prevention activity

Homelessness Prevention Activity	2013-14	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2014-15
Homeless preventions	4,529	1,098	992			2,090
Prevention Activities (top 3)						
YHN Advice and Support	1,567	397	338			735
HAC	1,442	397	427			824
Commissioned services via Gateway	428	137	134			271
Use of DHP						
DHP awards	286	33	46			79
Social Housing Evictions	474					
YHN evictions	97	14	13			27

There has been a reduction in the numbers of homelessness preventions this quarter but there has been a rise in the number of preventions generated by HAC as compared to other providers. As usual the majority of preventions are carried out by HAC and the Advice and Support team at YHN. The strength of the latter's interventions can be seen in the continued low number of evictions from YHN. Whilst evictions are low the continued forbearance over "bedroom tax" arrears being shown by social landlords will not continue indefinitely and we could see a rise in this figure.

2d. What we are doing

Universal credit partnership and support arrangements

- We are developing a Universal Credit Support Delivered Locally informal trial with Jobcentre Plus and local partners to test the integration of services and our partnership arrangements. We are developing a common triage process which will be at the centre of the trial. This will be used to assess residents' capacity to meet the requirements of Universal Credit (covering digital, financial, employment and housing).
- We are working with CTV, the Newcastle Families' Programme and YHN to align this triage process with their existing screening and support planning processes. We plan for staff from those teams to start using the triage process from January 2015.

2e. What should we do next?

- A part of the work around the development of the Active Inclusion Newcastle matrix (see 1d above) we will be working with primary level partners to identify intervention points. We would welcome comments from people as to what they would see as the pinch points for people being at risk of losing their accommodation and when and where information, advice or support should be targeted at an earlier stage.
- YHN are reporting that people from the European Economic Area are having their right to benefits withdrawn and that this is placing them at risk of homelessness. The Cross Council Migration Group is coordinating an impact assessment and responses.

3. People living in supported housing

3a. Table 7- number of admits, reason for admission and social needs

Housing Related Support	2013- 14	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2014-15
Total admits	1,565	396	416			812
Reason for admission						
Not recorded / not known	309	78	83			161
Lost existing accommodation	226	57	58			115
Relationship breakdown	411	80	130			210
Social needs						
Offending	444	78	105			183
Drugs	223	43	57			100
Mental health	198	45	64			109

There has been a rise in the number of admits to supported housing this quarter. We are concerned at the high number of admissions where the reason for homelessness is not recorded, either through not being disclosed on referral or subsequently not updated by the provider. We are working with partners to improve this, supported housing is an expensive resource and it is important that we are able to identify the reasons why someone would require it in order to better plan support and this will also help us to reduce evictions.

3b. Table 8- snapshot of move on assessments completed by end of each quarter

Move on assessments	Q4 13-14	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Number of 'red' (likely to require long term ongoing support)	96	86	94		
Number of 'amber' (further intervention or support required)	315	255	235		
Number of 'green' (ready to move to independent living)	109	118	101		

The Supported Housing Move On protocol has been in place for two years now and feedback from providers suggests that it has been positive but that we could improve the process and better focus resources. We have asked providers for examples of how move on is managed within their own services and will seek to build on examples of good practice to develop a more effective system for monitoring and managing the move on process.

3c. Table 10 - outcomes for people leaving supported housing

Move-on destinations	2013- 14	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2014-15
No forwarding address	486	110	86			196
Another hostel	418	152	91			243
Independent tenancy	270	75	75			150
• YHN	99	31	35			66
• Private rented	81	29	15			44
• Housing association	20	10	15			25
• Housing First	n/a	n/a	8			8
Evictions						
Evicted	391	95	78			174
Evictions not notified to HAC	11	23	26			49

Evictions from supported housing have dropped this quarter and this is to be welcomed but we know that there is still work to be done to further reduce this number. The main reasons given for evictions were “disruptive behaviour” or violence to staff or residents. Many of the incidents recorded through the Gateway show the frequent involvement of alcohol or drugs in such incidents and commentary on evictions for substance misuse indicate that disruptive behaviour is also involved. The majority of clients being evicted leave to no forwarding address and most clients are on a warning before being asked to leave. Looking at how long clients stayed before being asked to leave, the vast majority stay less than 3 months indicating that their support needs are too great or their behaviour too difficult to sustain the accommodation available. Of concern are the few clients who sustain accommodation for a period of years before being asked to leave, for example there were three clients evicted in Q2 after a year or more’s stay who were asked to leave for rent arrears.

We cross referenced people evicted from accommodation and later found rough sleeping and whilst 123 clients evicted in 2013-14 had later periods of rough sleeping only 15 clients were found rough sleeping within a month of eviction, suggesting that eviction does not usually mean a direct return to the streets however it is a high risk indicator that this will occur at some time. Evictions are generally higher in crisis accommodation compared to supported accommodation; with 57% of evictions in this quarter coming from crisis accommodation.

3e. What we are doing

- We have established monthly review of all evictions from supported housing and linked this with the Crisis Response Commissioning review cycle.
- We are working with the contract managers to review all evictions from supported housing and will update the Preventing Evictions from Supported Housing Protocol.
- We have established quarterly Preventing Sanctions Workshops, targeting providers who have evicted clients for rent arrears.

3f. What should we do next?

- Work with supported housing contract managers to look at improving the move on process and protocol.
- Working with Fulfilling Lives and health and social care partners to better align support.

4. Multiple exclusion and rough sleeping

4a. Table 11- Numbers of rough sleepers

	2013- 14	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Average per night	5	4	6		
Individuals	182	61	76		
Stock	79	20	23		
Flow	72	28	41		
Returner	31	13	12		
NSNO eligible	24	13	10		
NSNO – not eligible	14	10	18		
NSNO – unconfirmed	34	5	13		

There has been a rise in the numbers of individuals found rough sleeping this quarter. Feedback from front line workers suggests that the increase is linked to begging and the use of legal highs. As with previous quarters we have included the No Second Night Out (NSNO) figures. We have met our commitment to NSNO again this quarter and all 10 people who were NSNO eligible were found accommodation or offered reconnection. We have continued to include the figures for those who are ineligible for NSNO and those whose circumstances could not be confirmed as we feel this gives a rounder picture of the issue in Newcastle.

From Table 12 (below) we can see individuals who are evicted or abandon their accommodation feature highly in the numbers of people found. As we have seen, inspection of the evictions from supported housing doesn't suggest that there is a large group of people for whom eviction means an imminent return to the street so it would seem that these are people who may have been evicted from their last placement in supported housing some time ago and haven't found settled accommodation in the interim.

4b. Table 12- reasons for rough sleeping and outcomes

Reasons for rough sleeping	2013- 14	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2014-15
Relationship breakdown	14	1	10			11
Unknown	58	30	31			61
Abandoned / evicted from supported accomm'	81	26	31			57
Outcomes						
Accommodation secured	67	17	23			40
No further contact /disappeared	52	31	30			61
Housed by family/friends	2	-	-			
Returned to existing accomm'	18	6	9			15

We need to better understand why people abandon supported housing.

The complex needs of this group can again be seen in the outcomes, with disappeared / no further contact ranking highly. The work done by the Outreach Service and other agencies is reflected in a relatively high number people for whom accommodation was secured and this confirms our assertion that no one needs to be homeless in Newcastle. The quality of supported accommodation in Newcastle is good and there is support available to help people overcome the causes of their problems. The dilemma we face is what to do when people aren't ready to change their anti-social behaviour or accept the support offered.

4c. What we are doing

- 60 Housing First self-contained accommodation offers via the Multiple Exclusion Common Case Management Group (MECCMG).
- 365 day street outreach.
- Aligning the MECCMG closer to the Safeguarding process.
- Being part of a national Public Health England learning hub to develop an outcomes framework for health and homelessness.

4d. What should we do next?

- There was general support for closer working with health and social care partners to encourage proactive support to people who do not engage with services.

5. Issues to consider

This briefing note and accompanying presentation was delivered at the Newcastle Homelessness Prevention Forum on December 3rd, 2014. We asked those attending to consider a 4 specific areas and their feedback is summarised below. We also consulted with the Youth Independence Forum (YIF) specifically on issues around the use of private rented and we spoke with the User and Carer Forum on their experiences of housing and homeless in the city. Again, where relevant, their comments are included below.

5a Universal Credit – do you support the proposal for the informal trial?

There was broad agreement from all those attending that the approach to Universal Credit that had been outlined at the Forum (the presentation is available on the City Council [website](#)), and there were a number of specific issues raised in the discussion that followed the presentation. These included.

- Partners welcomed the plans to extend the partnership arrangements to a wider range of supported accommodation, following the completion of the informal trial.
- Partners welcomed the sharing of learning from the informal trial with the supported housing providers to help their preparation for Universal Credit.
- Concerns were raised about the transitional period and what this would mean for those involved. Budgeting and moving to monthly payments will require a culture change for many. Staff will need to work hard to understand ‘triggers’ and identify when people will need additional support.
- The additional support clients will need should be built in to existing support arrangements by ‘upskilling’ staff.
- Some lessons can be learned following the introduction of Universal Jobmatch.
- Concerns that residents will need to be eased into transitional arrangements as people are already struggling to cope.
- Partners stressed the importance of consistency of information and the risks of mixed messages for residents as confusion would only seek to increase the anxiety that some were feeling about the changes.
- The main issue agreed by the Forum was the need to up-date the support planning process to respond to the new demands created by Universal Credit and to align this to the Claimant’s Commitment.

5b: Fair Chance Fund - how can you support this initiative?

The Forum also received a presentation from Ben Dickenson (Home Group) on the Fair Chance Fund that Home Group would be administering across the region (presentation available on the City Council [website](#)) Again there was broad support for the initiative and a number of those attending (Under The Bridge, Newcastle CAB and Crisis Skylight) put themselves forward as being able to offer volunteering opportunities to the scheme. In addition one group whilst supportive of the initiative questioned how, like with Universal Credit trial, this scheme would align with existing support planning and there was some discussion about developing a variation on the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to cover adults. There were some concerns around the social enterprise nature of the scheme and whether this could inadvertently lead to potential cherry picking of clients. There were a number of practical questions raised about how the scheme would work and how referrals were made and once this information is available we will circulate via the Forum mailing list.

5c: Private rented – how can we reduce vulnerable people’s evictions?

As in other areas of the country and as described earlier in this briefing note, the loss of private rented accommodation is the largest reason for people presenting as homeless in the city. As such we need to look for new ways that we can engage with tenants living in this sector but also those considering it as a housing option to ensure that we are doing all we can to support people living in this sector. During discussions on this issue at the Forum a number of issues were raised

- The main issue we face is the legalisation and lack of security of tenure along with the disparate nature of the private rented market which can make it difficult to get consistency from landlords.
- There was agreement from most that attempts to use support as an incentive for landlords has only been partially successful and that greater consideration should be given to aligning support to vulnerable people.
- Concerns about the negative perception that some clients seem to have of available YHN accommodation, this links to some of the concerns raised at the YIF (and detailed above) that if you wanted to live in a particular area or have a choice about the type of property you rented then private rented was seen as more popular option.
- Early identification and action was seen by many as the key to preventing homelessness from private rented and that we needed to work closely with support providers and find out early if clients have involvement with professionals, such as Social Services which can be an obvious marker of vulnerability.
- The question was raised whether there are 'universally recognised' triggers to help identify vulnerability? Some felt that the onus was on the client to advise if they have a vulnerability rather than for service providers to identify it first.
- Crisis has a 'ready to rent' programme and were happy for details be shared. We will circulate this information to the Forum in the New Year.

5d: Evictions from supported housing

The Forum was asked to consider whether they agreed with the work with Supported Housing providers to address the high level of evictions from accommodation in the sector. The Supported Housing Evictions Protocol is to be reviewed and other measures to be considered including:

- Senior officer case scrutiny
- NTQs and appeals
- Exception reporting
- Improved recording
- Eviction support plan

Again the Forum showed broad agreement for the approach being taken but there was a request from some of those attending that there needs to be an appreciation of how difficult it is for the supported housing sector with increasing demands being placed on it from an increasingly complex client group. It was felt by many that rent arrears are an increasing issue for people who are disengaged from society and in conjunction with welfare reform and benefit sanctions were causing real hardship for some residents. In addition there was a request from some attending the Forum that consideration be given to a sector wide approach to rent arrears so that clients' case details are forwarded and so effectively that arrears and support plans follow the client.

5e: Rough sleepers and multiple exclusion - how can we better respond to people who sleep rough due to anti-social behaviour?

The responses from the Forum suggested this was the question that was a complex issue to address to which there wasn't a simple answer. Comments suggested that some people do not appear interested in altering their behaviour and that people must want to change, rather than be told their behaviour has to change. There was a feeling expressed that for some people there was no real consequence for their behaviour as some people who are evicted from one place are 'picked up' by another agency / venue the following night. In discussions with the User and Carer Forum there were some real concerns expressed about the those who may be sleeping in rough in the city and how we can work to engage better with this client group. There was also discussion of how to better involve health and social care agencies to proactively engage with people who have health and care needs but who do not seek support.

6. How to get involved.

Please feel free to discuss the issues raised in this briefing with your residents and services users at whatever forums you have and staff from the AIU would be happy to attend team meetings / service user groups you have if there are any specific issues that people would like to raise or discuss in more detail. You can contact Sarah Blakey (Active Inclusion Officer) on 0191 277 1733 or email activeinclusion@newcastle.gov.uk to arrange this.

You can comment on the Homelessness Strategy action plan and our progress towards the actions and on the protocols and procedures we have developed with partners to tackle homelessness at any time by contacting sarah.blakey@newcastle.gov.uk and copies of the action plan and the protocols and our governance arrangements can be found [here](#).