

# Active Inclusion Newcastle

## Newcastle Homelessness Prevention Briefing Q3 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**
- **financial inclusion**
- **somewhere to live**
- **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

- Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) evictions are still low, only 14 in this last quarter
  - Supported housing evictions down 21% – but are still too high at 66 in the last quarter
  - 'Bedroom Tax' still affects 4,374 households and Discretionary Housing Payments funding reduced by £105,000
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# 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	34		132
<b>Household type (top 3)</b>						
Lone parent with dependent children	93	26	32	21		79
Couple with dependent children	34	4	12	10		26
Single person household 18+	31	12	9	1		22
<b>Social needs</b>						
Physical health	45	13	13	9		35
Persons from abroad	37	3	8	9		20
Mental health	44	12	15	9		36

Table 1 shows the numbers and household types for all those clients the Council owed the full homeless duty. 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. We believe that in Newcastle this figure has reached a plateau and in the main now represents the true crisis presentations that couldn't have been avoided or relieved via other means. The decline in the number of statutory homelessness cases is mirrored in national figures, the latest Crisis Homelessness Monitor for England (February 2015 ) notes that nationally whilst acceptances in London have risen there has been a 14% reduction in the North for the four years to 2013/14.

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	9		36
Relatives / friends asked to leave	18	7	6	2		15
Parents asked to leave	28	5	6	5		16
Non-violent relationship breakdown			6	4		10
Violent relationship breakdown			6	9		15
Required to leave NASS			6	2		8
<b>Outcomes</b>						
Re-housed by YHN	146	30	35	22		60
Re-housed by housing assoc	9	1	2	2		5
Re-housed in private rented	3	0	5	0		5
Refused offer				1		1

As with previous quarters the main reason for households presenting as homeless is the loss of private rented accommodation. Again, as with previous quarters, we have reviewed each of these cases. 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. It may be that these landlords have other motives for wanting the tenant to leave but the legal framework that governs the ending of private tenancies does in effect make that irrelevant as far as the impact on the tenant is concerned and the requirement that they seek alternative accommodation.

The other largest cause of statutory homelessness this quarter is people presenting as a result of a violent relationship breakdown. There were 9 cases this quarter and all have been reviewed by a senior officer at the Housing Advice Centre (HAC) as part of our ongoing routine of reviewing all homeless acceptances each quarter. Of the 9 cases the majority (6) were living with partners in their partners tenancies (the majority of which were private rented) with 3 cases living in hostels after fleeing violence in other parts of the country and it being determined that it wasn't safe for them to return there. We will monitor all future cases to see if it is a blip for this quarter or a trend. The numbers presenting from NASS (National Asylum Seekers Support) accommodation has fallen following the high of the last quarter and we can hopefully see the issues in quarter 2 as a temporary blip as a cause of homelessness.

The main outcome for people who are owed the full duty is again, as with previous quarters, 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. No households who were accepted moved to private rented this quarter and one single person household who had been accepted turned down the offer of accommodation made and went to live with their father instead.

### 1c. Table 3 - statutory use of temporary accommodation

Statutory temporary accommodation	2013- 14	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2014-15
Cherry Tree View (CTV)	171	38	49	46		133
Other accommodation	141	33	30	34		97
Domestic violence refuges	20	5	5	5		15

The use of CTV and other temporary accommodation has remained relatively static over the year. In future recording quarters we will seek to include in these figures individuals and households who may come to be accommodated in CTV for reasons other than a statutory duty being owed. This will give us a fuller picture on the use of this important resource.

We have consulted with the regional Shelter office and they have confirmed that the management of homelessness in Newcastle is effective and meets our statutory duties and they had no cause to challenge the Council. In discussions with them they identified that the main issues they faced were around tenancy sustainment, including issues with private rented landlords. Of the 33 people who presented to them in quarter three the majority (20) identified as being tenants in private rented accommodation, with an additional 8 living in social housing. These figures would appear to support their view that homelessness in Newcastle is not to be seen in the crisis presentations but in those people living in accommodation that they are trying to maintain.

### 1d. What we are doing

- Active Inclusion matrix of engagement – working with 35 primary prevention level partner agencies to support them to prevent homelessness.
- Continued in-depth review of all accepted cases and weekly exception reporting to identify earlier opportunities for intervention.

### 1e. What should we do next?

- **Domestic violence presentations** –for this next quarter we will review presentations to the Housing Advice Centre where fleeing domestic violence was the reason for homelessness to see if there were any opportunities for us to have acted sooner in supporting someone to move other than through a crisis presentation.
- **Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)** – We know that there are a number of households across the city who are only sustaining their tenancy as a result of DHP

payments that this is not a situation that can be maintained long term and we need to develop a process for managing the transition off DHP for these households.

## 2. People at risk of homelessness

The numbers of people presenting to HAC seeking advice has fallen slightly this quarter compared to previous ones. This to be expected as the period covers the Christmas and New Year period which is traditionally quieter for this group. This figure relates to the numbers of people who have received full casework assistance. It bears repeating that 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. The large numbers of single men presenting to HAC is reflected in information received from Shelter regarding their work this quarter, where they saw significantly more single men than woman or households with dependent children. Out of 33 presentations, 21 were single men.

**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	494		1,657
<b>Household type (top3)</b>						
Single male 18+	1,210	315	314	278		907
Household with dependent children	470	133	122	102		357
Single female 18+	350	104	112	84		300
<b>Social needs (top 3)</b>						
Offending	833	192	165	149		506
Mental health	700	186	187	173		546
Physical health	570	166	140	120		426

For this quarter there was a 26% rise in the numbers of people presenting after having to leave family or friends (see table 5 below) though the loss of private rented accommodation continues remain a consistent issue for those in housing need and has been the biggest reason overall this year so far.

**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	98		198
Parents asked to leave	278	20	57	61		138
Loss of private rented	364	71	82	70		223
<b>Outcomes</b>						
Advice – remained in accommodation	525	177	184	105		470
Rehoused to supported housing	571	111	142	123		376
Rehoused to YHN	243	63	85	83		231
Rehoused to private rented	120	2	27	14		43

Supported housing still remains the highest outcome for this group which as ever reflects the prevalence of single males with support needs in this group. With regards the 14 clients who moved to private rented a review of those cases demonstrates that a choice of area in which to live is a major factor affecting a client's choice to seek a private rented tenancy.

## 2c. Table 6 - Homelessness prevention activity

Homelessness Prevention Activity	2013-14	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2014-15
Total preventions	4,529	1,098	992	1,118		3,208
Homelessness prevented		1,053	860	1,079		2,992
Homelessness relieved		45	62	39		259
<b>Prevention Activities (top 3)</b>						
YHN Advice and Support	1,567	397	338	419		1,154
HAC	1,442	397	427	416		1,240
Commissioned services via Gateway	428	137	134	129		400
<b>Use of DHP</b>						
DHP awards	286	33	46	65		144
<b>Social Housing Evictions</b>	474					
YHN evictions	97	14	13	14		41

In a slight change to how we present the figures on homelessness prevention this quarter you will see from table 6 above that we have broken down the figure for homelessness prevention activity to show the split between homelessness prevented and relieved. We believe that this helps with our overall understanding of the picture of homelessness in Newcastle and the type of work being carried out to prevent and relieve it. In this context 'homeless prevention' in its broadest terms, is where a local authority takes positive action to provide housing assistance to someone who considers themselves to be at risk of homelessness in the near future, and as a result the person is able to either remain in their existing accommodation or obtain alternative accommodation. Whereas 'homelessness relief' is where an authority has been unable to prevent homelessness but helps someone to secure alternative accommodation. We would expect the prevented figure to be higher as hopefully this would demonstrate the success of a range of interventions put in place to ensure that an individual doesn't have to make a crisis homelessness presentation.

Nationally the picture on homelessness prevention is similar whereby prevention activity across local authorities has risen as can be seen in the Crisis Homelessness Monitor for England (February 2015), if you would like to read a copy of the monitor please click [here](#)

Evictions from YHN continue to remain low as a proportion of the 27,000 + tenancies however these low numbers are to be seen in the context of the continuing pressures that are placed on tenants by welfare reform and an acknowledgement that many of the measures currently in place to mitigate the worst effects on tenants are only temporary, for example this is likely to be affected by the number of tenants who are approaching their third period of DHP funding. There remains 4,374 households in Newcastle who are affected by the Housing Benefit spare room subsidy commonly known as the 'bedroom tax' and the upcoming introduction of the first tranche of Universal Credit is only likely to add to the pressures felt by tenants in the city. We are responding to this through the Universal Credit partnership and support arrangements that we discussed in the Quarter 2 Homelessness Prevention Briefing Note (you can read a copy [here](#))

## 2d. Prison and hospital discharges

From this briefing note onwards we will include information on people being discharged from institutions as we know that both hospital and prison discharge if not managed can lead to crisis homelessness presentations. This information is agreed case by case with the hospitals discharge coordinators.

The most important step to preventing delayed discharges and homelessness is to identify any accommodation needs people have on admission. If that is not possible then it should be done as soon as it becomes apparent that a patient has no suitable accommodation to go to and that this is delaying the discharge for a patient who is well enough to leave hospital. We have an agreed protocol with the hospitals that is supported by YHN's Advice and Support Workers who provide support to the hospitals to manage challenging cases. Where this cannot resolve the issue then a referral is made to HAC as soon as possible. This referral can be made either by nursing staff or by any other existing support worker. This practice allows for the monitoring of the number of problematic cases and for the real time monitoring of patients housing outcomes. By following this process we will resolve at an early stage any cases where there is a risk of a delayed discharge and ensure that the correct care and support package is in place for that client to be discharged to the most appropriate accommodation available. By working in partnership with the hospitals and YHN in this way we will better identify unmet needs.

**Table 7 - Hospital discharge referrals**

	Q3 2014 – 15
Total number of referrals	12
General (RVI and Freeman)	9
Mental health	3
<b>Outcomes</b>	
Rehoused to YHN	1
Rehoused to supported housing	7
Returned to own tenancy	3
Admit to CTV	1
Homeless	0

There was an issue with one referral from a mental health ward which resulted in a crisis presentation to HAC. This client was found accommodation in supported housing that same day after some negotiation from staff at HAC but clearly it would have been better if the crisis presentation in this way could have been avoided. The issue was raised with the client's care co-ordinator and with ward staff and it has been arranged for staff from HAC to do information sessions with the ward staff as a refresher on the hospital discharge process in Newcastle. Staff from HAC also attend a monthly review meeting with the Mental Health Trust Discharge Facilitator, which facilitates joint planning to prevent homelessness.

With regards to prison release the table below outlines the number of presentations to HAC where prison release was identified as the reason for homelessness. This figure includes 6 cases where HAC was notified in advance by either the Shelter housing advice team in the prison or probation and a bed was held in supported housing in advance of release. From the figures below you can see that no one from Newcastle who was homeless due to a prison release was left without the offer of accommodation.

**Table 8 - Prison release referrals**

	Q3 2014 – 15
Total number of referrals	22
<b>Outcomes</b>	
Accommodated in supported housing	12

Out of area – referred back to local area	4
Refused accommodation offered, no further contact.	5
Recalled to prison	1

We spoke to Shelter about the cases that they are dealing with through their provision in the male prison establishments in the North East (they are unable through their current reporting system to provide information from the female prison at Low Newton) They reported 23 clients with a Newcastle connection who identified as having no accommodation to return to on release. Due to issues around their recording and confidentiality we are unable currently to cross reference the names of these clients with those that we accommodated in Newcastle. However we are confident due to the close links between the prison teams and staff at HAC we that we are referring to the same clients. Indeed Shelter also reported that 12 were accommodated in supported housing mirroring our outcomes. It is our aim that in the future we will be in a position to cross reference our client information.

## 2e. What we are doing

- **Spectrum of advice on housing and homelessness** – Active Inclusion Newcastle seeks to make the best use of the limited face to face specialist advice services in Newcastle by helping other non-specialist services to prevent and respond to the risk of homelessness. This means moving from signposting to proportionate responses in which all partners can play a role. To aid us in this process we are now developing a Spectrum which covers Housing and Homelessness advice and describes three broad tiers or levels of housing advice and will act as a tool to help us to better understand where organisations fit into the provision of advice in Newcastle and what support they need to do this. The draft document outlining the Spectrum of Advice was circulated to at the Newcastle Homelessness Prevention Forum (NHPF) on March 4<sup>th</sup> 2015. The feedback from those attending the Forum is detailed at point 5 below.

## 2f. What should we do next?

- Explore opportunities with other directly provided / commissioned services for prevention.

## 3. People living in supported housing

### 3a. Table 9- number of admits, reason for admission and social needs

Housing Related Support (accommodation based)	2013- 14	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2014-15
Total admits	1,565	396	416	360		1, 172
Total number of individuals		315	354	312		981
Reason for admission						
Not recorded / not known	309	78	83	38		199
Lost existing accommodation	226	57	58	58		173
Relationship breakdown	411	80	130	150		360
Moved from other hostel			65	43		108
Social needs						
Offending	444	78	105	88		271
Drugs	223	43	57	47		147
Mental health	198	45	64	52		161
Alcohol	137	19	49	35		103

We have seen a 13% drop in the numbers of admits to supported housing over the last quarter with a corresponding drop in the numbers of individuals that this relates to. The

number of admits will include those moves that individuals make between providers so it is important to note that some of the individuals above will have had more than one admit in to a service. It is positive to note that there has been a noticeable drop in the number of placements where the reason for admission was not recorded or given as unknown. The more we know about why people need supported housing the better we can look to target resources in those areas that would help to prevent this. We have worked with providers to ensure this information is captured and we would hope to see this figure fall again next quarter.

### 3b. Table 10- 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	80	
Number of 'amber' (further intervention or support required)	315	255	235	249	
Number of 'green' (ready to move to independent living)	109	118	101	99	

Of the 28 people who moved to an YHN tenancy in this quarter (see table 11 below) all had been assessed as green and ready for independence which is obviously exactly as we would expect. We will be going back to any provider where a client with less than an green rating moves on to independence to ensure that that the client has adequate support available to them to be able to main that tenancy. The 13 people who moved to private rented tenancies this quarter were also all recorded as 'green' before discharge, however due to the instability of the private rented market and our knowledge that many presentations to HAC for advice and assistance are from those in private rented accommodation we are understandably keen to learn more about why individuals have moved to this tenure of accommodation as opposed to YHN when there is currently availability in the latter. To this end we have asked Changing Lives to look at people moving from their projects to private rented tenancies and reflect on the reasons for that choice. We know from previous discussions with the Youth Independence Forum that a major pull toward private rented is the choice in location and the belief that it is much quicker to obtain accommodation via this route. Whilst we acknowledge the role that the private rented sector plays in the city we also need to recognise that for some of the more vulnerable clients in the city a more secure tenancy in social housing may be a better fit. For those leaving supported housing and wanting to move to an independent tenancy the YHN Pathways Advice and Support workers role is to assist clients in supported housing to navigate the Tyne and Wear Homes system and to offer additional support in setting up and sustaining that tenancy in the community.

### 3d. Table 11 - outcomes for people leaving supported housing

Move-on destinations	2013- 14	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2014-15
No forwarding address	486	110	86	68		264
Another hostel	418	152	91	100		343
Independent tenancy	270	75	75	69		219
• YHN	99	31	35	28		94
• Private rented	81	29	15	13		47
• Housing association	20	10	15	3		28
• Housing First	n/a	n/a	8	4		12
<b>Evictions</b>						
Evicted	391	95	78	66		239
Evictions not notified to HAC	11	23	26	11		60
NTQ recorded on Gateway				5		5

In addition this quarter, 21 people have moved from supported accommodation to a newly opened transitional tenancy project in the East of the city. This is a larger number than we would normally see in a quarter but in the interests of reporting on the full range of move on options for clients in supported housing we will look to include moves to transitional tenancies in future reporting quarters and we will report on Housing First within Rough Sleeping and Multiple Exclusion at point 4.

Evictions from supported housing have fallen by 21% this quarter. We have been working with providers since October on how to better address this issue in accommodation provision and at the NHPF on the 4th March 2015 we heard feedback from the providers on this work and how going forward we will hopefully continue to see a fall in these numbers. One area where there is room for improvement is in regards to the reporting of when a notice to quit (NTQ) has been issued. Providers are asked to update the Gateway record of a client in such circumstances and of the 66 people who were evicted in the last quarter only 5 were recorded as having had a NTQ issued.

### 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 continuing to work with the contract managers to review evictions from supported housing and have updated the Preventing Evictions from Supported Housing Protocol to reflect this work. Information on this was presented to the NHPF on the 4th March 2015.
- YHN Pathways (supported housing) pilot on Tyne and Wear applications. This is a three month trial to try and help speed up the application and verification process for those applying for YHN housing from the supported housing sector.

### 3f. What should we do next?

- In the same way that we have worked with supported housing contract managers to look at reducing evictions we will adopt a similar approach to reviewing the Supported Housing Move On Protocol and to improve outcomes.
- Refine our data to reflect better the demarcation between the new contracts
- Develop way of presenting figures to demonstrate truer picture of use of supported housing, highlight those clients who are new to the sector, those who are 'locked in' to provision and those who are the perpetual repeat clients.
- Better understand the correlation between the high numbers of clients with support needs with the provision of support to meet those needs e.g. how many people are engaged with drug and alcohol services.

## 4. Multiple exclusion and rough sleeping

### 4a. Table 12 – Numbers of rough sleepers

	2013-15	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2014-15
Average per night	5	4	6	7		
Individuals	182	61	76	60		
• Stock	79	20	23	26		
• Flow	72	28	41	33		
• Return	31	13	12	1		
NSNO eligible / compliant	24	13 /13	10/10	6/6		
NSNO – not eligible	14	10	18	9		
NSNO – unconfirmed	34	5	13	18		

There has been a rise in the average per night of individuals found rough sleeping this quarter, a trend which is of obvious concern. The Crisis Homelessness Monitor for England (February 2015) shows there has been a rise nationally in the numbers of rough sleepers over the last 4 years.

**4b. Table 13- reasons for rough sleeping and outcomes**

Reasons for rough sleeping	2013-14	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2014-15
Relationship breakdown	14	1	10	6		17
Unknown	58	30	31	24		86
Evicted / abandoned accommodation	81	26	31	25		82
<b>Outcomes</b>						
Accommodation secured	67	17	23	18		58
No further contact /disappeared	52	31	30	19		80
Returned to existing accommodation	18	6	9	8		23

As is perhaps to be expected with this client group, the reasons that people are found rough sleeping reflects abandonment and evictions from supported accommodation. We would hope that in future quarters that the work we are doing to prevent evictions from support accommodation would have a positive impact in this figure. In discussion with the User and Carer Forum there was concern that there were more people sleeping rough in the city than we were aware of. The discussion broadened to an acknowledgement that some of the heightened visible begging on the streets could lead to a perception that those individuals were all also sleeping rough. We discussed some of the initiatives taking place in the city to tackle rough sleeping and all were advised of the rough sleeping email and phone line that members of the public can use to report concerns and to help us ensure that the street outreach teams are visiting and targeting the right areas.

**4c. What we are doing**

- Complex High Risk Cases Task and Finish Group – to consider how to improve risk management and safeguarding arrangements.
- Aligning Housing First data more closely with this group.
- Working with the Police to develop information for the public outlining the ‘offer’ in the city for those sleeping rough.

**4d. What should we do next?**

- Utilise a specific approach to reporting the figures which highlights the distinction between those people who are street homeless because there is nothing available and those who are unsuitable for what is available. It is to be hoped that this more sophisticated approach will help us to develop a more nuanced picture of the issues being face.
- Develop a strategic approach to multiply excluded people, linked to the High Risk Clients task and finish group.

**5. Issues to consider**

This briefing note and accompanying presentation was delivered at the Newcastle Homelessness Prevention Forum on March 3rd, 2015. We asked those attending to consider 3 specific areas and their feedback is summarised below. The briefing note was also circulated in advance to the Forum mailing list and comments were invited on the briefing note as whole as well as the 3 specific areas listed below.

## **Spectrum of housing and homelessness advice**

There was broad agreement from those attending the Forum that the Spectrum was a good idea and many thought it would help in the delivery of advice and support to clients, but with the caveat that training and support for people would need to work alongside it. The main points raised in the subsequent discussions are detailed below.

- The Spectrum was seen as a useful tool for differentiating between what different roles should be doing and making it explicit that there are limitations and boundaries to some roles and that they don't have to know everything
- Some of those present felt that sometimes small amounts of information can be dangerous and there was a need to ensure that people do not give advice they shouldn't
- Linked to the above, it was felt that advisors at Tiers 1 and 2 needed to be supported by an ongoing programme of training. A number of organisations expressed interest in being part of this and the Active Inclusion Newcastle unit is planning a quarterly programme of training and support that will look to involve a number of partner agencies in the city.
- There was support from some to include those solicitors in the city who hold legal aid contracts, especially those holding the housing contract. They are an important part of tier 3 and it would be good to use their involvement in the Spectrum to encourage closer working and to build up ties within the sector.
- There was discussion from about where they felt their organisations would be placed within the tiers and an acknowledgement that for some organisations they may well fall within all 3 tiers depending on the different staff roles. This made people feel that it was important that different roles of advisors were clear and that advisors were confident about the boundaries of the advice they were able to give. This clear demarcation of roles would also help to manage client expectation of what a service was able to do.

The draft of the Spectrum was circulated to the wider Homeless Prevention Forum mailing list and comments were invited. Any comments received will be taken along with the comments raised at the Forum will be considered and incorporated in to the draft Spectrum of Housing Advice document. We will look to bring a final version to the next Forum along with details of the initial quarterly training sessions for advisors.

## **Support planning in light of Welfare Reform changes**

Welfare Reform has given us an opportunity to look at how support planning in supported housing will need to be adapted to reflect some of the new requirements placed on clients, including the claimant commitment element of Universal Credit. Claire Knox (NCC Commissioning) gave a brief introduction to the type of changes that they were considering and advised the Forum that these ideas would be taken forward through the regular meetings between Commissioning and the contract managers for the commissioned housing support services. The main points from the subsequent discussion at the Forum are detailed below

- There was agreement for this approach and many felt it offered an opportunity to help benchmark providers
- It was felt that a consistent approach to support planning across services would benefit clients and that ultimately if a single support plan could be developed from this work then that too would be of benefit to clients moving through the system to independence.

These changes are still at an early stage of development but we will continue to keep Forum members advised of any changes and people will have an opportunity to comment further as the process develops.

## Communications update

Previous to the Forum a paper from Cllr Talbot had been circulated were asked to consider whether they were happy for these Quarterly Briefings to be the agreed record of the sector on the state of homelessness in the city. People were broadly in agreement with this approach but the main points, including a couple of areas of concern, raised by those attending the Forum are listed below.

- Most of those attending agreed in the principle with the thinking behind this but a couple of people did think that if / when press coverage related to individual buildings or issues that are specific to an organisation then clearly the organisation should be allowed to respond separately and specifically on those points when joint communication could be a conflict of interest and where an organisation may have to act differently to the Council
- On specific issues such as begging and the impact this has on the perceptions of homelessness a joint approach was a good idea.
- The briefing note was seen as a positive step forward but some felt that it could be too detailed and there was support for Cllr Talbot's suggestion at the Forum that we produce a short 'headlines' document that could be used to show the public and other interested parties what was available in the city.
- It was also suggested that anonymised case studies illustrating the situations of homelessness would help. We will contact people in advance of next quarters briefing note for suitable case studies that we could include.
- For those organisations which were national they noted that it was sometimes difficult to 'control' a message which came from a centralised press office and which wouldn't always reflect local trends in its approach.
- On a practical level it was suggested that organisations looking to raise awareness should contact the Council's Press Office who would provide support. In such instances please contact Neil Munslow ([neil.munslow@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:neil.munslow@newcastle.gov.uk)).

We will seek to include case studies in future quarterly briefings where appropriate to help to illustrate the issues facing people but also the solutions that are found for them, we will ask partners to contribute to by forwarding to [activeinclusion@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:activeinclusion@newcastle.gov.uk) any case studies with homeless prevention issues they would wish to highlight. We will also for Q4 produce a summary of the briefing in the form of an update for 2014 -15 which highlights the key facts and figures for Newcastle in the prevention of homelessness.

## 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](mailto: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](mailto:sarah.blakey@newcastle.gov.uk) and copies of the action plan and the protocols and our governance arrangements can be found [here](#).