

Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Homelessness Prevention Programme: Early Adopter Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer

What is the DCLG Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer?

On 17 October 2016 the Prime Minister launched a new Homelessness Prevention Programme, announcing that Newcastle is one of only three national early adopters for the Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer part of the programme, which is “a fresh government approach to tackling homelessness by focusing on the underlying issues which can lead to somebody losing their home”. The two year public service transformation programme starts in January 2017 and will focus on the prevention of homelessness at an earlier stage by working with a wider group of residents at risk to help them before they reach crisis point.

Our approach to preventing homelessness and how being a Trailblazer will help

The government have acknowledged the strength of our Active Inclusion Newcastle approach to preventing financial exclusion and homelessness, which aims to maximise our collective resources to help residents to maintain the foundations for a stable **life**:

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

The government’s welfare reforms and the increased conditionality that now comes with welfare benefits mean that residents have limited options to prevent homelessness. If they are not entitled to benefits they need to get employment to maximise their income, and to reduce their expenditure they need to budget or move to cheaper housing. Because of the relationship between these activities we have developed coordinated approaches to aligning welfare rights, employment, debt and housing information, advice and support, and we have done well in improving the alignment and coordination of these for vulnerable residents. The trailblazer programme will take that work to the next level by helping us to integrate our responses to the demands that residents face in these areas.

We know that some residents live lives dominated by crisis, some have occasional crisis in their lives and some just manage. The premise of our trailblazer programme is to better understand residents’ needs and to proactively help them to respond to changes in circumstances. By organising our interconnected responses to identify risks and to support residents to face their challenges, we will make the most of the opportunities to prevent crisis. We aim to prevent homelessness by simplifying processes and providing consistent communications, governance, workforce development and analysis to:

- **Adapt core Council commissioned and directly delivered specialist support, care and therapeutic services for residents who are known to be vulnerable** – to enable them to identify and prevent the risk of financial exclusion and homelessness
- **Target support to protect the most vulnerable and to prevent crisis** – our specialist financial inclusion, homelessness prevention and employment advice and support services will respond to the trigger points for financial exclusion and homelessness
- **Catch residents who we don’t already know are at risk through open access information and advice services** – learning how to identify risk and prevent crisis

This complements Newcastle's 'Life Chances' 2020 budget proposals to facilitate the change from systems that are based predominantly on people presenting for help when they face a crisis, to systems based on identifying risks and providing proactive, targeted advice and support to sustain independence.

Outcomes for the Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer

The trailblazer programme will deliver the following outcomes:

- **Increased homelessness preventions** – without waiting for residents to present themselves as being at risk of homelessness
- **Increased successful transitions to independence** – for residents who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- **Increased sustained independence** – for residents who have been homeless or at risk of homelessness

The measures to test the above will be:

- **Reduced crisis and intentional homelessness** – for the number of residents presenting in crisis who require emergency accommodation or who have lost their home through their own acts or failures to act
- **Reduced repeat homelessness** – for anyone who has been homeless
- **Maintained low use of temporary accommodation and no use of bed and breakfast**

Key activities of the Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer

The trailblazer programme will lead to a citywide culture that makes the prevention of homelessness everyone's business and homelessness crisis the exception by developing:

- **Inclusion plans** – based on our Universal Credit Triage Trial, to support a citywide approach to creating the foundations for a stable life
- **Workforce development** – to support implementing the homelessness prevention plans
- **A multi-disciplinary team** – to deliver integrated casework on housing, financial and employment issues
- **Governance arrangements** – to integrate services, with an Inclusion Board involving senior level representatives of all relevant organisations
- **Analytics, cost benefit analysis and exception reporting** – to strengthen our evidence and feedback loops, enabling us to identify opportunities for prevention and to develop consensual monitoring and evaluation
- **Outcomes based commissioning** – leading to payment by results

Funding for the Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer

The DCLG will provide £936k funding from January 2017 to March 2019 to contribute to maintaining core services and for additional capacity to embed the transition to a whole systems approach. This approach aims to make the best use of all public service resources to prevent homelessness through integrating responses to create the foundations for a stable life.

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