

# Newcastle's Homelessness Strategy

2014-19

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## Foreword

The main issues looming over Newcastle are the Government's actions to reduce the deficit which affects public services, the voluntary and community sector, business and individuals themselves. This presents us all with hard choices about how we use our reduced resources.

We make the most of our resources when we link them to the outcomes we want to achieve, which are to prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place, to respond humanely where we fail to prevent crisis and to learn what agencies and individuals can do to prevent a reoccurrence. We are most likely to achieve this this by aligning our resources to meet joint outcomes and by flexibly responding to challenges and opportunities.

Homelessness can be a complex problem with multiple causes requiring dynamic solutions. The better we understand the problems that lead to homelessness the better we can create the partnerships that promote prevention. In Newcastle people don't become homeless due to a crude shortage of housing; rather the causes of homelessness are rooted in social and financial exclusion. By providing the right support at the right time we can stop people falling through the net and reduce the adverse effects for individuals, communities and budgets.

This Strategy is based on our effective record of cooperative work that last year prevented 4,529 potential cases of homelessness that has helped to mitigate the adverse effects of the Government's Welfare Reforms. The value of our strategic approach is evidenced by the 80% reduction, since our 2003 Strategy, of the priority groups the Council has to provide accommodation for if they become homeless. The Government estimate that the cost to councils of a single homelessness application is £2,656 and that a single case of rough sleeping costs £8,391, which increases to £20,000 if the costs to criminal justice and health are included.

Our strategic approach was recognised by the last Government that made Newcastle its Homelessness Champions in 2009 and more recently in 2013 by Heriot-Watt and Northumbria Universities who evaluated homelessness prevention in Newcastle and concluded that it was "highly effective". This work helps to build resilience for people and communities and to respond to Newcastle residents' needs. The risk of homelessness affects many people faced with increasingly precarious employment and financial markets.

There is good evidence that by intervening early we reduce the risk of people falling into harm and that we help to prevent problems escalating into more expensive problems for us, the health service or the criminal justice system to resolve. This Strategy is about making the most of the services that we have protected to prevent longer-term problems occurring by creating the conditions to work together to improve outcomes.

We know we will face more challenges but, more than ever, we also know it makes social and financial sense to work together to meet these challenges to prevent crisis. Our 2014 Homelessness Strategy describes how we will create the conditions for partners in the City to work together to prevent homelessness from happening in the first place.

**Councillor Joyce McCarty**  
**Deputy Leader, Newcastle City Council**

# 1. Introduction

Our Homelessness Strategy aims to support partners to prevent homelessness. It describes how we will increase opportunities to prevent homelessness and enhance resilience. It does not seek to be a definitive route map for every action we will take over the next five years. It seeks to build on and improve our partnership framework by translating our principles into flexible and responsive actions that make the best use of the available resources and inform future commissioning to meet the challenges identified in our Homelessness Review 2013 and those that vulnerable people in Newcastle face.

Our Review captured trends at a particular time, so to remain effective we have to create the conditions for partnerships to have regular dialogue, reporting and analysis to flexibly respond to changing needs. This strategy describes how we do this and how we use our collective knowledge and experience to increase the opportunities to prevent homelessness.

We examine the key factors that impact upon homelessness in Newcastle and the resources we have to prevent and respond to homelessness. We describe our approach to working with partners to identify and support clients at risk before crisis occurs, and to agree where to focus our resources to best effect.

Whilst there is still much to do and there are new challenges related to the Government's austerity measures, much has improved in the delivery and coordination of services to prevent and respond to homelessness since our first strategy in 2003. This strategy seeks to build on what has worked and to further extend our partnerships to prevent homelessness at the earliest opportunity.

## **2. Why we have a homelessness strategy**

### **2.1 The statutory context**

In 2002, the, then Labour, Government identified homelessness as a form of social exclusion rather than simply a housing supply problem. This was a national change in direction in approaches to tackling homelessness. The Homelessness Act 2002 created a statutory duty for local authorities to develop a strategy for:

- Preventing homelessness in their district;
- Ensuring that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in their district who are or may become homeless;
- Securing the satisfactory provision of support for people in their district who:
  - Are or may become homeless; or
  - Have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.

The Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) 2003 report *More Than a Roof: a report into tackling homelessness* provided guidance stating that, "Any new approach will only work if action is taken by all key partners. Central government, local authorities, housing associations, mortgage providers, private landlords and the voluntary sector all have a vital role to play".

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires homelessness strategies to be based on a local review of homelessness. Newcastle's Homelessness Review 2013 is available online at: [www.newcastle.gov.uk/housing/housing-advice-and-homelessness/information-for-professionals](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/housing/housing-advice-and-homelessness/information-for-professionals)

Since 2011 we have held quarterly internal homelessness reviews which have helped us to identify and respond to the challenges people face. We are building on this process to include external partners, service users and stakeholders, and to publish our quarterly reviews. Our aim is to support more partners to prevent homelessness at the earliest opportunity.

### **2.2 The Newcastle context**

This is Newcastle's third Homelessness Strategy and the national political, financial and housing market contexts have changed considerably. Our 2003 strategy was produced in the context of increased resources and encouragement for councils to develop strategic approaches. We are developing our 2014-19 strategy at a time of the largest public sector and welfare cuts in 60 years. Despite these cuts, there is a belief in Newcastle that through increased cooperation and smarter working we can continue to reduce inequality, prevent homelessness and reduce cycles of deprivation. Our primary challenge is to maintain our high levels of homelessness prevention in the face of these cuts.

Newcastle City Council is committed to tackling inequalities that prevent people from achieving their potential. Homelessness is often a product of inequality and becoming homeless can exacerbate inequality if people get into a downward cycle where there is a greater chance of homelessness leading to other problems or worsening existing problems.

In addition to meeting our statutory duties, our reasons for wanting to prevent homelessness and to humanely respond to crises will be obvious to most residents who recognise that the human and financial costs of homelessness are too high.

Crisis' 2011 report *Homelessness: A silent killer – a research briefing on mortality amongst homeless people* found that the average age of death of a homeless person is 47 years old, compared to 77 for the general population. The Cabinet Office's 2014 *Centre for Social Impact Bonds Toolkit* estimates the average cost per year to a local authority of:

- A single case of rough sleeping is £8,391;
- A complex eviction is £7,095;
- A single homelessness application is £2,656.

There are also the longer term adverse impacts upon families and children of insecurity and transience when faced with the risk of homelessness. We know we have to do more to understand both the cost of failing to prevent crises and the value of our interventions.

## 2.2.1 Our policy context

This strategy should not be seen as a standalone document. It sits within Newcastle's wider partnership, led by the Wellbeing for Life Board (our local Health and Wellbeing Board), which is committed to working together through a single policy approach, called the Newcastle Future Needs Assessment (NFNA). The NFNA aims to be:

- **Holistic** – to draw not just on statistical data, but on other sources of knowledge such as the insights of practitioners and local people;
- **Participatory** – based on dialogue and joint thinking through which people develop shared understanding of the issues facing the city;
- **Forward-looking** – to help us anticipate the future and take collective action to shape it;
- **Value-informed** – shaped by our values, particularly those of fairness and inclusion;
- **Integrated** – to inform different levels and types of policy and strategic activity whether undertaken together or individually by partners.

The NFNA is the way in which we fulfil our statutory responsibilities for undertaking a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) but we are also developing it to fulfil other requirements for assessments or evidence-based planning. Our quarterly homelessness reviews feed into the NFNA and inform a shared partnership-wide view of the challenges we face in preventing homelessness and working with people who need support to sustain their independence.

The key underpinning principles and cross-cutting themes, described in the Wellbeing for Life Strategy, are those that we also work to to prevent homelessness. This is available online at: [www.wellbeingforlife.org.uk/our-strategy](http://www.wellbeingforlife.org.uk/our-strategy)

The following are other key documents that influence the Homelessness Strategy and the delivery of services in Newcastle.

The Council's Newcastle 2016 Budget explains how decisions will be made about the allocation of Newcastle City Council resources for 2013-16. Information is available online at:

[www.newcastle.gov.uk/your-council/budget-and-annual-report/budget-proposals-2016](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/your-council/budget-and-annual-report/budget-proposals-2016)

The Council's Housing Delivery Plan explains Newcastle City Council's housing capital requirements and plans. This is available online at:

[www.newcastle.gov.uk/housing/housing-strategy](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/housing/housing-strategy)

The Newcastle Fairness Commission report explains how we promote equality. This is available online at:

[www.ncl.ac.uk/socialrenewal/engagement/fairnesscommission/documents/index.htm](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/socialrenewal/engagement/fairnesscommission/documents/index.htm)

The Council Plan 2013-14 sets out Newcastle City Council's priorities for the year ahead and the values that underpin our work. This is available online at:

[www.newcastle.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/policies-strategies-and-performance/our-policies-and-strategies/corporate-plan](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/policies-strategies-and-performance/our-policies-and-strategies/corporate-plan)

The financial pressures Newcastle faces means that the Council's budget is increasingly the primary strategic process for deciding expenditure. The local importance of services to prevent homelessness is recognised within this process with the creation of the Crisis Response workstream for the Newcastle 2016 Budget. Details are available online at:

[www.newcastle.gov.uk/your-council/budget-and-annual-report/crisis-response](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/your-council/budget-and-annual-report/crisis-response)

## 2.2.2 Our resources

The Newcastle 2016 budget workstream on Crisis Response set out how the Council would save £1.74 million from 2014-15 on housing related support aimed at preventing homelessness and sustaining people's independence in the community. The savings represent a 24% reduction on 2013-14 spend levels but Newcastle has retained a commissioning budget of over £5.5 million to provide support which helps people to access and sustain their accommodation in the community. In addition to this commissioning budget, funds secured by provider organisations through rental income and other income streams create an additional £10 to £12 million per year for preventing homelessness in Newcastle. The Council has now completed its re-commissioning plans for Crisis Response which will result in the following resources being available from July 2014.

### **Support for homeless people including those with complex needs, including but not limited to, those with problematic drug and alcohol use, offending behaviour, mental health problems, learning disabilities, refugees**

- 63 units of crisis accommodation and support in the West provided by Changing Lives;
- 73 units of crisis accommodation and support in the East provided by Home Group in partnership with Tyne Housing, The Salvation Army and St Vincent De Paul;
- 403 units of supported accommodation and resettlement support provided by Changing Lives (with Norcare, Praxis and Action Foundation) and Home Group (with Tyne Housing, Haven, North of England Refugee Service and the Salvation Army);
- Floating support provided by Norcare (with Changing Lives) delivering floating support to 140 people at any one time;
- Floating support provided by Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) delivering floating support to 590 people at any one time across the city

**Support for young people aged 16-24 at risk**

- 100 units of supported accommodation, resettlement and crisis responses specifically for young people provided by Home Group with AKT Outpost and Depaul UK;
- 26 units of supported accommodation and floating support for up to 163 young people at any one time provided by YHN.

**Support for people with mental health problems**

- 68 units of supported accommodation for people with mental health problems provided by Mental Health Concern with ISOS, Mental Health Matters and Richmond Fellowship;
- 88 units of floating support for people with mental health problems provided by ISOS with Mental Health Concern, Mental Health Matters and Richmond Fellowship;
- Move on support for 40 people with mental health problems at any time provided by YHN.

**Support for people experiencing multiple exclusion**

- Support for people experiencing multiple exclusion provided by Changing Lives delivering 60 units of Housing First accommodation and supporting 60 rough sleepers.

In addition to the commissioned resources, the Council also directly provides 45 units of statutory emergency accommodation at Cherry Tree View.



### **3. Our outcomes and achievements since our Homelessness Strategy 2008-13**

The main challenges and actions in the Homelessness Strategy 2008-13 were in the following four categories:

- Increasing the supply of housing options available to prevent homelessness;
- Consolidating and extending the prevention of homelessness;
- Increasing the amount and quality of accommodation available for those at risk of homelessness;
- Improving governance and strengthening partnerships to meet cross cutting needs.

Our aim then was to build on the introduction of a number of homelessness prevention initiatives and widen the number of early intervention partners. We also described our long term aim to improve the Council's statutory emergency accommodation and develop a resource that met all of the Council's emergency accommodation requirements. We recognised that the causes of homelessness were often complex and involved unmet support, health, employment and care needs and there was a need to develop prevention initiatives that must match this complexity and to work with partners who can meet people's wider needs.

The Newcastle Homelessness Review 2013 highlighted many positive actions undertaken in the last five years by the Council and partners to improve the lives of those either at risk of or experiencing homelessness. These include:

- Closing Hill Court which was notorious for the poor standard of accommodation and opening Cherry Tree View, the Council's first purpose built statutory emergency accommodation, in 2012;
- Attracting £8.5 million capital funding for nine "Places of Change" (background information is available online at: [www.homeless.org.uk/places-of-change](http://www.homeless.org.uk/places-of-change)). There are now no shared rooms in any of our homeless accommodation;
- Improving access to debt advice. Since April 2013 Active Inclusion Debt Advisors have been co-located in the Housing Advice Centre (HAC) and a single point of contact has been established for referrals to the Council's debt advice team and Newcastle Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB);
- Reviewing, revising and re-launching the Prevention from Eviction and Repeat Homelessness Protocol (PERHP) as the Sustaining Tenancies Guidance with Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) to further reduce evictions. There were 176 YHN evictions in 2008 compared to 85 in 2012-13;
- Reviewing, revising and re-launching the Pathways protocol with the Supported Housing Move On Protocol in 2012 to increase planned move ons from supported housing to independence;
- Introducing the Care Leavers' Transition to Independence project in 2013 with partners to better assess the ability of a young person to live independently and to move to accommodation that they are better able to sustain;
- From 2010 Changing Lives have been developing Newcastle's Housing First project, which is now the largest such scheme in the country;

- Introducing in 2008 Common Case Management to better coordinate responses to those who are rough sleeping and those at risk of rough sleeping;
- Developing the Changing Lives ACE outreach service which ensures continuity in the street outreach service and assists some of the most excluded people in the city. This, in conjunction with the Common Case Management Group, ensures that we are able to meet our No Second Night Out commitment;
- Newcastle City Council were DCLG's Homelessness Champions in 2007-8 and Rough Sleeping Champions in 2008-9;
- Using no bed and breakfast accommodation since 2006;
- Establishing the Active Inclusion Newcastle Unit in 2013 to support all partners in our integrated approach to financial inclusion and homelessness prevention.

However we have not achieved all our stated aims: in the 2008 strategy we spoke of the need to improve the methods by which we engage with service users in the city who have experienced homelessness and homeless services. We have made a start in this area by involving the Youth Independence Forum and the User and Carer Forum in our quarterly review process, but we acknowledge that the lack of a coordinated approach to involving service users up to now has been a weakness on our part. We describe the above in more detail in this strategy.

We also need to do more to improve the systematic access to training and employment. Whilst there are some excellent services in the city that provide employment-related support there can be confusion about the access to the programmes provided and commissioned by Government, local specialist employment support agencies, the services provided by homelessness and housing agencies. This has become an increasingly important issue as the Government has increased work-related conditionality for people in receipt of out of work benefits. We will seek to improve the integration of these services through the city's response to Universal Credit and the development of a Local Support Services Framework that is relevant to the needs of Newcastle residents.

## 4. Our aims, outcomes and principles for preventing homelessness

Our aim is to ensure that no one in Newcastle needs to be homeless. We recognise that this is complicated by different levels of statutory duties, and therefore funding, owed to different categories of homeless people. We believe we can best reduce the risk of homelessness by a cooperative approach to working in partnership to secure the following outcomes for people.

We aim to increase the number of people:

- **For whom we prevent homelessness and repeat homelessness;** the prevention of homelessness has increased from 405 cases in 2005-6 when we started recording to 3,673 cases in 2012-13. Statutory repeat homelessness have fallen from 13 cases in 2007-8 to 0 in 2012-13;
- **With homes and services that they believe work for them;** we have attracted over £13 million to improve homeless accommodation and since 2009 ended the use of shared rooms;
- **That move on from supported accommodation to sustained independence;** this has increased from 149 cases in 2008-9 to 230 in 2012-13. Through the Supported Housing Move On Protocol (described in section 5.2) we help more people to attain their optimum level of independence with support to reduce the risk of repeat homelessness;
- **Who are involved in meaningful activities and entering employment;** there are pockets of excellence in the employment services developed by homelessness and housing agencies, e.g. YHN's Your Home Your Jobs and apprenticeships schemes, Changing Lives' and Tyne Housing's employment support schemes;
- **Who use homeless services that we engage with to seek their views;** as part of our quarterly homelessness review process we attend the User and Carer Forum and the Youth Independence Forum in order to seek their views on the challenges that we have identified and to provide feedback on the actions that we have taken. We are happy to attend any other service users' groups where people think it would be helpful or appropriate for us to do so.

We aim to maintain low numbers or further reduce the number of people:

- **Becoming statutorily homeless,** by offering appropriate preventative options; this has decreased from 1,038 cases in 2003-4 to 220 in 2012-13;
- **Evicted from all forms of housing;** YHN evictions have decreased from 197 cases in 2007-8 when we started our prevention protocol to 85 in 2012-13;
- **Requiring crisis accommodation or statutory emergency accommodation;** this has decreased from 2,418 admissions in 2003-4 to 1,311 in 2012-13;
- **Who sleep rough and are experiencing multiple exclusion;** we still have too many people sleeping rough at an average of 7 per night in 2012-13 but we know that no one sleeps rough because of a lack of accommodation;
- **Placed in bed and breakfast accommodation;** we have not used bed and breakfast since 2006. At the time of our first strategy in 2003 there were 198 households placed in bed and breakfast accommodation.

We aspire to a consensual approach that aligns partnerships and commissioning with services that respond to individual needs, based on the following principles:

- An understanding of the structural and individual causes of homelessness;
- A life course approach to preventing homelessness at the earliest opportunity;
- An asset based approach that builds on people's and partners' strengths;
- Understanding the value of, and the difference, our interventions make;
- Integrating our responses to people's social, health, housing and financial needs;
- Providing places to live that create hope and inspire change;
- Humanely responding to crises when we fail to prevent homelessness;
- Learning from these crises to prevent reoccurrences.

The above are demonstrated through our work over the last ten years and are consolidated in this strategy as we describe the components of our approach to preventing homelessness.

## 5. Newcastle's partnership approach to preventing homelessness

Working in partnership is at the core of our approach to preventing homelessness from happening in the first place. The evidence of the value of this approach includes no bed and breakfast use since 2006, attracting £8.5 million of capital to create nine "Places of Change" and replacing the Council's statutory emergency accommodation with a state of the art building in 2012. The numbers of people becoming statutorily homeless has fallen by 80% from 1,038 cases in 2003-4 to 220 in 2012-13. This correlates with the increase in the prevention of homelessness from 405 cases in 2005-6 to 3,673 cases in 2012-13.

This good performance has been based on all party political support for preventing homelessness, and was recognised by DCLG who made Newcastle their Homelessness Champions in 2007-8 and Rough Sleeping Champions in 2008-9. The strength of YHN's work and our partnerships in preventing homelessness was also recognised in the research *Evaluating Homelessness Prevention in Newcastle* (2011) and *Evaluation of Newcastle's 'Cooperative' Approach to the Prevention and Management of Homelessness in Light of Changing Government Policy* (2013) by Heriot-Watt and Northumbria Universities that found that prevention work in Newcastle, particularly YHN's, was "highly effective". This research is available online at:

[www.newcastle.gov.uk/housing/housing-advice-and-homelessness/information-for-professionals](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/housing/housing-advice-and-homelessness/information-for-professionals)

Our strategic approach is based on maintaining and strengthening the following:

- **An evidence base** – since 2011 we have had quarterly homelessness reviews that combine quantitative analysis with qualitative reviews by workers;
- **Policies and protocols** that describe the partnership arrangements to prevent homelessness and how we apply this to individuals;
- **Partnership working arrangements** – including strategic and delivery partnerships, and case management that applies the protocols to the delivery of services;
- **Active Inclusion Newcastle – our integrated approach to financial inclusion and homelessness prevention**, which includes infrastructure support to develop partnerships and improve the coordinated delivery of services.

Our Homelessness Review 2013 considered the effectiveness of this approach. This strategy describes each of these components and why they are central to our strategic approach.

### 5.1 An evidence base – quarterly homelessness reviews

We want all partners in the city to play a part in preventing homelessness and do this through developing a consensus about the causes of homelessness, the challenges we face and how we use the resources we have to meet these challenges. Over the last ten years we have become more familiar with the dynamic organisational and institutional relationships that have an on-going effect on the prevention of homelessness. We are most successful when we understand the risks people face and facilitate the opportunities for partners to respond early, and are even more so when we understand the value of these interventions.

Central to our strategic cycle are our quarterly reviews which build consensus, facilitate clarity about the challenges we face and provide accountability on how we will meet these challenges. They also improve our understanding of the data collected and how this relates to service delivery. We have found this has been a useful process to improve delivery and also to understand the limitations of the data collection processes so that we can try to improve them. This is particularly in the ability for data systems to be cross referenced.

The data used comes from the Gateway (the single access point for housing-related support services within Newcastle which manages referrals to all supported accommodation and floating support services in the city), the HAC database and our statutory P1E returns. We test this against the experience of those working with homeless people and then agree priorities based on a combination of data and practice. The reviews cover the following:

- Stage 1:** Consolidating our partnerships and performance management information about what works, the causes of homelessness, new initiatives, and policy and legislative changes
- Stage 2:** Developing a better understanding of our performance management information with practitioners, service users, providers and stakeholders
- Stage 3:** Publishing a briefing that provides an analysis of challenges and responses
- Stage 4:** Demonstrating how we are going to improve performance and make a difference through our action plan, linking to the review of our policies and protocols
- Stage 5:** Reporting to Council Cabinet members

This helps to create a culture of co-production about how to:

- Make the most of our resources to prevent homelessness and to respond to crisis;
- Identify and meet our collective challenges;
- Build on what is working well;
- Create opportunities to intervene earlier, build resilience and prevent homelessness.

## **5.2 Homelessness policies and protocols**

Our policies and protocols develop common understanding and consistent practice. Where an issue is of repeated significance as a cause of homelessness we have developed joint working protocols that explain how partners will respond to the issue. This approach has enabled us to break down seemingly intractable problems into manageable areas. This facilitates getting the right people involved in working together to find solutions for named individuals. We have found it most effective when we can apply our policies to named individuals; basically if we know the person's name we stand a better chance of helping them.

We have taken a proportionate response to the development and review of these processes. For example, our work on preventing evictions and responding to rough sleeping is reviewed more frequently and has more rigorous data collection than the Clean Homes Protocol that is used infrequently. Our homelessness prevention protocols are briefly outlined below. They are available online at:

[www.newcastle.gov.uk/housing/housing-advice-and-homelessness/information-for-professionals](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/housing/housing-advice-and-homelessness/information-for-professionals)

**Sustaining Tenancies Guidance:** (previously known as the Prevention from Eviction Protocol; introduced in 2007, reviewed in 2009 and 2012). This aims to prevent evictions from YHN and housing association tenancies. YHN evictions have reduced from 197 in 2007-8 to 85 in 2012-13. This demonstrates the value of reviewing individual cases of crisis to inform practice and commissioning.

**Supported Housing Move on Protocol (incorporates Pathways to Independence):** (introduced in 2012). This aims to identify barriers to moves to independence from supported accommodation and to promote appropriate use of resettlement support services.

**Preventing Evictions from Supported Housing Protocol:** (introduced in 2013). This aims to ensure that there is a consistent and consensual approach to preventing people losing their hostel accommodation through eviction.

**Hospital Discharge Protocol:** (introduced in 2007, reviewed in 2009 and under review in 2014). This aims to prevent homelessness on discharge from hospital.

**Drug Management Protocol:** (introduced in 2007, reviewed in 2009 and under review in 2014). This was predominantly a response to the “Wintercomfort” court ruling in 2000 when the managers of a day centre were convicted for allowing their premises to be used for the supply of drugs.

**Housing and Returning Prisoners Protocol:** (introduced in 2009, to be adapted to Newcastle’s needs in 2014). This aims to prevent homelessness on discharge from prison.

**Care Leavers’ Transitions to Independence:** (introduced in 2013). This is based on a common assessment between children’s and adults’ services of a young person’s ability to live independently and the level of support they require.

**Prohibitions Order Protocol:** (introduced in 2007, reviewed in 2012). This is aimed at reducing homelessness as the result of a Prohibition Order, which result in the emergency closure of a house in multiple occupation (HMO).

**Clean Homes Protocol:** (introduced in 2007). This is aimed at preventing homelessness from accommodation designated as “filthy and verminous” by Regulatory Services.

These protocols have contributed to joint planning, improved responses to crisis, and joint commissioning of services and initiatives. We will review these with partners at the Homelessness Prevention Forum. We will ask our partners to comment on their use and appropriateness, which will contribute towards our annual review of the protocols to ensure that they are fit for purpose.

### **5.3 Partnership working arrangements**

Partners meet to review and improve joint working arrangements. Some of these meetings focus on individual people and some combine this with a wider approach that includes reviewing procedures. We have found that bringing partners together regularly to agree challenges and actions builds trust and consensus. Our Homelessness Prevention Forum has met since 2002

and we have invested in establishing the meetings, described below, to facilitate partnership responses to cross cutting issues. More detail is available online at: [www.newcastle.gov.uk/housing/housing-advice-and-homelessness/information-for-professionals](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/housing/housing-advice-and-homelessness/information-for-professionals)

Our citywide partnership approach has contributed to Newcastle being seen as an exemplar city for preventing homelessness. This has helped to create a platform for the development of excellent and innovative services that have been recognised nationally and in Europe. Our examples include the development of peer support, Housing First, care leavers' transitions and the Youth Independence Forum. This has helped to attract additional funding to the city, most recently the £5.5 million secured from the Big Lottery Fund by Changing Lives to respond to complex needs. Our strategic partnership arrangements will continue to support partners to innovate and attract funding to promote inclusion.

Newcastle has a good record of responding flexibly to meet the challenges residents face. We know that there will be increased challenges to meet with diminished resources, not least the Government's on-going Welfare Reform programme that has increased the risk of homelessness of over 5,000 households through the "bedroom tax". There will be more challenges due to increased work-related conditionality and the introduction of Universal Credit and increased expectations for individuals to budget for their housing costs. Unless there is a greater degree of autonomy to match funding to local needs it is likely that the context we work in will continue to be as unpredictable as it has been over the last ten years. Because of this we need to continue to work in partnership, to strengthen existing arrangements and to develop new ones if we think there are gaps.

Our cooperative partnership arrangements make finding solutions to complex performance requirements easier and more attractive than disengagement. The right feedback loops reduce the need for cumbersome alignment mechanisms and oblique performance indicator tools. A tangible example of how this approach has worked is the development of services for people experiencing multiple exclusion. In 2007 The Cyrenians (now known as Changing Lives) secured funding from the Cabinet Office to develop services for Adults Facing Chronic Exclusion (ACE). This contributed to a more systematic approach to reducing rough sleeping. Subsequently in 2008-9 Newcastle became the DCLG's Rough Sleeping Champions. In 2010, The Cyrenians secured £250,000 from the Homelessness Transitions Fund to develop a Housing First pilot for people who struggled to live in hostels, which became the largest Housing First project in the country. This experience has led to the mainstreaming of the service with the Council commissioning a contract for the provision of 'City wide support for people who are multiply excluded' in 2014.

We have a range of arrangements to enable us to work effectively in partnership. These are described below. A diagram showing our governance arrangements is available online at: [www.newcastle.gov.uk/housing/housing-advice-and-homelessness/information-for-professionals](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/housing/housing-advice-and-homelessness/information-for-professionals)

### **5.3.1 Strategic partnerships**

The meetings listed below bring together partners to consider cross cutting issues and to review performance, challenges and potentially preventable crises. An example of the need for this approach was the Government's introduction of the "bedroom tax" in 2013 that put over 5,000 households in Newcastle at risk of homelessness. This was not foreseen by any councils' 2008 homelessness strategies. Newcastle mitigated the worst aspects of the "bedroom tax" by a



combination of YHN's advice and support to tenants and the securing of over £1 million additional Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) funding from central government in 2013-14. Newcastle's partnership, coordinated by the Welfare Reform Board, responded to changing circumstances and provided evidence to secure funding which was made available at short notice. Information about Newcastle's approach to Welfare Reform is available online at: [www.newcastle.gov.uk/sites/drupalncc.newcastle.gov.uk/files/wwwfileroot/benefits-and-council-tax/newcastles\\_approach\\_to\\_welfare\\_reform\\_-\\_january\\_2014.pdf](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/sites/drupalncc.newcastle.gov.uk/files/wwwfileroot/benefits-and-council-tax/newcastles_approach_to_welfare_reform_-_january_2014.pdf)

- **Financial Inclusion Group** – meets quarterly and brings together over 50 agencies;
- **Homelessness Prevention Forum** – meets quarterly and brings together over 40 agencies;
- **Refugees and Migrants Coordination Group** – meets bi-monthly

These meetings inform action plans and agree the prioritisation of activities. Newcastle is also represented at the North East Regional Housing Group, which was established in 2011 to oversee the DCLG's funding for single homelessness aimed at reducing rough sleeping.

In addition to the above, homelessness staff also attend and contribute to a number of other external coordination or safeguarding processes. These include:

- **MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements)** conferences;
- **MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference)** meetings;
- **Safeguarding Adults** meetings.

Homelessness is also represented in the partnerships listed below. Attendance at such groups contributes to the wider prevention and resilience agenda. These are good examples of operational partnerships and governance arrangements providing an opportunity to meet the Council's requirement for services to be integrated to respond to life course events.

- **Children's Trust Board;**
- **Employability Review;**
- **Reducing Reoffending;**
- **North East Regional Housing Group;**
- **Welfare Reform Board;**
- **Wellbeing for Life Board;**
- **Youth Offending Team Board.**

### 5.3.2 Delivery partnerships

These meetings consider joint working to implement actions to respond to the challenges identified and to consult with service users.

- **Gateway Users Group** – meets quarterly to consider the Newcastle Supported Housing Gateway;
- **Newcastle Advice Compact** – meets monthly and brings together the specialist advice agencies;
- **Private Rented Liaison** – meets monthly to consider responses to challenges faced by people living in the private rented sector;

- **Youth Independence Forum** – meets quarterly to consider independence from the perspective of young people living independently.

The above have agreed action logs, joint working initiatives and inform strategic action plans.

### 5.3.3 Case management arrangements

These meetings focus on specific clients' needs and provide a feedback loop to help us learn from crises and to inform whether there is a need for improved cooperation.

- **Care Leavers' Transitions to Independence** – meets monthly to assess and coordinate move-on options for care leavers;
- **Homelessness and Lettings** – meets quarterly to focus on the “Sustaining Tenancies Strategy” and review all evictions from YHN. Evictions have reduced by 50% since 2008 to just 85 cases.
- **Multiple Exclusion Common Case Management** – meets weekly to coordinate responses to rough sleepers and those at risk of drug-related deaths;
- **Supported Housing Move-on** – meets monthly to assess and coordinate moves from supported housing to independence;
- **Temporary Accommodation Move-on Co-ordination** – meets monthly to assess and coordinate move-on options for people living in statutory homeless accommodation. This has been key to our not having used bed and breakfast since 2006;
- **Temporary Accommodation Progress** – meets weekly to coordinate multi-agency responses to accommodation, support and health needs of statutory homeless households.

## 5.4 Active Inclusion Newcastle – our integrated approach to financial inclusion and homelessness prevention

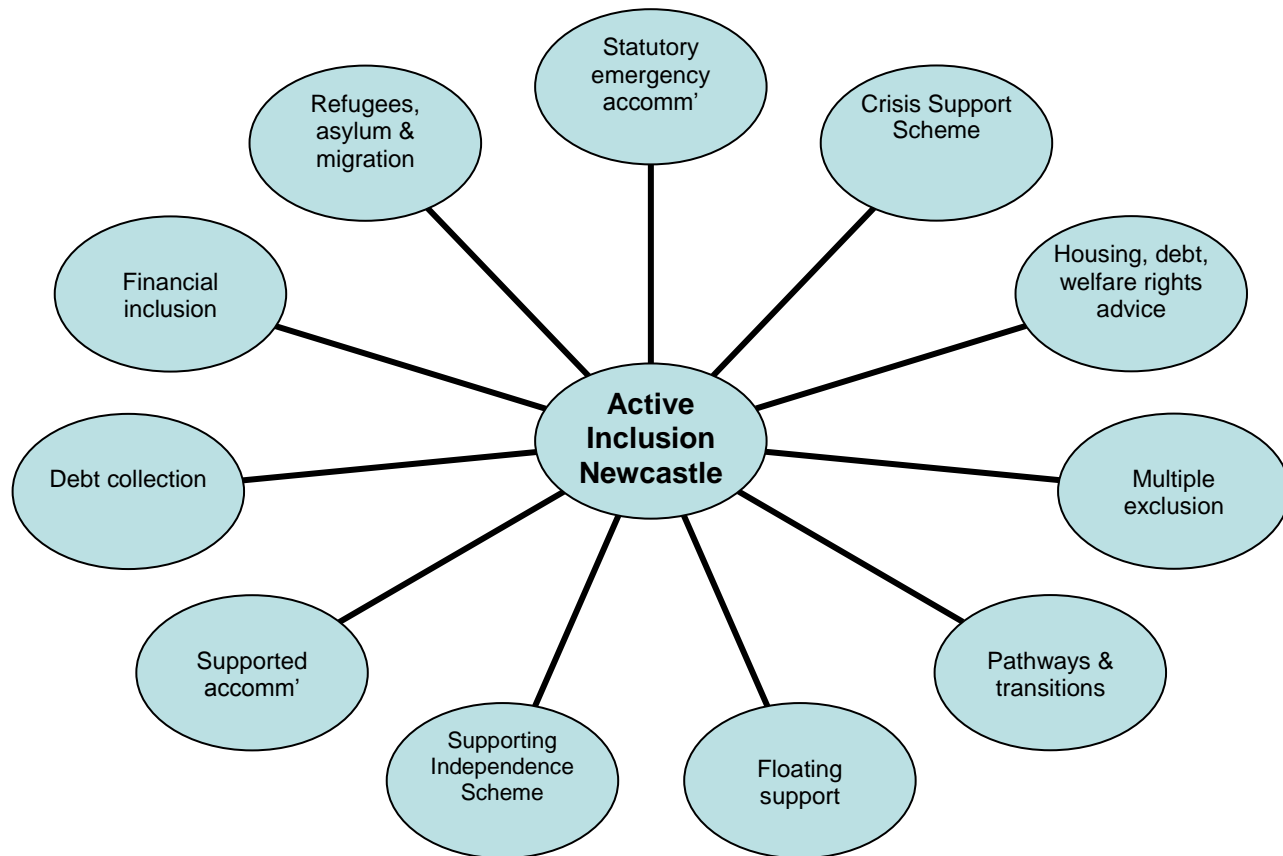
Active Inclusion Newcastle (AIN) is a partnership approach developed as part of the Crisis Response workstream of the Council's 2013-16 budget setting process (Newcastle 2016). It responds to the growth in demand for information, advice and support for financial inclusion and housing advice which need to be met at the same time as resources are reducing. AIN improves the coordination and consistency of information, advice and support, to facilitate more partners to help residents' financial inclusion and to prevent homelessness. This helps us make the most of limited resources to maintain the foundations for stability:

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

As part of the Crisis Response workstream, the Active Inclusion Newcastle (AIN) Unit was created to give infrastructure capacity to develop this approach and to support activity in this area that helps partners to focus resources on those in the greatest need. From April 2013 the AIN Unit has coordinated activity across the services illustrated in **Figure 1** below. The aims of this are to create a consistent partnership approach to the provision of information, advice and support, including information for the public, training and improving standards; to work with partners to reduce duplication by agreeing performance monitoring, prioritisation of need and the use of resources; and to provide policy responses that link to commissioning.

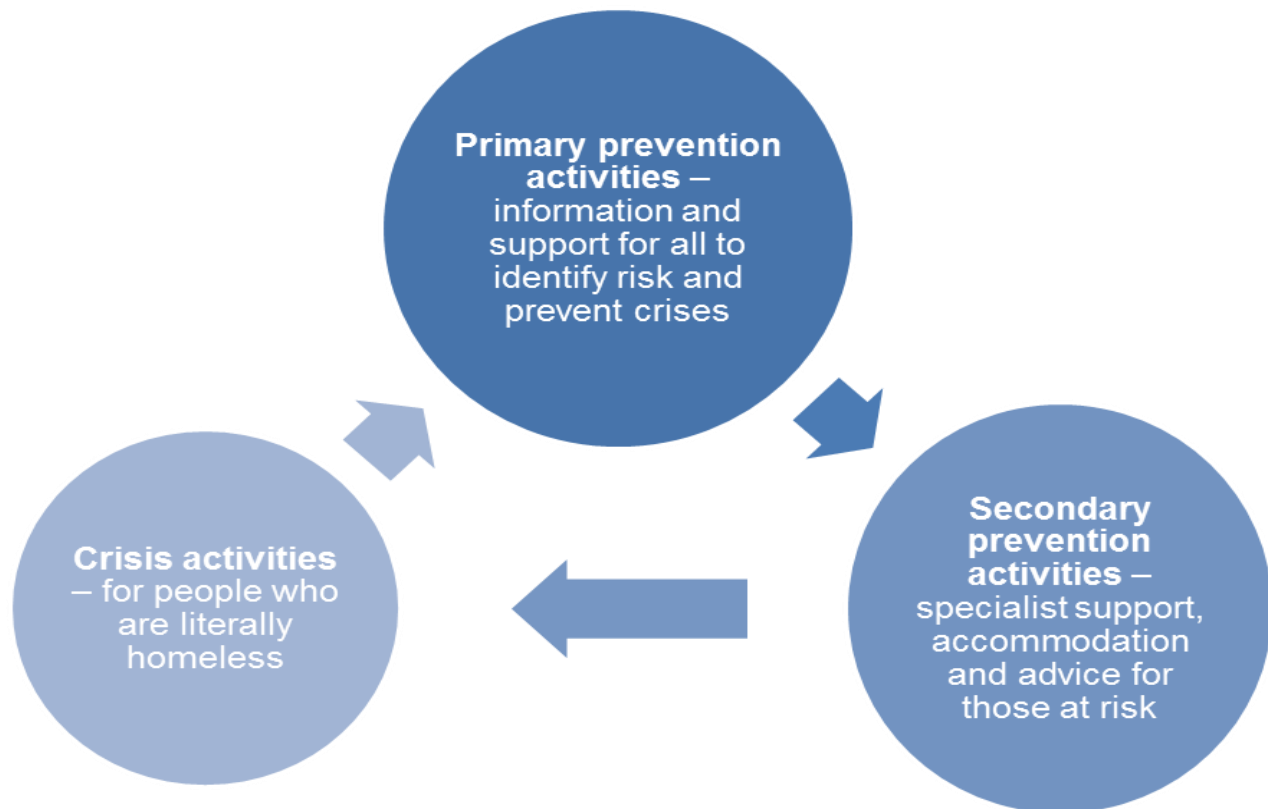
The AIN Unit supports partnership work by developing an agreed evidence base, shared objectives, language, definitions and a culture which facilitates partners to make a positive difference. The AIN Unit also facilitates and supports the governance arrangements for coordinating partnerships in the city.

**Figure 1: Activities coordinated by the Active Inclusion Newcastle (AIN) Unit**



The aim of AIN is to facilitate all partners to respond to poverty and inequality, thereby improving wellbeing and health, by supporting them to be part of identifying and preventing the risks people face. This is based on the three levels of homelessness prevention activity shown in **Figure 2** and described in further detail below.

**Figure 2: The levels of homelessness prevention activity in Newcastle**



These arrangements help to:

- Facilitate prevention opportunities at all levels of engagement;
- Connect specialist and non-specialist services;
- Learn from crisis by changing practice at all levels;
- Inform commissioning through evidence of need and effectiveness.

#### **5.4.1 Primary prevention activities**

The AIN Unit supports partners who are not specialists in financial inclusion and homelessness prevention to routinely talk to people about these issues and know when to refer on. We do this by providing the information they need to understand where the problems are that can lead to homelessness and empowering the right people to make good choices to prevent those problems escalating. This is a response to the public sector cuts and the need to move away from a signposting production line model that refers people in apparent need to face to face services. This means not just expecting specialist homelessness agencies to do more to prevent homelessness, but proactively supporting non-specialist agencies to do more. The new approach helps non-specialist primary prevention partners to:

- Identify the risk of homelessness earlier;
- Prevent homelessness through non-specialist early interventions;
- Make considered referrals to our limited face to face specialist services;

- Learn together from preventable crisis.

The AIN Unit provides the following support to partners that are not specialists in housing, welfare rights, debt or employment. We call this support the Active Inclusion Newcastle “Offer”.

- **Trigger point conversations** – information to help workers and volunteers to identify and talk about financial and housing risks. We have produced information sheets on benefits, debt and money management, financial inclusion, and housing and homelessness prevention to help them to do this. These are available online at: [www.newcastle.gov.uk/benefits-and-council-tax/welfare-rights-and-money-advice/information-professionals-and-volunteers](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/benefits-and-council-tax/welfare-rights-and-money-advice/information-professionals-and-volunteers)
- **Briefings and toolkits** – presentations and information on key issues and services. Examples of these include briefings for professionals on changes due to Welfare Reform and our Debt Toolkit, which is available online at: [www.newcastle.gov.uk/debt-toolkit-mar14](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/debt-toolkit-mar14)
- **Consultancy lines and email contacts** – information on where workers can get expert help with cases that concern them;
- **Spectrum of advice** – information on Newcastle’s advice and support agencies linked to training to support partners to respond to change and deliver more. This focuses on benefits advice in the first instance;
- **Targeted advice and support** – access to our expert advice, accommodation and support services. In 2012-13, these services supported over 25,000 vulnerable clients, including securing £24,142,256 in benefits;
- **Communications** – consistent information on issues relating to financial inclusion and homelessness prevention for workers, volunteers and the public including leaflets and self-help materials. Examples are available online at: [www.newcastle.gov.uk/benefits-and-council-tax/welfare-rights-and-money-advice/benefits-information](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/benefits-and-council-tax/welfare-rights-and-money-advice/benefits-information)
- **Partnerships and governance** – opportunities to come together to improve the coordination of services, as listed in [section 5.3](#);
- **Protocols, action plans and strategies** – formal partnership arrangements, as listed in [section 5.2](#);
- **Quarterly reviews** – as part of the NFNA partners review the challenges we face, the difference we have made and future priorities, as described in [section 5.1](#).

We are promoting the Active Inclusion Newcastle “Offer” with partners including Children’s and Adult’s Social Care, Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service (NCVS) and Probation. Our resources will be revised and refined based on feedback from these partners and from learning from individual cases where prevention fails and households become homeless.

#### 5.4.2 Secondary prevention activities

At the core of the model are our specialist information, advice and accommodation services. These are the specialist services that the community based primary services can turn to when they need more help. In 2012-13 these services helped over 25,000 people. However, we know that the demand for support to help people cope with poverty and disadvantage outstrips the supply of services and that services have been reduced. This means we need to

develop better targeting of support because people's problems worsen if they are ignored. The information below gives a sense of the scale of the support provided in 2012-13:

- **Homelessness and housing** – 3,783 households given advice to meet our statutory homelessness duties;
- **Welfare rights** – Newcastle Advice Compact members advised 15,871 people to secure £24,142,256 of benefits. Within the Council's internal service the benefit gains per worker has risen from £429k of benefits in 2009-10 to £720k in 2012-13;
- **Debt** – Newcastle Advice Compact members advised 5,415 people to provide relief from excessive debt;
- **Gateway** – 2,274 placements made to supported accommodation and floating support;
- **Supporting Independence Scheme** – 578 households awarded with resettlement support in 2013-14.

By monitoring and reviewing the use of these services we identify how we can improve the support for our primary prevention activities and can inform commissioning.

### 5.4.3 Crisis activities

These are the acute services that support people facing destitution when community and preventative support fails to prevent crises. In 2012-13 crisis services provided:

- **Emergency accommodation** – 395 households with statutory accommodation;
- **Crisis Support Scheme** – 2,676 households in crisis with food, fuel, clothing and travel support;
- **Rough sleepers** – outreach and support that helped 164 people off the street.

Wherever possible we seek to prevent crisis and we have a good record in doing this. However, we also must learn from every case as to why that person's crisis has not been prevented. Our strategic framework does this through feedback loops that expose partners as directly as possible to the consequences of their actions that can lead to homelessness and then provides support to prevent a reoccurrence. The current financial situation makes it more important that we assess the value of preventive and community based services and look to improve cooperation when crises are preventable. With this goes an expectation that partners will work differently and will always help to prevent homelessness and ask for help when they don't know how the risk can be averted. Where we fail through our existing provision we feed into the commissioning process to develop new responses.

We know we need to improve our systems to better reward those who cooperate and identify those who don't. This means considering how we do this by creating a feedback loop to our performance management and commissioning arrangements. Our partnership working arrangements described in section 5.3 are well established and help to increase reciprocity and break down silos. There are positive examples of this working such as the move-on panels and work with YHN that has halved evictions since 2008.

The primary, secondary and crisis areas are linked together by the AIN Unit which allows us to learn from potentially preventable crisis and to improve the targeting of support.

## **6. Our challenges in preventing homelessness**

This section summarises the challenges identified in our Homelessness Review 2013 from which we have developed the action plan for this strategy. 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.

### **6.1 Cross cutting issues**

We identified the following challenges that affect and apply to all groupings and partners:

#### **6.1.1 Maintain and build on our integrated partnerships for preventing homelessness**

Consolidating and extending our partnership approach to make the most of limited resources to maintain our levels of homelessness prevention in the face of the cuts to services and to individuals' budgets. Our partnership working arrangements are described in detail in section 5.3. We are also working with the other councils in Tyne and Wear to meet the DCLG's homelessness Gold Standard.

#### **6.1.2 Make the prevention of homelessness everyone's business by supporting non-specialist partners to prevent homelessness**

The AIN "Offer", described in section 5.4.1, is at the core of our aim to support non-specialist partners to prevent homelessness. We have begun a programme of promoting the "Offer" to partners in social care, health, the voluntary sector and faith groups.

#### **6.1.3 Improve data collection**

At present our data collection processes are more suited to measuring demand than to identifying opportunities to better manage demand. We know we have to get simpler and smarter at using data to identify risk and the financial value of our interventions to help us better understand the reasons why people become homeless. This will help us to more effectively target our resources to ensure people don't reach crisis point. Responses to this challenge will include better aligning data collection and monitoring with contract compliance arrangements and creating a single framework that incorporates commissioning, Gateway, and operational information.

#### **6.1.4 The policy, economic, demographic, housing market and Welfare Reform context**

We will work with partners to embed the principles of the Wellbeing for Life Strategy into our partnerships and processes, including adopting "asset based practices". We will also:

- Strengthen the integration of employment and homelessness services;
- Work to ensure access to sustainable private rented accommodation;

- Work with partners in the Health Service to further improve the prevention of homelessness and increase wellbeing;
- Work with partners on the Welfare Reform Board to reduce the risks of people becoming homeless due to the Government's Welfare Reforms.

### **6.1.5 Make the best use of our resources to prevent homelessness**

There is still over £7 million of core funding per year for preventing homelessness. We need to better understand the value of our interventions and improve the business case for prevention to show that we are supporting people at the right time in the right way.

### **6.1.6 Provide more coordinated responses to people experiencing multiple exclusion**

A small number of people sleep rough, often due to exclusion from supported accommodation. In 2012-13 227 people were evicted from supported housing.

### **6.1.7 Improve service users' involvement in planning to meet these challenges**

Whilst there are pockets of excellence, e.g. Youth Voice, we have to embed service user involvement into our homelessness quarterly reviews.

### **6.1.8 Develop flexible responses to changing political and market challenges**

The public sector cuts, the Government's Welfare Reform programme, reduced rental subsidies and an increase in interest rates may put thousands at risk of homelessness. We need to understand the risks so that we can respond early. The introduction of Universal Credit in 2016 will require even greater integration of financial inclusion, employment and digital inclusion support. In Newcastle the prevention of homelessness is considered in the citywide responses to these issues, e.g. the Council has held two Policy Cabinet meetings considering the implications of the Government's Welfare Reform programme.

### **6.1.9 Improve the wellbeing and health of vulnerable people**

We will build on our close working relationships with our Public Health Division and other partners in the Health Service to improve the health of homeless and vulnerable people. This will be through:

- The continued co-location of services, e.g. mental health social worker and GPs at Cherry Tree View, nursing at the Joseph Cowen Health Centre and drug and alcohol support at Ron Eager House;
- The rolling out of the Active Inclusion Newcastle "Offer" to health partners;
- Joint commissioning, e.g. the work on multiple exclusion;
- Coordinating case management and safeguarding arrangements, e.g. hospital discharge and people with addictions experiencing multiple exclusion;
- Targeted preventive healthcare, e.g. immunisation programmes and dental care;



- Joint approaches to wellbeing initiatives, e.g. the promotion of the Public Health apprenticeships.

## 6.2 Challenges facing core homeless groups

In addition to the cross cutting challenges described above, we recognise that more tailored responses are required for the sub-groups of people affected by homelessness. This approach contributes to meeting our aim to maximise the value of existing resources to prevent homelessness. As homelessness is used to describe a range of circumstances, we have created the following four groupings to aid our analysis and the development of actions:

- **People who are owed the full homelessness duty;**
- **People at risk of homelessness;**
- **People living with housing-related support;**
- **People experiencing rough sleeping and multiple exclusion.**

We recognise that these groupings have limitations and that people may not exactly fit the definitions, or may move between groups. Whilst we aim to prevent all homelessness there is also a recognition that legislation prioritises certain groups, therefore there is more information and potentially costs associated with these groups. Differentiating between the risks of homelessness helps to develop relevant and realistic options that include the wider aspects of social and financial inclusion, wellbeing and health. Again the aim of these groupings is to help partners see where they can cooperate to make a difference and also to facilitate an appreciation of the circumstances that can create or exacerbate the risk of homelessness.

### 6.2.1 People who are owed the full homelessness duty

Since 2002 there has been an 80% decrease in households owed the full homelessness duty. To maintain this we need to sustain our high levels of homelessness prevention, provide alternative accommodation offers and work with partners on the primary prevention activities described in section 5.4.1 to help people to sustain their accommodation and move in a planned way. This approach will help us to meet the new challenges posed by the Government's austerity measures, including the financial challenges for households affected by Welfare Reform. Our Review found that the groups most at risk of becoming statutorily homeless are families with support needs, people from abroad and people leaving private rented accommodation. Our action plan focuses on:

- Using the AIN "Offer" to work more closely with children's and health services to promote early intervention to build resilience and prevent homelessness in families;
- At-risk groups, such as people with mental health issues and migrants;
- Maintaining the low number of full homelessness duty acceptances for under 18s, which was 0 in 2012-13. This highlights the benefits of the peer education and family support work of YHN's Young People's Service;
- Improving the allocation of support and building resilience in the private rented sector;
- Learning from every episode of crisis at HAC and Cherry Tree View.

## **6.2.2 People at risk of homelessness**

This grouping covers those people at risk of homelessness who are not owed the full statutory homelessness duty. Our Review found that the groups most at risk of becoming homeless are those with non-statutory support needs who have been asked to leave by their family and friends or have lost private rented accommodation or supported accommodation. Within this group are 550 people who we accepted as being homeless in 2012 -13 and for the majority of these people their homelessness was relieved through the provision of supported accommodation or by a move to an independent tenancy. We recognise that we will need to do more to understand the causes of their homelessness and develop appropriate prevention opportunities. Our action plan focuses on:

- Improving our understanding of the causes of non-priority homelessness and maximising opportunities for early intervention by extending our partnerships to intervene earlier to prevent crises;
- Building resilience, particularly in response to the work-related conditionality in the Welfare Reforms, by further integration of housing and employment support;
- Self-help opportunities for clients and staff to promote financial inclusion;
- Working with YHN to maintain low numbers of evictions from YHN properties;
- Understanding the needs and circumstances of the 9% of households in this group who have made repeat presentations to HAC;
- Understanding the needs of the 250+ households who are excluded from YHN;
- Improving how we engage with vulnerable people living in unsupported houses in multiple occupation;
- Developing a Newcastle support services framework in readiness for Universal Credit.

## **6.2.3 People living with housing-related support**

This grouping focuses on people living with housing-related support. Our Review found that the groups requiring housing-related support were either single people without specific needs identified by the supported housing providers, those who have been evicted from supported housing or those who have been asked to leave by their family and friends. Our action plan focuses on:

- Improving our information analysis of this client group to better differentiate multiple presentations that currently give a false picture of demand;
- Working with supported housing providers to create a culture of prevention and understanding of the causes of homelessness;
- Increasing the numbers of people moving on to independence by supporting providers to improve pre-tenancy support packages around living skills, such as budgeting, and benefits and identifying suitable options in the private rented sector;
- Reducing evictions from supported accommodation and evaluating short term options, e.g. spot purchasing additional support where required and developing alternative supported accommodation options for people for whom hostel accommodation is unsuitable;
- Providing long term solutions for people who are not able to move to independence;

- Building on our Pathways to prevent homelessness, especially of people leaving institutions;
- Improving the consistency of data recording to facilitate the better understanding of need and the effectiveness of our responses, in particular understanding how many of the 126 discharged from institutions into supported housing are positive responses that prevent crisis and how many are negative moves that hinder people moving to independence;
- Working with Jobcentre Plus and providers to reduce benefit sanctioning and support those who have had sanctions applied.

#### **6.2.4 People experiencing rough sleeping and multiple exclusion**

This grouping focuses on people who have experienced rough sleeping and multiple exclusion, by which we mean people who have experienced several episodes of rough sleeping and also have unmet addictions and mental health problems. We know the two issues are linked and that we best help people by ensuring that no one new to the street has to spend more than one night rough sleeping. However, our Review found that our most acute problem is people with multiple unmet needs who have been evicted from our hostels.

We have found that for some people our conventional accommodation based offer has not worked and a different offer is required. This has fed into our commissioning processes and the introduction from June 2014 of a new contract to provide a dedicated offer for people experiencing multiple exclusion for whom existing accommodation services are not successful. This will help to reduce the multiple unsuccessful placements (“churn”), high eviction rates and the numbers of people with identified support needs who are not known to or engaging with support services. Our action plan focuses on:

- Developing the 60 Housing First units to be provided as part of the new contract;
- Developing common definitions and improving the consistency of our recording;
- Maintaining our coordinated approach to resolving rough sleeping and meeting our No Second Night Out commitment;
- Ensuring there is daily meaningful contact at a street level with dedicated outreach support;
- Formalising our common case management framework and agreeing links with other safeguarding arrangements;
- Exploring intensive support methodologies, e.g. multi-systemic therapy.

## **7. Newcastle’s performance in comparison with other areas**

Newcastle has a good comparative record. Detailed information about this is available in our Homelessness Review 2013, which is available online at:

[www.newcastle.gov.uk/housing/housing-advice-and-homelessness/information-for-professionals](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/housing/housing-advice-and-homelessness/information-for-professionals)

We will continue to monitor ourselves against the other Core Cities to check how well we are maintaining this relatively good performance in the context of the public sector cuts and Welfare Reforms.

## **8. Risks**

As with most public services aimed at supporting the more vulnerable members of society the approach described in this strategy is at risk to further austerity measures, in particular further cuts to the council's budget. This may reduce the capacity to maintain partnerships and to provide the services that prevent and respond to crisis. The Government's on-going Welfare Reform programme and, in particular, the increased work-related conditionality, the "bedroom tax" and the restriction of direct rent payments proposed in Universal Credit all may increase the risk of homelessness; as may an increase in interest rates or a reduction in the forbearance currently shown by most lenders.

The aim of this strategy is not to propose lengthy solutions that seek to predict and respond to all possible scenarios. As stated, the aim is to focus on maintaining and developing flexible partnerships that maximise the value of all partners' resources and to demonstrate this value in contributing to the wider aims of the council and its partners.

## **9. Conclusion**

Newcastle is committed to working in partnership to prevent homelessness from happening in the first place. When crises happen and homelessness isn't prevented we are committed to responding humanely and effectively, and to learning from these cases to prevent reoccurrences. We recognise that we cannot predict every event in the five years covered by this strategy, so instead our aim is to consolidate and build on our partnerships that have reduced homelessness, improved services and buildings and increased the prevention of homelessness. This will help us to create a consensual, responsive, integrated framework for working with partners to support individuals and to respond to changing political, policy and economic circumstances. We believe this will help to maintain and further build upon the substantial improvements we have made in supporting vulnerable people in our city who experience or are at risk of homelessness.

## **10. How to get involved**

There has been extensive consultation over the last nine months on our Homelessness Review 2013 and on the Crisis Response 2013-16 Budget reductions. The consultation on this strategy involved partners in our Homelessness Prevention Forum, Financial Inclusion Group and the Active Inclusion Newcastle network; this reached over 100 agencies in the city. We also held a consultation event as part of our Homelessness Prevention Forum meeting on 4 June 2014.

If you have any queries, comments or questions about this strategy please contact the Active Inclusion Newcastle Unit at [activeinclusion@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:activeinclusion@newcastle.gov.uk)