

North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 – 2021 and Delivery Plan

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North Tyneside Council

Foreword

I am pleased to be introducing North Tyneside's fourth Homelessness Prevention Strategy.

Homelessness is something which affects all communities and the Council is proud to work with a wide range of stakeholders and local agencies, all of whom are committed to preventing and reducing homelessness across the Borough. We will continue to expand our partnership approach and ensure all potential resources are secured, and support implemented to ensure delivery of efficient services which reduce homelessness.

Recent successes include work to introduce new services and the review of existing services in order to meet the changing needs of housing and support services. These have allowed positive outcomes for households who have experienced homelessness or been threatened with homelessness.

The introduction of this strategy allows us to continue our focus on homelessness prevention. By tackling the issues which can lead to homelessness, we are able to have a greater positive influence on the lives of all vulnerable households.

Steve Cox
Cabinet Member for Housing

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1. Introduction

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a statutory duty on all local housing authorities to carry out a homelessness review for their area and, in consultation with local partners and stakeholders, formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of that review, at least every five years. The strategy should be monitored by a partnership such as a homelessness forum, with local partnership sign off and clear links into the authority's corporate framework including other local strategies.

The Act states that the purpose of this strategic approach is to:

- Prevent homelessness in the district of the authority;
- Secure accommodation that is or will be available for people in the district who are or who may become homeless; and
- Provide support for people in the district who are or who may become homeless.

2. National policy and legal context

The implementation of the Homelessness Act 2002 introduced a cultural shift for local authorities and how they should respond to homelessness, with the emphasis on prevention and not reacting to a crisis situation, although there was no statutory duty to adopt this approach.

Since our last strategy was published in 2013 there have been further changes to national policy and legal context. Key changes that have had or will have an impact on how local authorities deliver housing and homelessness services include:

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

This Private Members Bill received Royal Assent in April 2017. It was implemented with effect from 3 April 2018. The Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities 2006 has been revised to reflect the Act.

The Act places new responsibilities on local authorities in England to provide advice and assistance to prevent homelessness, regardless of priority need, at an earlier stage. It has 12 key measures that include:

- An extension to when someone is considered homeless, from 28 days to 56 days;
- A requirement to provide services for anyone, and not just households who may be considered to be in priority need, if a statutory assessment was carried out;
- Advice services that are tailored to the needs of specific groups. This includes care leavers, hospital discharge, leaving prison and youth detention centres, former members of the armed forces, mental health and those who have suffered domestic abuse;
- Requirement to issue a personalised plan for each eligible applicant setting out the steps they must take to retain or secure accommodation;

- Local authorities to take all reasonable steps to prevent homelessness in all cases, and where this is not possible, to help an applicant secure accommodation, through the new duty of relief;
- Where accommodation is being secured, there should be a reasonable prospect of it being retained for at least six months;
- Accommodation that is secured for the household must pass an eligibility test, that would apply if duty was being discharged by the local authority into the private rented sector;
- Any non-co-operation by the household in the prevention or relief of their homelessness may impact on any subsequent statutory duties; and
- The current process for review of decisions relating to statutory homelessness is extended to cover decisions taken in the prevention and relief stages of homelessness.

Vulnerability

In May 2015 Supreme Court rulings regarding the 'vulnerability test' resulted in revised case law interpretation as to how vulnerability is to be considered when deciding if a homeless applicant is in priority need.

Local authorities must now consider each applicant as an individual, and their assessment must be based on the characteristics of the person they are assessing. The assessment must include consideration of the applicant and their vulnerabilities compared with an 'ordinary person' at risk of homelessness and not someone who is already homeless.

Housing and Planning Act 2016

The Act aims to help more people own their own home, get homes built quicker and ensure that the way in which housing is managed is fair and fit for the future. These aims could have an impact on social housing and homelessness and include:

- A pledge to ban letting agent fees;
- Measures to tackle rogue landlords;
- Private landlords being able to regain possession of a property without a court order if they believe it has been abandoned; and
- Voluntary extension of right to buy to housing association tenants.

Other measures originally included in the Act were:

- Local authority tenants with higher incomes paying a higher rent (known as 'pay to stay'); and
- Local authorities being required to sell their higher value asset homes as they became vacant which would impact on the availability of social sector homes.

Both measures have since been dropped from the Act.

Housing White Paper: fixing our broken housing market

The main objectives of this paper are to boost housing supply and create a more efficient housing market. Proposals include some significant changes for how local authorities meet housing need moving forward. These include:

- Encouraging local authorities and registered providers to build more homes;
- Widening the definition of affordable housing to include starter homes, intermediate rent, discount below open market value and rent to buy;
- A greater emphasis on homelessness prevention; and
- Making renting in the private sector fairer for households.

The Deregulation Act 2015

Some of the measures included in this Act were designed to increase the rights of council and private tenants. They include:

- A reduction in the minimum length of time from 5 years to 3 years for a Council tenant to purchase their home through Right to Buy;
- A requirement for private sector landlords to provide all new tenants with information about their rights and responsibilities, Energy Performance and Gas Safety certificates;
- A requirement to protect all tenancy deposits in a Government approved tenancy deposit scheme; and
- Banning of retaliatory evictions by private sector landlords. This means that a Section 21 notice cannot be issued in respect of tenant complaints about disrepair, health and safety or energy performance in a property.

Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016

Tackling homelessness is still a government priority however this will become more challenging with the full implementation of this Act and the impact that the changes may make on a household's living circumstances and housing. Welfare reform changes have had and will continue to have significant implications relating to housing and homelessness. This includes:

- **Local Housing Allowance:** those under the age of 35 are only entitled to the shared accommodation rate;
- **Reduction in social rents:** from 2016 for a four year period Council's and Registered Providers have had to reduce their social housing rents by 1% each year. This means less funding to invest in services;
- **Removal of the spare room subsidy:** also known as the 'bedroom tax'. If a household is under occupying their home, then the reduction to their net rent is 14% for one room and 25% for two rooms;
- **Universal Credit:** this is a monthly payment that replaces six other benefits, including employment support allowance, job seekers allowance and housing benefit. Nationally it has had a phased roll out, with full roll out in North Tyneside from May 2018;

- **Benefit cap:** the maximum income a household can receive is £20,000, for singles this is £14,000;
- **Transfer of responsibility of Social Fund payments to local authorities:** this happened in April 2013 with a two year transitional period built in. There has been no specific welfare provision funding since April 2015 and there is no duty on local authorities to provide; and
- **Replacement of council tax benefit with council tax support:** a scheme to assist households on a low income or welfare benefits pay their council tax.

Care Act 2014

Introduced on 1 April 2015, this sets out a stronger focus on prevention and a duty to integrate care with health related provision and highlights the role key sectors such as housing can play.

A key aim of the Act is the creation of a single consistent route to identify if a person is entitled to publically funded care and support. For some client groups who may not have previously met a criteria threshold to enable them to access services, this exclusion may no longer apply.

Supported housing funding

Following two consultations on the future of funding for supported housing, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) issued an interim response in April 2018. To reflect the diversity of the sector, the proposed model was broken down into three areas:

- The introduction of a sheltered rent from April 2020. This will ensure that funding for sheltered and extra care homes remains in the welfare system, and brings in important but proportionate cost controls;
- Funding for other long term supported housing remaining in the welfare system with a commitment;
- Funding for short term supported housing to be funded and commissioned through local authorities through an indefinite ring-fenced grant.

In August 2018 MHCLG published their response to the two consultations. Their conclusion is that funding for supported housing will continue through the welfare system and there will be no grant model introduced for short term accommodation. Work will now take place with providers, local authorities and anyone else with an interest in the sector to produce a sound and robust oversight regime to ensure consistent standards throughout the sector.

Children and Social Work Act 2017

This Act was implemented on 1 April 2018 and introduces Corporate Parenting principles that are intended to change local authority culture to ensure that all service areas consider the impact of their work with children and young people for whom the local authority is the corporate parent. The Act extends duty to the age of 25 for those who were previously in the care of the local authority.

Corporate Parenting principles state that English local authorities must '**have regard to the need**' to take certain actions in their work for children in care and care leavers. These are:

- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
- For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

English local authorities must also publish a '**local offer**' for care leavers, informing care leavers about services that must be provided under the Children Act 1989, plus anything else they or others offer that 'may assist care leavers in, or in preparing for, adulthood and independent living' including services related to:

- Health and well-being;
- Relationships;
- Education and training;
- Employment;
- Accommodation; and
- Participation in society.

3. North Tyneside context

Our **North Tyneside Council Plan 2018 – 2020**: has three key themes, people, place and economy, with 16 priorities spanning across the themes. These include: the provision of services that respond quickly to people's needs; keeping people safe; providing new homes, including quality, affordable housing; creating more job opportunities and apprenticeships and ensuring that people have the necessary skills to do them; helping people to be healthier and fulfil their potential; and building stronger working relationships with our partners.

Creating a Brighter Future: sets out the policy priorities from the **Our North Tyneside Plan** and their delivery. The four priorities introduce a new way of working that encourages our customers to be more independent (where they are able to), provide better managed

services so residents access the right services at the right time, and focus everything we do on delivering our priorities.

A **Target Operating Model** sets out the financial challenges that the Council faces, whilst enabling the priorities from **Our Plan** and **Creating a Brighter Future** to be delivered.

North Tyneside Housing Strategy 2016 -2021 ‘a great place to live’: includes our strategic vision for housing in North Tyneside **‘to increase housing supply, choice and quality across North Tyneside; ensuring that housing contributes to thriving, safe and healthy communities’**. It has four strategic objectives, of which preventing homelessness sits within Priority 4: Better Homes, More Independence.

North Tyneside Tenancy Strategy 2013 – 2018: provides guidance to registered providers operating in the borough, including our own landlord function. The strategy emphasises the need to make best use of the housing stock to meet local housing need, maintain and create successful, sustainable communities and prevent homelessness.

North Tyneside Lettings Policy 2017: aims to help people access secure, suitable and affordable social sector homes within North Tyneside. The banding structure includes recognition for North Tyneside residents with a local connection.

North Tyneside Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013 – 2023: based on the findings of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, this strategy focuses on the health inequalities that exist within the borough and sets out the priorities to address this. The issues faced by many homeless and transient people cut across all five strategic priorities.

North Tyneside Children’s Workforce Development Strategy and Action 2015 – 2018: focuses on the planning, commissioning and delivery of services for children and young people in North Tyneside. The partnership brings together public and voluntary sector organisations responsible for children’s services with the aim of improving life outcomes.

4. Review of the North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2013 - 2018

Delivery of our third homelessness prevention strategy has been at a time of competing priorities, reduced funding and increased housing and support need from some of our most vulnerable residents.

Throughout this period we have continued to work with stakeholders and service providers to achieve the following:

Funding:

- £48,000 secured from the North East Regional Homelessness Group for the introduction of the Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) approach as a one year pilot. The success of the pilot led to MEAM being mainstreamed;
- £40,500 received from the North East Regional Homelessness Group for a two year, part time Outreach and Engagement service through Changing Lives to work with rough sleepers to get them off the streets and accessing services. The first time such a

service was available in the borough, it ran from September 2014 – September 2016 and achieved some positive outcomes;

- Part of a £203,000 pot from the Help for Single Homeless Fund to enable delivery of an In-reach service into the bed and breakfasts and hostel accommodation that accommodate non statutory placements across North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland. Changing Lives provided support to individuals to access services and move to a more suitable, permanent home and to engage with owners to improve their accommodation standards;
- An allocation from the £1.9m secured through the Fair Chance Fund for Tyne and Wear, Northumberland and Durham to enable Life Coaches to work with 18 – 24 year olds who were not in settled accommodation, training, education or employment to access accommodation and services. Delivered through Depaul UK the number of young people supported in North Tyneside exceeded the target figure;
- Depaul UK secured additional funding from the then Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), now Homes England (HE) to increase the number of bed spaces at Depaul House. Originally extending from 8 shared rooms to 11 en-suite bedrooms, this increased to 14 en-suite bedrooms with shared living facilities;
- Home Group secured HCA funding through the Affordable Homes Programme 2015 - 2018 to purchase properties for ex-offenders; and
- Registered providers received £7.2m from the HCA Affordable Homes Programme 2015 - 2018 to increase the supply of affordable homes in the borough.

Supported housing provision

- YMCA North Tyneside received funding from a benefactor to purchase a community house for young singles with on-site support;
- YMCA North Tyneside converted part of their 'Y' building (now known as Sir James Knott House) to provide 15 x 1 bedroom flats with on-site support for single young people;
- Accessing the private rented sector to provide homes for young people, including care leavers with outreach support; and
- Pilot of a Housing First scheme for people over the age of 25 years. Success of the pilot led to the provision being included in a procurement exercise.

Improving existing accommodation services:

- The award of £78,000 to the YMCA North Tyneside for the creation of 3 emergency en-suite bed spaces with a communal kitchen for 16 – 24 year olds at Sir James Knott House;
- Additional HCA funding secured by YMCA North Tyneside to enable a further 6 x 1 bedroom flats to be delivered in Sir James Knott House;
- Working with a private landlord, YMCA North Tyneside secured 9 bedsits to use as part of a staged housing process for 16 – 24 year olds;

- Through procurement exercises for supported housing and housing support, providers formed partnerships to deliver a more effective service for a range of housing and support needs making better use of existing schemes; and
- Children's Services increased their in-house accommodation and support offer to looked after children and those leaving care.

Move on

- The delivery of 1,130 affordable homes in the borough to meet an increased housing need, with a further 880 affordable homes projected by March 2021;
- Changing Lives secured the lease of a property from Square Build Trust. The property was converted to provide 5 homes for former armed services personnel;
- Improving access to the private rented sector; and
- Lettings policy revision to ensure that housing need is met and residents receive a banding for local connection (helping local people).

And.....

- The introduction of a Gateway service for statutory bed and breakfast placements, to ensure all referrals are through one single point of contact and households are placed in a safe environment;
- Through partnership working established a 'sit up' service for those rough sleeping in periods of poor weather. Delivered by the Whitley Bay Street Pastors at a local resource centre it provides a place of safety;
- With funding from the regional homelessness group, Depaul UK expanded Nightstop to include provision to over 25s. A regional resource, North Tyneside is an area that is considered a 'super user' of the service; and
- Depaul UK and YMCA North Tyneside visited local schools and colleges to deliver homelessness awareness sessions.

4.2 Current picture

4.2.1 The Housing Options Team (homelessness)

The Housing Options Team (homelessness) is the first point of contact for any household in need of free, independent advice regarding their current housing situation. The team operate a face to face triage system, identifying those who need to be seen and those queries that can be dealt with on the day through the provision of advice. Anyone who presents as roofless is seen the same day.

4.2.2 Presentations, opened cases and acceptances

The number of presentations to the Housing Options Team (homelessness) fell between April 2013 – March 2017, although this last year has seen a rise in presentations. There were also fewer opened cases over the last five years, with priority homeless acceptances increasing over the last year.

Presentations:	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
a) Triage	2239	1755	1686	1832	2084
b) Roofless	551	485	453	480	434
Total Presentations	2790	2240	2139	2312	2518
Total opened cases**	1105	852	772	796	815
Total priority acceptances	177	191	149	167	179

****Total opened cases:** the figure supplied is the total number of homelessness decisions during the year, plus the total number of preventions. This represents the number of cases that were opened and progressed beyond the triage/roofless stage to a formal outcome.

Following the national trend for reasons for homelessness, termination of an assured short-hold tenancy continues to be the number one reason for a household being accepted as homeless and in priority need.

This is followed by a violent breakdown of a relationship involving a partner, with the number of households being accepted with this reason for homelessness rising over the last two years.

Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate slipped out of the top three reasons for homelessness between 2014 -2017, however it reappeared for 2017 -2018.

Reasons for homelessness:	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Termination of an assured short hold tenancy	53	63	52	58	61
Violent breakdown of a relationship, involving partner	30	37	28	42	46
Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate	20	10	6	2	10
Violent breakdown of a relationship involving associated persons	6	12	6	5	9

Households including a person aged between 25 – 44 years of age remain the largest group accepted.

Age of priority homeless	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
16 – 24	43	34	24	32	30
25 – 44	100	118	93	101	114
45 – 59	29	31	28	23	28
60 – 64	3	5	1	3	2
65 – 74	2	1	1	3	3
75 & Over	0	2	2	5	2
Total	177	191	149	167	179

4.2.3 Prevention and relief

The number of households assisted to have their homelessness prevented has reduced in recent years. This can be attributed to fewer resources, in terms of service sustainability and funding availability to support successful prevention. The top three prevention reasons are:

Successful positive action taken to prevent homelessness	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Conciliation including home visits for family/friend threatened with exclusion	242	154	149	97	106
Providing other assistance to remain in accommodation in the private or social rented sector	140	87	77	89	111
Debt advice	28	10	9	8	7

If preventing a household's homelessness has not been achieved then work has taken place, where possible, to relieve a household's homelessness situation. Securing hostel or a house in multiple occupation (HMO) accommodation or accommodation arranged with friends or relatives no longer feature as one of the top three relief approaches. The current top three relief methods are:

Homelessness prevented to relieved households assisted to obtain alternative accommodation	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
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Social housing: offer of local authority accommodation or nomination to a registered provider	48	48	55	43	80
Supported accommodation	28	24	20	24	47
Private rented without landlord incentive scheme	27	24	24	19	36

4.2.4 Temporary accommodation

There is a specialist temporary emergency accommodation team that arrange accommodation for the households and support them during their placement.

Households are placed in temporary accommodation if there is a duty to do so, i.e. they are believed to be eligible, homeless and likely to be in priority need while their application is dealt with, or it has not been possible to prevent or relieve their homelessness and they have been accepted as homeless and in priority need. Temporary accommodation is provided until the council's statutory duty comes to an end, this is normally through a household moving into a permanent home.

Temporary accommodation is provided through our existing social housing stock, dispersed throughout the borough. Only in exceptional circumstances is bed and breakfast or hotel accommodation used for homeless applicants. With so few establishments in the borough willing to accommodate a homeless household, this placement is frequently made outside of North Tyneside. This can limit the support that the household can receive from the team, isolates them from their family and social networks and increases financial outlay with additional and increased travel and associated costs.

For the last few years the number of households housed in temporary accommodation has remained fairly static, with around 20 at any one time. However the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has seen this figure start to increase.

4.2.5 Rough sleeping

Rough sleeping impacts on both the individuals experiencing sleeping rough and the wider community. The cost to the public purse is high, with research suggesting that each rough sleeper costs around £16,000 - £21,000 per annum compared to the average cost of an adult who has a home at £4,600 per annum (DCLG 2015).

To help address rough sleeping, Government launched their national Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018. This sets out how responding to rough sleeping is a key priority with ambitious targets to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and eradicate it by 2027.

It is a government requirement that all local authorities submit an annual figure to MHCLG indicating the number of people sleeping rough in their area on a typical night.

The typical night is between 1 October – 30 November and can either be a count or an estimate. The North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention Forum makes the decision and to date this has always been an estimate.

At a North East regional level, one night is identified and agreed for the 12 authorities to conduct this work on with their partners. The principle reason for this is to avoid any double counting of some rough sleepers who are known to travel between local authority areas.

A multitude of stakeholders and organisations participate in the survey. Very low levels are recorded for the typical night, although it is acknowledged that rough sleeping does occur in the borough.

At any time rough sleeping or suspected rough sleeping can be reported direct to StreetLink by calling 0300 500 0914 or visiting www.streetlink.org.uk. This information is then forwarded to the Housing Options Team (homelessness) to investigate and verify the referral. If anyone is found, a housing options (homelessness) appointment will be offered to them. Posters advising the public how to report any rough sleeping concerns have been circulated to supermarkets, GPs, hospitals, customer first centres and placed on bins in known hot spot areas.

Alternatively rough sleeping can be reported direct to the Housing Advice Team. Their email is housingadvice@northtynteside.gov.uk and their contact number is 0191 643 2520.

During periods of severe weather there are no legal protections for people sleeping rough and no statutory duty to provide shelter.

However, there is a humanitarian obligation on all local authorities to do all that they can to prevent deaths on the streets caused by severe weather. This includes the cold, but also conditions such as high wind and heavy rain. A **Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)** is in place during the winter months, typically November – March, or periods of poor weather.

The protocol sets out the arrangements that the Council will put in place to avoid death on the streets through prompt action being taken to ensure that all rough sleepers have the opportunity to access a safe shelter during periods of severe weather.

4.2.6 Youth homelessness

The term **youth homeless** relates to any young person aged between 16 – 24 years of age, however what youth homeless is and who it relates to is open to interpretation, depending on individual service areas and organisations.

Over the last few years the number of young people presenting to the Housing Options Team (homelessness) and being accepted as homeless and in priority need in North Tyneside has decreased. This is representative of fewer young people presenting at a regional and national level. From April 2014 - March 2017 being asked to leave by family and/or friends did not feature in the top three reasons for homelessness acceptances, but reappeared as the third top reason for 2017 – 2018. This is mirrored by conciliation including home visits for family and friends threatened with exclusion being the constant number one prevention reason since 2013 until 2017 – 2018.

A joint protocol is in place between Children's Services, Housing and providers that sets out the action and responsibility towards any young person aged 16 or 17 years old who

presents to the local authority with a housing need. This protocol will be reviewed to ensure that the needs of the young person are met by the most appropriate service area.

Changes to the way in which housing and support services for young people are delivered may have also attributed to fewer young people being accepted as statutory homeless over the last five years. An emphasis has been placed on prevention and there has been an increase in supported housing provision, including specific supported housing for looked after children and care leavers.

4.3 Engagement

4.3.1 The North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention Forum has an independent Chair. It meets on a quarterly basis to share good practice and learning and discuss the impact that housing and homelessness related legislative and policy changes may have for service users and services and explores how these can be mitigated. Membership of the forum is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it is reflective of the priorities and issues.

4.3.2 A homelessness review event took place in February 2017. Principle aims of this event were to highlight achievements over the lifespan of the third homelessness prevention strategy, identify legislative and policy changes that will impact on how homelessness is responded to in the future and what priority areas need to be focused on.

Around 50 people from a range of organisations attended the event, with positive feedback received on the content of the sessions and delivery. Information and feedback from the event concluded that:

- Tackling homelessness is a collective responsibility;
- A need to enhance a partnership approach at a local and regional level;
- Identify where service gaps are and how they can be overcome;
- More appropriate, affordable, secure move on housing is needed. This includes reviewing use of existing stock and engaging with private sector landlords to make best use of properties;
- Develop working relationship with Health to improve access to services;
- Effective communication and access to good quality information for all; and
- Support individuals to develop independent living and life skills to sustain a home.

4.3.3 A third health needs audit of single homeless people established the most prevalent health conditions, access to services and levels of substance use amongst this client group. 88 returns were received, a huge improvement on the previous audits, although not every question was answered. Key points from the audit include:

- The need to carry out some additional work with participants to understand why they feel their current support and treatment is inadequate for their perceived need;
- Identify an appropriate pathway to enable those who feel they require support and treatment to be assessed and an outcome obtained;

- Educate those who use emergency services about alternative mechanisms to access support; and
- Increase the numbers that are registered with a dentist.

The information has been shared with relevant stakeholders to help raise awareness of the health needs of single homeless people and current issues in accessing health services.

4.3.4 In developing the priorities for this strategy a range of **engagement approaches** to gather the views of those who have direct experience of homelessness, who work in services that aim to prevent and reduce homelessness and organisations whose work cuts across homelessness have been used.

To understand a client perspective, group sessions were held with current and former clients. Five key questions were asked:

- What happened to make you need help with housing?
- What support do you currently use from the local authority?
- What could have stopped you needing help?
- What do you want to do or be in the future? What are your dreams?
- What does a home mean to you?

Relationship breakdown, domestic abuse, rent arrears, addiction and lack of knowledge and support were the main reasons for requiring help with housing.

Individuals relied on family support and appropriate service support.

Knowing who to contact and how to access services could have prevented the situation.

Having good mental health, family and friend networks, abstinence from substances and own home were the aims for the future.

Having a home meant security, independence, self-worth, stability and a sense of belonging through being part of a community.

A short video presentation was made from one of the sessions.

<https://youtu.be/OfbimsKHyWA>

An electronic survey was circulated around stakeholders and organisations for participants to answer 13 questions linked to homelessness and submit their responses. There was also a face to face option offered. Those who took part in this were asked questions around:

- Success in reducing homelessness;
- Main causes of homelessness;
- Advice, information and signposting;
- Support for those at risk of or actual homelessness and access to support;
- Seeking assistance at an earlier stage;

- Existing prevention and support services;
- Gaps in services, areas for improvement and priorities; and
- Factors that may impact on delivery of the homelessness prevention strategy.

For some questions the responses were mixed:

- It was felt that for some client groups there had been success in reducing homelessness, but not for others;
- Relationship breakdown, financial issues and lack of affordable housing were cited as the main reasons for homelessness;
- The view was unanimous that current services did not meet need, in terms of people knowing how to access services and sufficient support available to meet client need.
- Government policies, lack of suitable move on housing and short term funding were the main concerns that could impact on being able to successfully reduce homelessness.
- Priorities were more appropriate and affordable homes, earlier intervention and improved support services.

5. Our priorities

The effects of homelessness extend beyond not having somewhere to call home. The impact that this can have on an individual or a household can last several years.

Our priorities have been shaped by recent legislative changes, our homelessness review, and our engagement with service providers and those who use the services. They focus on making best use of resources to support vulnerable households, and place a greater emphasis on services working together, and empowering people to identify solutions to their own issues.

Priority One: successful implementation and delivery of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 represents the biggest change to homelessness legislation for almost 40 years.

For the first time legislation has a focus on prevention. The Act strengthens the Council's duty to prevent homelessness for all eligible households, regardless of priority need, possible intentionality and local connection. If preventing homelessness has not been possible, then a relief stage has been introduced and every effort should be made to resolve at this stage.

It enables councils to work with and support households at an earlier stage to resolve their housing issue. Through the creation of personal housing plans between the household and the Housing Options Team (homelessness), actions will be identified and agreed for each party to undertake to redress the housing situation, with the emphasis on working together, and with partners to secure a home.

It is anticipated that the number of households who will require housing advice and support will increase; therefore responses must be timely and services must be able to meet this additional demand. Web based and paper information must be available on how to deal with housing issues.

The introduction of a duty to refer by public sector organisations will create both challenge and opportunity. Not all public sector organisations are included in this duty therefore engagement will take place with such organisations to ensure that they are aware of local referral processes that are in place. It must also be emphasised to organisations that a referral will not trigger a homeless application under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.

Complementing this duty will be generic work with statutory and voluntary organisations to ensure that they are aware of the Act, and the requirements and expectations within it so that they can provide the correct advice and support to households. This could be included in any 'duty to commitment' that may be introduced following the 'duty to refer'. Effective working pathways between organisations, such as prison release and hospital discharge must also be developed.

Key actions for this priority are:

- Review and explore options to increase prevention tools;
- Review and explore options to develop intervention methods;
- Review and introduce accessible information (web based and paper format) for all households, particularly the identified vulnerable groups on their housing options;
- Review and monitor agreed personal housing plan that clearly sets out the actions that will be taken including frequency of contact;
- Develop and implement Duty to Refer protocol and monitor;
- Develop and introduce leaving prison and hospital discharge protocols; and
- Regular engagement and information sharing with statutory and voluntary organisations to keep them up to date on the Act.

Priority Two: meeting local housing need

This priority focuses on temporary, supported and permanent housing.

As at 30 April 2018 there were 14,767 council homes and 6,117 registered provider homes in North Tyneside. 5,158 applicants were registered for housing in the borough, with 1,494 homes let between 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018.

The latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) for North Tyneside was carried out in 2014 and identified annual shortfall of 491 affordable homes.

Demand for social and affordable homes continues to exceed supply. We will continue to work with registered providers and private developers to increase the provision of affordable homes in the borough. This may be through affordable rent or intermediate housing options, such as shared ownership or discount below open market value.

With limited availability of social sector housing, there is a requirement to engage with the private sector and support households who wish to secure a home in this sector to do so. However, some private landlords and letting agents are reluctant to accept tenants who are on low incomes and welfare benefits. The development of new schemes and the

introduction of new roles that will work with both the tenant and landlord should enable this concern to be addressed.

The lack of suitable, affordable housing is an increasing pressure for single person households under the age of 35. With few one bed social sector homes available and the shared accommodation rate of local housing allowance applied to private rented property, options are restricted. Although there may be some individual household exceptions to this, for the majority it is financially unviable for them to rent a one bed home in the private sector. Alternative housing options, including shared homes will need to be considered.

For many households who become homeless the provision of a suitable, affordable, secure home is the only issue that needs to be addressed. For others, the threat of homelessness can stem from their vulnerability and support needs. Some vulnerable groups are at greater risk of homelessness and/or repeated housing instability. This includes:

- Young people;
- Substance misusers;
- Those with an offending history;
- Survivors of domestic abuse;
- Those with a mental health issue; and
- Those with complex needs, including one or more of the above.

Supported housing for single person households is delivered through two partnerships, one for 16 -24 year olds and the other for those aged 25 and over. This approach is working well, with fewer evictions taking place from supported housing as partners work together to ensure an individual is housed in the most suitable form of supported housing for them. The partnerships will be reviewed to establish if the needs of all are being met or if there are any gaps.

We use our own council stock to provide temporary accommodation to homeless households. Depending on availability it may not meet the household's requirements. If it is too large for them then under-occupancy charges may apply, therefore adding to any financial issues they may already have. Options for alternative temporary accommodation that meet varying housing need and support must be explored.

Bed and breakfast accommodation should only be used when there is no in-house temporary accommodation available. This should be for a short a period of time as possible. Placements in bed and breakfast accommodation need to be monitored, with any exceptions reported on.

The number of households presenting with domestic abuse as their main reason is rising. At a sub-regional level, work is taking place to enable local authorities (housing) to review their current domestic abuse procedures and policies on how they respond to and support households experiencing domestic abuse and staff who support those households. Within North Tyneside a steering group will be established to drive the process forward, this will include the implementation of a stand-alone domestic abuse policy.

The joint protocol that is in place for 16 and 17 year olds between Children's Services, Housing and providers will also need to be reviewed and revised to ensure it continues to meet the need of any 16 and 17 year old who presents with a housing need.

Key actions for this priority are:

- Continuous engagement with registered providers and private developers to increase the supply of affordable homes;
- Successful engagement with the private rented sector to improve the housing offer;
- Explore and identify housing options for single person households aged under 35;
- Review supported housing offer to ensure it is meeting housing and support need;
- Identify any gaps in current service provision, influence commissioners and bid for any funding that becomes available and/or support partners to bid for funding;
- Review use of temporary accommodation and identify alternative provision to meet need;
- Monitor use of bed and breakfast accommodation;
- Achieve accreditation with Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance; and
- Review the 16 and 17 year old joint protocol.

Priority Three: supporting households to secure and sustain an affordable home

The North Tyneside Partnerships also deliver outreach support to help someone through the first few weeks of their tenancy or provide targeted intervention work to prevent someone from losing their home. This element of the support service will be reviewed to ensure that it is meeting its objectives and fewer people are losing their homes.

North Tyneside Council and some registered providers who have properties in the borough also deliver targeted work with their tenants to hopefully avoid eviction.

Feedback from our engagement with service users and providers on current support services concluded that whilst support services are available, they may not necessarily meet the needs of all, particularly some specific clients groups. Through partnership working we will identify approaches that will seek to encourage tenancy sustainment and prevent recurring homelessness.

As mentioned in Priority Two there is a need to engage with the private sector to secure homes for those households who wish to reside in the sector. Improving access to good quality private rented sector housing with support to expand choices and provide affordable housing options for families and individuals sits within this priority. We will focus more on sustaining tenancies and providing timely advice to prevent a housing crisis arising in the private rented sector and working positively with landlords and tenants to improve successful outcomes.

A new role will be created within the Housing Options Team (homelessness) to work with single person households to explore their housing options and support them to secure a permanent home.

In North Tyneside there is no one service with specific responsibility for engaging with those found to be sleeping rough. Reports of rough sleeping or concerns that someone may be sleeping rough have increased to the local authority and its partners. Each report is responded to with a visit to the location to identify and verify if someone is sleeping rough; and an initial assessment undertaken or a calling card left.

Monitoring rough sleeping activity will help to inform if there is a need for an outreach service as that first step for individuals to re-engage with services and move off the streets. Such a service could link with the Severe Weather Emergency Provision that is available to individuals during extreme periods of poor weather.

The challenges and issues that rough sleepers often present with, extend beyond not having a home. Poor physical and mental health, substance misuse, financial exclusion, current and former offending and/or anti social behaviour can all be contributing factors to their current situation. Resources and existing homelessness related services are extremely limited in North Tyneside. There is no immediate accommodation offer or direct pathway out of rough sleeping. Services will be reviewed to include an emphasis on responding to rough sleeping and how the 'hidden households' known as sofa surfers can be considered. .

Often linked with or mistaken for rough sleeping is street activity, such as begging which has become more prevalent in some key locations within the borough. Working with partners we will identify approaches and publicity campaigns that promote alternative solutions to the general public handing over money.

Key actions for this priority are:

- Support households to successfully move on and sustain their home;
- Review outreach support offer to establish if the needs of all clients are being met;
- Where service gaps are identified influence commissioners, be successful in any funding bids and support partners in their funding bids;
- Work with private sector landlords and tenants to secure a home and prevent eviction, through the introduction of schemes that support both tenant and landlord;
- Monitor Single Person Support Officer work and outcomes;
- Monitor rough sleeping activity to determine if a specialist outreach service is needed; and
- Work with partners to reduce street activity and promote alternative solutions to support rough sleepers.

Priority Four: effective communication and robust partnership working

Running throughout our priorities is the necessity for effective communication and robust partnership working. Feedback from our engagement highlighted that people did not

always know who to contact in times of a housing crisis, and that this lack of knowledge may have contributed to them becoming homeless.

Linked to Priority One, we will review existing web based and paper information to ensure it is accessible, informative, easy to understand and jargon free. We will ensure that services are well publicised and promoted and organisations know who to signpost to.

Partnerships will be strengthened and developed to ensure we are working together to deliver services that aim to respond to and tackle homelessness.

Prevention work into schools has been well received in the past and helped to get the message across about homelessness and dispel some myths. We need to identify how this effective approach can continue and build on and develop relationships with primary and secondary schools.

Key actions for this priority include:

- Review and revise web pages and paper information;
- Promotion of services and sign posting;
- Continuous engagement with partners to strengthen relationships and tackle homelessness; and
- On-going prevention work into primary and secondary schools

6. Monitoring and performance indicators

6.1 Local monitoring and performance indicators

Our delivery plan sets out how we will deliver the objectives that sit within our priorities. It is the responsibility of all stakeholders and agencies who contribute to the preventing homelessness agenda to deliver.

A monitoring group will be established to monitor the plan on a quarterly basis with updates provided to the homelessness prevention forum. The role of the monitoring group will be to:

- Monitor progress towards the completion of the delivery plan actions;
- Address any issues in relation to the completion of delivery plan actions; and
- Evaluate the impact new or amended legislative policies or practices may have on services within North Tyneside, this includes identifying appropriate responses to change.

Effective monitoring of the delivery plan will ensure that services are best placed to adapt and respond to any challenges and legislative changes that occur during the life of the strategy. The plan will be reviewed on an annual basis.

The group will also monitor and review the performance indicators that have been created to monitor homelessness. They are:

Presentations

- Total number of homeless presentations to the Housing Options Team (including out of hours);
- Number of presentations to the Housing Options Team out of hours;

Live cases

- Number of live advice only cases at the last day of the month;
- Number of live prevention only cases at the last day of the month;
- Number of live relief cases at the last day of the month;

Closed cases

- Number of cases closed at advice only stage;
- Number of cases closed at prevention stage;
- Number of cases closed at relief stage;
- Number of homeless applications processed in 5 days;

Temporary accommodation

- Families with children in B&B for more than 6 weeks;
- Average number of nights' accommodation per household in dispersed;
- Average number of nights' accommodation per household in B&B;
- New households provided with temporary accommodation (dispersed properties and B&B).

6.2 Government returns

It is a government requirement that all local authorities submit quarterly returns (known as P1E) on statutory homelessness cases. The data does not provide a true picture of homelessness.

From 1 April 2018 all housing authorities will be required to collect and submit detailed case level performance information relating to all homelessness applications. This is known as H-Clic data.

7. Delivery Plan

Priority One: successful implementation and delivery of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

Objective	Key actions	Lead	Partners
<p>More households have their homelessness prevented or relieved, through the availability of accessible information, successful use of personal housing plans and effective joint working.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and explore options to increase prevention tools. 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and explore options to develop intervention methods. 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and introduce accessible information (web based and paper format) for all households, particularly the identified vulnerable groups on their housing options. 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and monitor agreed personal housing plan that clearly sets out the actions that will be taken including frequency of contact. 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop and implement Duty to Refer protocol and monitor.		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop and introduce leaving prison and hospital discharge protocols.		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regular engagement and information sharing with statutory and voluntary organisations to keep them up to date on the Act.		

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Priority Two: meeting local housing need

Objective	Key actions	Lead	Partners
<p>Best use of all temporary, supported and permanent housing is made to meet local housing need</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous engagement with registered providers and private developers to increase the supply of affordable homes. 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful engagement with the private rented sector to increase the housing offer. 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore and identify housing options for under 35s. 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review supported housing offer to ensure it is meeting housing need. 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify any gaps in current service provision, influence commissioners and bid for any funding that becomes available and/or support partners to bid for funding. 		

	Review use of temporary accommodation and identify alternative provision to meet need.		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitor use of bed and breakfast accommodation.		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Achieve accreditation with Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance.		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review 16 and 17 year old joint protocol.		

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Priority Three: support households to secure and sustain an affordable home

Objective	Key actions	Lead	Partner
<p>Successful tenancies, with fewer evictions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support households to successfully move on and sustain their home. 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review outreach support offer to establish if the needs of all are being met. 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where service gaps are identified influence commissioners, be successful in any funding bids and support partners in their funding bids. 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with private sector landlords and tenants to secure a home and prevent eviction through the introduction of schemes that support both tenant and landlord. 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitor Single Person Support Officer work and outcomes.		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitor rough sleeping activity to determine if a specialist outreach service is needed.		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with partners to reduce street activity and promote alternative solutions to support rough sleepers.		

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Priority Four: effective communication and robust partnership working

Objective	Key actions	Lead	Partner
<p>People know who to contact to assist with their housing issue through the provision of accessible and easy to understand literature.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and revise web pages and paper information. 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion of services and signposting. 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuous engagement with partners to strengthen relationships and tackle homelessness. 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-going prevention work into primary and secondary schools. 		

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