

Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council
Homelessness Review 2015

Contents

1. Introduction and Review Process

- 1.1 Introduction & Context
- 1.2 Achievements since 2010
- 1.3 Review Process

2. Context and Delivery

- 2.1 National Context
- 2.2 Local Context
- 2.3 Legal Context

3. Newcastle - The Local Picture

- 3.1 The Borough Profile
- 3.2 Current levels of homelessness & Trends
- 3.3 Who becomes homeless?
- 3.4 Why people become homeless
- 3.5 Temporary Accommodation use
- 3.6 Housing Benefit Information
- 3.7 Mortgage and Landlord Possessions

4. Prevention Homelessness and Meeting Housing Need

- 4.1 Homelessness Services in Newcastle-under-Lyme
- 4.2 Homelessness Prevention
- 4.3 Supply of accommodation
- 4.4 Supporting Vulnerable People
- 4.5 Partnership Working

5. Issues & Recommendations for the Homelessness Strategy

- 5.1 Summary of Initial Homelessness Review Findings
- 5.2 Issues highlighted through consultation
- 5.3 Recommendations / Issues for the Updated Strategy to Consider

1. Introduction and Review Process

1.1 Introduction and Context

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires each local authority to carry out a review of homelessness within its area every 5 years and to use the findings to publish a Homelessness Strategy in consultation with other local partners and stakeholders.

In line with this legislation Newcastle's first strategy was developed in 2003. There have been 2 further reviews and strategies. The third strategy was adopted in 2010 and covered the five-year period to 2015. Newcastle's third strategy had the following priorities:

- **Priority 1 - Prevention**

To continue to prevent homelessness by earlier intervention and strong partnership working

- **Priority 2 - Accommodation**

Ensuring sufficient accommodation is available for people who are or may become homeless

- **Priority 3 - Support**

Securing the satisfactory provision of support for people who may be or are at risk of becoming homeless or who have been homeless and need the support to prevent them from becoming homeless again

1.2 Achievements since our last Strategy

The 2010 Strategy achieved the majority of its objectives; substantial developments and improvements during the five-year period are outlined below. Any actions that have not yet been completed from the previous Homelessness Strategy Action Plan will either be brought forward into the next strategy or disregarded if the outcomes of this review find they are no longer fit for purpose.

- **Retendering of the Newcastle Housing Advice Service (NHA)**

During the period of the last strategy the council has re-tendered its Newcastle Housing Advice service. The new contract continues to focus on homelessness prevention and the provision of housing advice to residents in the Borough.

- **Joint commissioning of the rough sleeper's outreach service**

Over the past 10 years, both Newcastle Borough Council and Stoke on Trent City Council have commissioned a rough sleeper's outreach service in their areas. During the current strategy, the Councils have worked together to jointly commission a service, which provides outreach services to rough sleepers in both Newcastle and Stoke on Trent.

- **A new temporary accommodation (TA) unit**

Previously the Council has piloted the feasibility of a temporary accommodation unit in the borough. The provision has proved to be a successful alternative to using emergency bed & breakfast accommodation, for a number of homeless households. Using the lessons learnt from the pilot, the Council now has arrangements in place

for the use of a new temporary accommodation unit to accommodate homelessness households for the next two years.

- **The Shropshire and Staffordshire Homelessness Prevention Partnership**
During the period of the current strategy, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCGL) made £528,000 of funding available to regional groups of local authorities to invest in the prevention of homelessness. The Borough Council is a member of the Shropshire and Staffordshire regional group and together the eleven local authority members have worked closely to commission a range of services across the region, which will assist in the prevention of homelessness for rough sleepers and the single homeless.
- **Re-commissioning of the debt advice service**
The Council has re-commissioned its Homelessness prevention debt advice service, which is of central importance in the overall prevention of homelessness. The service provides targeted and proactive money advice to households at risk of homelessness.
- **A Countywide Welfare Advice Service**
The Borough Council has worked with Staffordshire County Council to jointly commission a countywide welfare advice service. This approach improves the consistency of welfare advice throughout the County, whilst creating efficiencies and economies of scale, which could not be achieved through individual local authority services.
- **Delivery of 370 affordable homes**
Since the production of the last homelessness strategy in 2010, 370 affordable homes have been delivered in Newcastle under Lyme.
- **Increase in the number of homelessness preventions**
Each year the number of households who have had their risk of homelessness prevented has increased.

1.3 Review Process

The aim of this review is to understand the current situation in Newcastle and identify any changes that may have taken place since the last Homelessness review in 2010. On completion of the review it will enable the Council to identify the key aims and objectives to inform the future strategic direction of local homelessness services and shape actions that will effectively prevent and tackle homelessness between now and 2020.

Each Homelessness Review must consider the following:-

- a. Current and likely future levels of homelessness
- b. The activities, which are carried out for any of the following purposes (or contribute to achieving any of them)
 - Preventing homelessness in the Borough
 - Securing that accommodation is or will be available for people in the Borough who are or may become homeless
 - Providing support for people in the Borough who are, or may become, homeless or have been homeless and need support to prevent them from becoming homeless again
- c. The resources available to the local housing authority, the social services authority, other public authorities, voluntary organisations and other persons for the activities outlined in (b) above

The Council's existing Housing Strategy, its Allocations Policy and the Strategic Tenancy Strategy have been considered as part of this review to ensure a coherent strategic approach to reducing homelessness is delivered in Newcastle.

In order to complete this review the following activities have taken place:

1.3.1. Data Collection

Research data was taken from the following sources:

- Statutory returns
- Monitoring Information from the Newcastle Housing Advice Service
- Monitoring Information provided by stakeholders and partners

1.3.2. Service Mapping

Staff collated information on the services currently available in the Borough that assist people who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

1.3.3. Consultation

Consultation is vital to inform the development of the strategy and improvement to Council services.

Please note, the data collated for this review has been provided through a variety of sources, some of which are monitored on a calendar year basis whilst others are measured in financial years and therefore the totals reported may be different depending on which method has been used.

2. Context

Homelessness is a key strategic issue for Newcastle Borough Council and its partners. However the Homelessness Strategy does not exist in isolation, national, regional and local policies influence its aims, objectives and priorities.

2.1 National Context

Since the 2002 Homelessness Act, homelessness prevention has been a key priority for the Government. The focus has been on those who are not statutory homeless. This group includes rough sleepers, single homeless and couples without dependants. The rationale being that by taking a more considered and holistic approach when these groups present to services this will enable authorities to reduce the repeated demands these groups place on services, not only for housing, but also health and the criminal justice system.

This policy priority is particularly associated with the work of the Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness (MWG) chaired by the Housing Minister. The group brings together eight departments with responsibility for issues that affect homeless people. The group's first report, focused on rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping and was called a "Vision to end rough sleeping: No Second Night Out Nationwide" (2011). The report reiterated the Government's commitment to work together across departments and with voluntary sector partners to end rough sleeping in England. The report also made a series of commitments on improved access to healthcare and employment support for homeless people, including early access to the Work Programme. Help was also promised to local authorities with significant numbers of migrant rough sleepers to assist in reconnecting them with their home countries.

In addition, Homeless Link was made responsible for a new £20 million Homelessness Transition Fund to fund voluntary organisations to deliver strategic rough sleepers services across England and Crisis was granted £10.8 million to fund voluntary sector schemes to improve access to the PRS for single homeless people.

There was also a commitment to a national roll – out of the 'No Second Night Out (NSNO)' project, first piloted in London in 2011. The NSNO model is focused on ensuring, via better intelligence and public awareness, a rapid outreach response to people sleeping rough. The report recognises the need to tackle the broader issues that led to homelessness in the first place.

The second MWG report, Making Every Contact Count (2012) focuses on a joint approach to homelessness prevention, based on early intervention. The vision centres on the principle that agencies will work together to make sure that everyone at risk of homelessness can get the help they need to prevent them from losing their home.

The report sets out the government's commitment to make sure that every contact a vulnerable person or family makes with a local agency really counts to:

- tackle troubled childhoods and adolescence - through interventions to turn around the lives of the most troubled families; and by promoting innovative approaches to youth homelessness
- improve health - including improving outcomes for homeless people with dual drugs / alcohol and mental health needs; and helping to ensure medical professionals discharging patients know who to approach for help to meet housing needs
- reduce involvement in crime - through support to the new Police and Crime Commissioners; improving offender access to private rented sector accommodation; and measures to help those on short sentences retain their tenancy

- improve skills; employment; and financial advice - through new housing demonstration projects which help claimants budget and manage rent payments; a commitment to explore a payment by results approach for those some distance from the labour market; and piloting community learning trusts
- pioneer social funding for homelessness - through a world first Social Impact Bond for rough sleepers and support to other local commissioners to turn social investment propositions into reality

The Gold Standard

In April 2013, based upon the 10 local challenges set out by the MWG, the Government announced a new support and training scheme for homelessness services called the Gold Standard. The Gold Standard is designed to help local authorities deliver more efficient and cost effective homelessness prevention services. The standard requires local authorities to pledge to strive for continuous improvement in front line housing services through peer review, expert support and professional training. Participating authorities benchmark against neighbouring authorities and learn from examples of good practice.

To attain the Gold Standard Status, local authorities need to meet a number of key commitments:

1. Adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness, which has buy in across all local authority services
2. Actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs
3. Offer a Housing Options prevention service, including written advice, to all clients
4. Adopt a No Second Night Out model or an effective local alternative
5. Have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support
6. Develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both clients and landlords
7. Actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme
8. Have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs
9. Not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation
10. Not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and then for no longer than 6 weeks

★ Review findings

The Council needs to consider whether it is prepared to contribute both financially and strategically to achieve the Gold Standard.

Localism

The Localism Act came into force in November 2012, and supports the improvement of local housing options. The Act includes a number of key provisions in relation to homelessness:

- Local Authorities are given the power to discharge their homelessness duty with an offer of accommodation in the private rented sector.
- Social housing tenure reform which will allow social landlords to grant fixed term tenancies with limited security of tenure;

- The need for Local Authorities to set out their approach and response in a Tenancy Strategy.
- Social Housing allocation reform which allows Local Authorities to set allocation policies appropriate to the local area.

Following from the Act, came the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation)(England) Order 2012. This is the Statutory Guidance to which local authorities must have regard when discharging (ending) their duties to homeless households by using private rented accommodation. The guidance describes situations in which private rented housing should be regarded as unsuitable.

Welfare Reform

The Coalition Government introduced a series of welfare reforms and changes to the welfare to work provision under the Welfare Reform Act of 2012. The Act was designed to simplify the benefit system and help more people move into work whilst also seeking to support vulnerable people. The most significant implications for housing and homelessness are:

- Local Housing Allowance (LHA) reductions including total LHA caps and the limiting of LHA to the 30th percentile of market rents
- Total Benefit Cap limiting maximum benefits that a household can receive to £500 per week with the benefit removed from housing benefit payment towards rent
- Spare room subsidy (known as the Bedroom Tax) reducing housing benefit entitlement to social housing tenants considered to be under occupying their homes
- The Single accommodation rate limit applied to young people up to the age of 34
- Transfer of responsibility of social fund payments to local authorities and to council budgets (in Newcastle this is a responsibility for Staffordshire County Council)
- Disability Benefit Charges and the replacement of Council Tax benefit with local council tax support, reducing benefit income to a wide range of working age adults
- Introduction of the Universal Credit to provide a single stream-lined benefit paid to residents directly rather than to their landlords

★ Review findings

Welfare Reform does not have appeared to have produced a direct increase in homelessness, so far.

We are yet to see the full effect of Universal Credit in Newcastle as it has only been introduced for certain customers from April 2015.

Consideration must be given on ways as how to identify households at risk of falling into arrears under Universal Credit.

Health

There is a direct correlation between homelessness and poor health. Homeless people can face great inequalities in accessing health services, yet their health can often suffer from being homeless or living in poor quality temporary accommodation. Poor health – physical, mental or both can also cause a person to become homeless in the first place. Homeless people may often leave health problems untreated until they reach crisis point and then present inappropriately at A&E. This combines to make health problems more expensive to treat, hospital waiting lists longer and leads to people being less able to support themselves in their homes.

Improving the health of the homeless is dependent on effective commissioning of appropriate healthcare services, under the Health and Social Care Act 2012, reducing health inequalities is now a requirement. Since April 2013 the new NHS Commissioning Board and local clinical commissioning groups are responsible for the commissioning of healthcare services. Local Health and Wellbeing boards will be responsible for determining their commissioning priorities based on strategic needs assessments. Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) have the duty to provide services for all patients in their locality whether registered or not, including services for the homeless.

★ Review findings

We need to be aware of the new structures within health and plan how to maximise partnership opportunities. We also need to identify our respective roles in coordinating the achievement of shared outcomes (as detailed in the Public Health NHS and Adult Social Care Outcome Frameworks).

There is currently little analysis nationally or locally about the cost of homelessness to health.

Temporary Accommodation

The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 placed a duty on local housing authorities to secure permanent accommodation for unintentionally homeless people in priority need. Authorities' duties towards homeless people are now contained in Part 7 of the 1996 Housing Act (as amended). In performing their duties to homeless people under Part 7 of the 1996 Housing Act (as amended) local authorities are obliged to have regard for the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities. The Guidance was revised to take account of the changes made by the 2002 Homelessness Act and the extension of the priority need categories.

Where an authority is providing interim accommodation for a homeless household pending a decision on their application under section 188 of the 1996 Act, the Guidance notes the use of B&B should be avoided where possible.

'Housing authorities should avoid using Bed & Breakfast (B&B) accommodation wherever possible. Where B&B accommodation has been used in an emergency situation, applicants should be moved to more suitable accommodation as soon as possible. The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2003 provides that B&B accommodation is not suitable accommodation for families with children and households that include a pregnant woman unless there is no alternative accommodation available and then only for a maximum of six weeks.'

CLG, Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, July 2006, para 7.6

Where an authority accepts a duty to secure accommodation for a household that is unintentionally homeless and in priority need, the accommodation provided must be 'suitable.' The Code of Guidance provides the following advice for authorities on using B&B accommodation for discharging a re-housing duty:

Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation caters for very short-term stays only and generally will afford residents only limited privacy and may lack certain important amenities, such as cooking and laundry facilities. Consequently, where possible, housing authorities should avoid using B&B hotels to discharge a duty to secure accommodation for applicants, unless, in the very limited circumstances where it is likely to be the case, it is the most appropriate option for an applicant. The Secretary of State considers B&B hotels as particularly

unsuitable for accommodating applicants with family commitments and applicants aged 16 or 17 year who need support.

CLG, Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, July 2006 16.28

The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) produced a report entitled 'No Place Like Home' in July 2013. The report identified a 'worrying trend' of young people and homelessness families being placed in bed and breakfast and has issued five LGO reports on homelessness involving the inappropriate use of bed and breakfast accommodation. The LGO considers bed and breakfast accommodation as unsuitable and that councils must secure alternative accommodation within no more than six weeks and has explicitly warned that the LGO may find fault even where a family has spent less than six weeks in bed and breakfast if the LO is of the view that the council could have moved an applicant sooner.

★ Review findings

TA usage has increased both locally and nationally

Customers who need assistance have more complex needs

TA providers are becoming more reluctant to allow our customers to access

Councils are accessing TA provision outside their local authority boundaries

2.2 Local context

Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council's Corporate Plan (2013-16)

Newcastle Borough Council is committed to four corporate priorities within its Corporate Plan:

- A clean, safe & sustainable borough
- A borough of opportunity
- A healthy and active community
- A co-operative council delivering high value community driven services

The Homelessness Strategy is one of a number of strategies within the Authority that will deliver the Council's Corporate Plan.

The Newcastle Partnership

The Newcastle Partnership is the overarching strategic partnership for the borough; it was formerly the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and Community Safety Partnership. The vision for the partnership is '*Newcastle Communities together, securing a prosperous future*'.

In seeking to translate the Partnership's vision into a reality, a number of key outcomes have been identified: -

- People being part of an active, local community and involved in how public services are delivered
- People living, working and prospering in safe environments, free from crime and the causes of crime
- People having a supportive family life and a decent place to live
- People enjoying longer, healthier and more rewarding lives

The key objectives of the partnership are to:

- improve People's lives;
- improve the Places in which we live, work and visit and
- working together as Partners to achieve improvements.

The Partnership reviewed its structures as a result of national, regional and local changes to policy and process in 2012 and put two key priorities at the heart of the Partnership's work – delivering economic growth and tackling vulnerability.

★ Review findings

The Council has a wide range of overarching strategies that affect and impact upon the lives of the homeless or those who are at risk of homelessness. However few mention this in any detail.

Newcastle under Lyme's Housing Strategy

Newcastle's Housing Strategy (2011 -16) is the overarching document for all housing activity and investment in the borough by the Council and its partners.

The Council's vision for housing is to 'ensure that present and future residents of the Borough have greater choice in being able to live in a home that is affordable, in good condition and adequately meets their needs'.

The strategy has four strategic objectives;

1. To improve the sustainability of the local housing market
2. To prevent homelessness and ensure support is available to vulnerable people
3. To meet the decent homes standard by improving the condition and energy efficiency of homes across all tenures
4. To provide greater choice in housing in response to resident's needs.

The strategy sets out how these objectives have been prioritised and the action plan demonstrates how these objectives will be met. The Council is currently in the process of reviewing and developing a new Housing Strategy for the period of 2016 to 2021.

Newcastle under Lyme's Tenancy Strategy

The Tenancy Strategy sets out the type of social rented housing tenancies the borough expects Social housing providers to provide in Newcastle.

The Tenancy Strategy has the following four strategic aims:

- To encourage better use of existing housing stock to meet housing need in the Borough
- To tackle overcrowding and under occupation in social housing stock in the Borough
- To contribute to balanced, sustainable and cohesive communities within the Borough
- To protect and support vulnerable people who require housing in the Borough

2.3 Legal context

Local authorities have a duty to find accommodation for the homeless under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002. Under the 1996 Act, local authorities have responsibilities to those who they believe are either homeless or threatened with homelessness.

The statutory definition of homelessness was unaltered by the Homelessness Act 2002 and remains as that defined by the Homelessness Act 1996 s.175,

‘A person is homeless if he or she has no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere which is available for his or her occupation and which that person has a legal right to occupy. A person will also be homeless where he or she has accommodation but cannot secure entry to it, or where he or she has accommodation that is a moveable structure (such as a caravan or a house boat) and there is no place where it can be placed in order to provide accommodation. A person who has accommodation is to be treated as homeless where it would not be reasonable for him or her to continue to occupy it’

Also a person is considered to be threatened with homelessness if he or she is likely to become homeless within 28 days.

If a local authority has reason to believe that a person is homeless or threatened with homelessness, it is required to make enquiries and decide whether it owes the applicant a duty to find accommodation for them. In each case an assessment will take place to determine whether the applicant is actually homeless, eligible for assistance, in priority need and not intentionally homeless. If an applicant meets these criteria the authority has an immediate duty to provide temporary accommodation for them and anyone who normally resides with them.

Local authorities owe a lesser duty to applicants who are not in priority need or who are intentionally homeless. Local authorities may have a duty to provide them with advice and assistance in finding new accommodation. Information and advice about homelessness and housing options can be provided by the local authority and also external agencies. However it is essential that the advice and assistance provided is up to date, robust and will help with the strategic aim of preventing homelessness.

Where an applicant is threatened with homelessness and meets the above criteria, local authorities have a duty to take reasonable steps to ensure that the accommodation remains available for their occupation.

The Council fulfils its legal duty through Newcastle Housing Advice (NHA), which is a housing advice, options and homelessness service, delivered on behalf of the Council under contract by Midland Heart Ltd.

3. Homelessness in Newcastle

3.1 The Borough Profile

Newcastle under Lyme is part of the North West conurbation of North Staffordshire. It is the most populated borough in Staffordshire with a population of around 125,200 (2013 mid-year estimates) and has an area of 81 square miles. The two main towns within the borough are Newcastle under Lyme and Kidsgrove, there is also an extensive rural area in the West of the borough.

The industrial base of the borough has changed significantly in the last century with the closure of the mines and the development of distribution and manufacturing sectors. Service industries are now the largest employers in the area, with the number of people employed in water, energy and construction industries being higher than the national average. The presence of Keele University with the development of its innovation centres for small businesses, medical school and the growth of hi tech and research industries demonstrates the potential and vibrancy of the area. Newcastle town centre is recognised as being one of the strategically important centres in North Staffordshire, taking advantage of its good connections to major transport routes.

Overall the level of deprivation in the Borough is about average; the Borough has areas of considerable affluence, but also includes three areas that fall into the 10% most deprived in the Country.

The Borough is becoming a safer place to live, work and visit, with long-term crime rates falling over the last few years. Reports of anti-social behaviour have also been fallen steadily over the past four years. However, fear of crime remains a concern for residents despite falling crime rates.

Population

Population estimates for 2013 tell us that Newcastle's population has grown by around 2.6% per cent since 2001 and there are now an estimated 125,200 residents in the borough. The average age of the population is slightly higher than the national average and the population is ageing, with around 17% more residents aged 65 and over living in the borough than in 2001.

Population projections for Newcastle-under-Lyme from 2012 to 2021 suggest there will be a growth in the total population of 4.3%, (around 5,400 residents); this is lower than the expected growth across England of 7.7%. There will be a small increase in the number of children aged under 16 - 3.3% compared with 11.6% nationally and a projected growth in people aged 65 and over of 18.3% - slightly less than England (19.1%). The biggest increase will be amongst residents aged over 85. It is likely that there will be almost 37% more people in this age group by 2021. This increasing old-age dependency ratio will have wide ranging implications on the economy of the borough.

Economic Activity

The level of unemployment in Newcastle increased dramatically following the economic downturn of 2008, with rates peaking at 4.1% in April 2009. However, in line with the trend across the country, the rate of people claiming Job Seeker's Allowance has gradually fallen. In June 2014 the rate of unemployment stood at 1.9%, lower than the national average of 2.4%.

The economic downturn has had a significant effect on the number of jobs available in the borough. Between 2007 and 2011 the number of jobs fell by 4,000 or around 8.5%. However, figures for 2012 suggest that the number of jobs available in Newcastle has increased by around 1,600 compared to 2011.

Business start-up rates in Newcastle are relatively low, but survival rates for those that do get off the ground are relatively good.

The proportion of people claiming out of work benefits in Newcastle is slightly lower than the national and regional average; however there are areas in the Borough where these proportions are significantly higher. Worklessness due to ill health, particularly poor mental health, in some areas is a long-standing issue.

The 2011 Census tells us that the proportion of working age residents with no formal qualifications is around 27%. However the Office for National Statistics annual population survey for 2013 suggests that only around 10% of residents have no qualifications.

Despite falling unemployment rates overall, unemployment locally continues to disproportionately affect people aged between 16 -24. Currently this group accounts for around a quarter of JSA claimants in the borough. It is widely accepted that reducing the number of young people who are not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) within Newcastle is likely to result in positive outcomes around reducing the risks of homelessness, improved community safety, better health and an improved academic and vocation skills base. Between 2006 – 2007 and 2008 – 2009, the percentage of 16 – 18 year olds who were NEET in Newcastle reduced from 8.7% to 5.7%. The most recent data available shows that this percentage has fallen further and stands at 4.9% in December 2012. Currently, educational attainment in Newcastle is reasonable with average proportions of 16 year olds achieving five or more A*-C GCSEs.

In 2013 the average gross annual income for residents in the Borough was £24,769 and the average gross household income is around £34,600.

Number of dwellings and tenure

There are currently 54790 dwellings in Newcastle of which 9800 are Registered Provider stock, 449910 are within the owner occupied and private rented sector, 10 are owned by the local authority. (*source: number of dwellings by tenure, table 100 dwelling stock England 2013 www.gov.uk*).

Property condition

In 2008 the Housing Stock Condition Survey reviewed the levels of stock condition in the Borough. The survey estimated that 8,209 private sector dwellings exhibit Category 1 hazards; these are not evenly distributed throughout the Borough and tend to be more prevalent in the following areas: Newcastle Town Centre, Thistleberry, Cross Heath, Knutton, Silverdale, May Bank, Porthill, Wolstanton and Butt Lane.

Right to Buy

In 1980 the Housing Act gave tenants who rented local authority stock an opportunity to buy their homes. Between 2010 and 31st May 2014 there have been 77 Right to Buy sales in Newcastle under Lyme.

AFFORDABILITY

The Strategic Market Housing Assessment (SMHA) (2014) concluded that ‘Newcastle needs an estimated 163 affordable homes each year for the next five years to cover the existing backlog and meet current needs’.

Average house prices in Newcastle are nearly 7 times the average individual income.

Information from the Land Registry shows that between 1st April 2013 and 31st March 2014 the average house price for Newcastle was £162,085.

Area	Average Sold Price	Average Detached Price	Average Semi-Detached Price	Average Terraced Price	Average Flat / Maisonette Price
Borough Average	£162,085	£213,302	£145,315	£131,282	£80,418
Urban Average	£160,833	£196,665	£147,497	£129,219	£89,483
Newcastle	£173,311	£213,971	£158,943	£161,741	£81,068
Kidsgrove	£148,356	£179,399	£136,051	£96,696	£97,897
Rural Area	£189,977	£260,531	£154,184	£209,707	£79,050
Urban / Rural Mix	£152,739	£192,047	£115,743	£94,414	

Source: Land Registry

Renting

Renting from a Registered Provider

The table below illustrates the average weekly Registered Provider rent within Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Registered Provider Average Weekly Rents for Newcastle-under-Lyme				
2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
£54.85	£59.56	£60.89	£65.44	£70.64

Source: DCLG live tables 704

Aspire Housing is the largest registered provider within Newcastle. During 2013 Aspire owned and managed 8,458 residential properties, of which 91% are let at a social housing rent, 7% are designated for older people (including extra care) and 2% are let at affordable rents. The table below illustrates its average weekly rents per number of bedrooms.

Aspire Housing – Average Weekly Rent – April 2013	
Number of Bedrooms	Average Rents
Bed Sit	£68.86
1 Bedroom	£71.47
2 Bedrooms	£76.86
3 Bedrooms	£82.53
4 Bedrooms	£93.09
Overall Average	£77.32

Source: Aspire Annual report 2012-13

Note: figures are shown over 52 weeks – average rent over a 48 week is £83.76

The tables, in comparison to the private rented data shown further on in this review, demonstrate that renting from a social landlord is clearly still the most affordable tenure.

The affordability gap has increased the demand for affordable rented housing. The table below shows the number of households waiting for housing on the Joint Housing Register in Newcastle by bedroom requirement (excluding transfer applications);

Households on Joint Housing Register as 1st April by bedroom requirement						
	2009	2010*	2011	2012	2013	2014**
Households requiring 1 Bedroom	1322	1111	1356	1534	1161	1195
Households requiring 2 Bedrooms	975	423	504	590	528	498
Households requiring 3 Bedrooms	386	313	150	266	149	165
Households requiring more than 3 Bedrooms	88	47	128	54	42	41
Total	2771	1894	2138	2444	1880	1899

Source: Local authority housing statistics

*In 2010 the Joint Housing Register was reviewed as part of the introduction of Choice Based Lettings.

**Snapshot of Joint Housing Register as at Aug 2014

The table above illustrates that the highest demand on the register is for one and two bedroom properties.

The table below demonstrates that the number of registered provider dwellings let to households in response to a nomination has increased significantly between 2012 and 2013.

Number of Registered provider dwellings let to households in response to a nomination from NBC			
2011	2012	2013	2014
641	627	860	671

Source: Local Authority Housing Statistics

The information within the tables above also highlights that the numbers on the waiting list in the Borough far outweighs the number of relets per year of social housing stock.

The Private Rented Sector

The table below gives a summary of the average rents per property type for Newcastle under Lyme, the West Midlands and England between 1st April 2013 and 31st March 2014.

Type of Property	Newcastle Average Rent	West Midlands Average Rent	England Average Rent
1 Bed House	£408 Monthly £94 Weekly	£442 Monthly £102 Weekly	£606 Monthly £140 Weekly
2 Bed House	£474 Monthly £109 Weekly	£538 Monthly £124 Weekly	£677 Monthly £156 Weekly

3 Bed House	£552 Monthly £127 Weekly	£638 Monthly £147 Weekly	£771 Monthly £178 Weekly
4 Bed or more House	£764 Monthly £176 Weekly	£996 Monthly £230 Weekly	£1348 Monthly £311 Weekly

Source: Valuation Office Agency – June 2014

In comparison, the local housing allowance (LHA) is a flat rate of housing benefit for people who rent from private landlords and are entitled to assistance with their rent.

The table below illustrates the LHA for Newcastle in 2013, 2014 and 2015

	1 Bed shared	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
Weekly 2013	£48.10	£79.62	£91.25	£109.62	£144.23
Weekly 2014	£50.02	£80.00	£91.15	£109.62	£138.46
Weekly 2015	£52.02	£80.55	£90.90	£109.32	£139.84

Source: LHA rates-NBC website

The data indicates that for many households who are in receipt of benefits or are working but on low incomes finding affordable accommodation in the private sector may still be difficult.

★ Review findings

There are less social rented homes available and an increasing need to rely on the private sector. This may influence our ability to give people a wide housing choice.

3.2 Current Levels of Homelessness

Levels and natures of Statutory Homelessness

On a regular basis, the Council collates a wide range of statistics relating to all aspects of homelessness in the Borough. From this data the Council reports its findings to a number of sources. On a national level the Council is required to submit to the DCLG on a quarterly basis statistics relating to approaches made to them by homeless applicants. These statistics are known as the P1E returns. They provide data on people who have approached the Council and following enquires have been deemed to be eligible, homeless, in priority need and not intentionally homeless (this is termed as the number of acceptances). The data also includes the number of decisions made, the main reasons for homelessness, a breakdown of the priority need categories and the numbers in temporary accommodation.

The P1E returns give a useful insight into the levels and nature of homelessness within the Borough; however it must be remembered that the figures only account for people who approach the Council and not the other services that operate in the Borough. In addition, it needs to be noted that the vast amount of homelessness prevention work that takes place in the Borough should lead to a reduction in the numbers reported on the P1E. All people who approach Newcastle Housing Advice who are in housing need or facing homelessness will see a Housing Advisor to discuss the range of options available to them. Wherever possible, the Advisor will work with the individuals to prevent the homelessness occurring either by working with them to find alternative accommodation, referring them to partner organisations for support and assistance or accessing one of the homelessness prevention schemes which operate in the Borough.

Homelessness Decisions

The table and chart below show the number of decisions in the past 5 years.

	Eligible, unintentionally homeless & In Priority Need	Eligible in Priority Need but Intentional	Eligible Homeless but in no Priority Need	Eligible but not homeless	Ineligible households	Total
2014	11	13	71	8	3	106
2013	18	18	41	20	1	98
2012	11	11	8	6	1	37
2011	6	11	10	14	3	44
2010	7	7	6	16	0	36
2009	18	13	6	16	4	57

Source: NULBC Contract Monitoring Stats

The table shows that between 2009 and 2010 the total number of homeless households owed a duty decreased. In 2011 the total numbers began to increase, and whilst 2012 showed a small reduction, in 2014 the total number of homeless households rose to 106. It is worth noting if a person is deemed to be non-priority or intentionally homeless, the Council does not owe a duty to provide accommodation, however the Council recognises these groups of people should not remain homeless and there is still the need to provide them with advice and assistance.

The table below shows the level of activity carried out by NHA over the past five years.

Activity	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/14
Telephone Enquiries	34449	15307	12175	14341	10229
Reception Enquiries	1970	4970	5553	6650	3286
NHA Homelessness Enquiries	1283	449	457	1299	106
Interviews (by appointment)	737	668	587	456	639
Interviews (walk ins)	94	97	90	67	162
Homeless Decisions	64	40	47	39	99
Number Placed in temporary accommodation	32	26	19	2	12

Source: NULBC Contract Monitoring Stats

When considering this information compared to the number of homeless decisions, a significant number of people are also being assisted through the housing options route. The tables below show how many housing advice enquires there have been in Newcastle compared to homelessness decisions made over the past six years.

	Quarter 1		Quarter 2		Quarter 3		Quarter 4	
	Enquiries	Decisions	Enquiries	Decisions	Enquiries	Decisions	Enquiries	Decisions
2012/13	358	6	311	7	287	9	363	11
2011/12	121	11	145	15	72	10	119	11
2010/11	100	11	123	7	80	11	146	11
2009/10	242	26	352	12	319	13	370	13

Source: NULBC Contract Monitoring Stats

	Quarter 1		Quarter 2		Quarter 3		Quarter 4	
	Applications	Decisions	Applications	Decisions	Applications	Decisions	Applications	Decisions
2014/15	36	29	28	26	36	28	31	19
2013/14	31	21	25	21	35	34	25	34

Source: NULBC Contract Monitoring Stats

* From 2013/14 the information for decisions was recorded from a customer making a full homelessness application.

The statistics show that there has been an increase in the decisions over the past five years, which has risen significantly over the past two years. This increase is in line with an increase nationally and can be attributed to a number of factors, including impacts from the introduction of the Localism Act, welfare reforms and a decrease in the resources for support and access to accommodation, especially for customers with complex needs.

★ Review findings

2013/15 has shown an increase in the number of homeless decisions the service has made.

Consideration needs to be given as to whether the new strategy can realistically address the needs of all homeless and potentially homeless people within the borough.

3.3 Who becomes homeless?

The tables below illustrate the age, household type and ethnicity breakdown of those people who have been accepted as homeless in Newcastle.

Age

The majority of those accepted as homeless fall within the age group of 25 – 44 year olds. The number of homeless acceptances for 16 to 24 year olds increased in 2013 as did acceptances for those aged 45-59 years. Part of this increase may reflect the lack of opportunity to prevent homelessness through the provision of alternative accommodation for single people who may have been affected by welfare reforms.

	2010		2011		2012		2013	
Age	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
16-24	2	22%	1	17%	1	10%	3	22%
25-44	4	44%	5	83%	10	90%	7	50%
45-59	1	12%	0	0%	0	0%	3	22%
60-64	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
65-74	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
75 & Over	2	22%	0	0%	0	0%	1	6%
Total	9	100%	6	100%	11	100%	14	100%

Source: NULBC Contract Monitoring Stats

Household Type	2010		2011		2012		2013	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Couple with or expecting dependant children	0	0%	5	83%	2	20%	0	0%
Lone parent (male) household with or	1	14%	0	0%	0	0%	4	18%

expecting dependant children								
Lone parent (female) household with or expecting dependant children	4	57%	0	0%	5	50%	6	27%
One person household (male)	0	0%	1	17%	2	20%	4	18%
One person household (female)	2	29%	0	0%	1	10%	6	27%
All other household groups	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	10%
TOTAL	7	100%	6	100%	10	100%	22	100%

Source: NULBC Contract Monitoring Stats

As the data shows the more than half of the households accepted as homeless by Newcastle over the past four years are lone females either with or without children, over the past three years the data also shows an increase in the number of lone males with or without children.

Ethnicity

Ethnic Group	2010		2011		2012		2013	
	No	%	No	%	No	100%	No	100%
White	32	88%	43	98%	34	92%	93	95%
Black or Black British	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Asian or Asian British	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Mixed	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	3	3%
Other ethnic group	0	0%	1	2%	3	8%	2	2%
Not Stated	4	12%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
TOTAL	36	100%	44	100%	37	100%	98	100%

Source: NULBC Contract Monitoring Stats

Data collected on the ethnicity of priority need homeless households suggested that the proportion of household found to be in priority need that has been recorded as belonging to a black or minority ethnic group (BME) is less proportionate to the percentage of BME households in Newcastle. This can be partially explained due to the Borough having 'affluent' pockets of ethnicity, which have not historically required the Council's homelessness services. However a full Equality Impact Assessment will be completed before the Homelessness Strategy is published.

Reasons for Priority Need

Priority Need	2010	2011	2012	2013
Dependent Children	4	5	7	7
Household includes a pregnant women and there are no other dependent children	1	0	0	0
Applicant aged 16 /17 years	0	0	0	0
Vulnerable – having fled the home because of threat of violence	2	0	1	5
Vulnerable – mental illness or disability	0	1	2	3

Applicant formerly in care and aged 18 to 20 years old	0	0	1	1
Homelessness due to emergency (fire or flood etc)	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	2
Total	7	6	11	18

Source: NULBC Contract Monitoring Stats

The table shows that the majority of priority need homeless households are those with dependent children. This reflects that when children are part of the household, the household will automatically be placed in priority need. The numbers of homeless households with children has also increased over the past four years.

The numbers also demonstrate an increase in the number of people in priority need who are vulnerable. This reflects messages we are receiving from stakeholders that they too are experiencing about the increased levels of vulnerability in their customers.

Finally it is worth noting, that many households may fall into more than one priority need category but for the purposes of P1E recording, which is where these figures are taken from, households are only recorded against the main priority need category.

Why do people become homeless?

The table below reports upon the main reasons for loss of settled accommodation for applicants found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need in Newcastle.

Reason	2010		2011		2012		2013	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Parents / Relatives / Friends no longer able / willing to accommodate	1	14%	2	33%	1	10%	2	11%
Non Violent Relationship Breakdown	0	0%	0	0%	1	10%	0	0%
Loss of rented or tied accommodation	1	14%	0	0%	1	10%	1	5%
Other forms of violence	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Domestic Violence	4	57%	1	17%	4	30%	12	78%
Harassment	0	0%	1	17%	0	0%	1	5%
Mortgage Arrears	1	15%	0	0%	1	10%	0	0%
Rent arrears on private sector dwellings	0	0%	0	0%	2	20%	0	0%
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Other Reasons	0	0%	2	33%	1	10%	2	11%
Total	7	100%	6	100%	11	100%	18	100%

Source: NULBC Contract Monitoring Stats

The causes of homelessness in Newcastle do reflect the national main causes of parental / relatives / friends no longer willing / able to accommodate and the loss of rented or tied accommodation (termination of assured tenancy). However the figures evidence that in the past four years Domestic Violence has been the main cause of homelessness for residents

in Newcastle. The figures also show that there is a small number of those accepted as homeless are homeless as a result of mortgage arrears or lost tenancies due to rent areas.

It should be noted that the number of statutory applications and decisions do not reflect the levels of potential homelessness in the Borough; many customers assisted through NHA are prevented from becoming homeless without the need for a homelessness application. Also of those who do make an application, some may be refused assistance based upon not meeting the eligibility criteria laid down in legislation.

★ Review findings

Not all NHA customers will make a statutory homelessness application and many potential homelessness cases are prevented due to the actions and assistance from the team

Housing Benefit Information

The Housing Benefit Department (HB) fulfils two major functions with regard to homelessness prevention, the provision of subsidy to enable people to afford their rented homes and the provision of discretionary housing payments to prevent hardship by covering a shortfall between benefit levels and rent.

Delays in HB payments, problems with under and over payments and failures to renew claims create rent arrears, which can result in evictions. In Newcastle the HB team works to process HB claims swiftly with a three week target. In addition the team works closely with officers from the Council's Housing Strategy Team and Officers at NHA, which further reduces the likelihood of claimant problems.

The housing benefit provision for private rented and social housing tenants is different in so much as for private tenants the provision is known as the Local Housing Allowance (LHA), which is paid to the tenant rather than the landlord for all but the most vulnerable tenants. This was designed to encourage a greater level of tenant responsibility and greater certainty over what they will be expected to pay.

The LHA does open the risk of tenants defaulting on rent payments, although the scheme does allow for direct payments to be made to landlords for tenants who are unable to manage their finances or fall into arrears. The Council is working with various partners to ensure that where those customers are considered to be at risk (e.g. many of those who receive housing support services) will have their LHA paid direct to the landlord.

Discretionary Housing Payments are used by the Benefits Team at Newcastle to can assist those who might otherwise suffer hardship, including homelessness. These are considered on a case by case basis. The Council's budget for the financial year 2013-2014 was £135,044 of which £124,878.63 was spent.

The NHA team work closely with the Council's housing benefit team in order to prevent homelessness and the application of discretionary Housing Benefit payments.

Mortgage and Landlord Possessions

It is apparent that activity for mortgage repossessions has fallen and is on a downward trend. However, this is in contrast to the legal actions sought by landlords, which has shown an increase in numbers.

The tables below show the number of mortgage possession and landlord claims leading to orders made in Newcastle under Lyme and the comparative tables for the West Midlands and the national figures.

Newcastle under Lyme	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Annual Mortgage Claims for Possession	167	128	126
Annual Mortgage orders for possession	138	102	250
Annual Landlord Claims for Possession	193	234	250
Total Claims for Possession	360	362	379
Total Orders for Possession	279	269	268

Source: Ministry of justice court possession statistics online

West Midlands	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Annual Mortgage Claims for Possession	7,871	6,317	6,063
Annual Mortgage orders for possession	5,799	4,665	4,293
Annual Landlord Claims for Possession	13,237	14,405	14,804
Annual Landlord Orders for Possession	9,574	9,949	10,015
Total Claims for Possession	21,108	20,722	20,867
Total Order for Possession	15,373	14,613	14,308

Source: Ministry of justice court possession statistics online

National	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Annual Mortgage Claims for Possession	67,890	55,473	53,162
Annual Mortgage orders for possession	51,183	41,040	38,658
Annual Landlord Claims for Possession	136,372	144,952	148,838
Annual Landlord Orders for Possession	93,606	98,917	101,310
Total Claims for Possession	204,262	200,425	202,000
Total Order for Possession	144,789	139,957	139,968

Source: Ministry of justice court possession statistics online

The Council and Partners have developed a number of initiatives to respond effectively as possible to the economic downturn. The steps taken include:

- Implementing the Government's Mortgage Rescue Scheme.
- Developing in partnership with Aspire housing a specific Money Advice drop in service to prevent homelessness.
- Writing to each household in Newcastle where proceedings for possession of the property have commenced, to offer advice and assistance.

However, despite measures to ensure that repossession is the very last resort for lenders, there is the fear that when that interest rates have remained at an all-time low may have helped some borrowers to afford repayments and once interest rates begin to increase again, this may result in affordability issues for further people.

★ Review findings

At present interest rates are low, any upward changes may impact on both home owners and buy to let landlords

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4. Preventing Homelessness and Meeting Housing Need

The adoption of the homelessness prevention ethos has had a considerable impact on the homelessness work in the Borough. A prevention centred approach means a pro-active rather than a reactive approach with increased emphasis on networking, negotiation and creativity.

4.1 Homelessness Services in Newcastle

Newcastle Housing Advice Service (NHA)

The homeless legislation places a duty on the Council to provide up-to-date, advice and assistance to our residents, not only about housing options but also on the broad range of factors that can contribute to homelessness. Reasons for housing need and homelessness can be due to a range of environmental and personal circumstances.

The Code of Guidance states that the duty to provide advice can be fulfilled by the local authority or through another agency on their behalf. Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council has fulfilled its duty to provide advice and assistance through the Newcastle Housing Advice Service (NHA).

The NHA service is delivered by Midland Heart Ltd under a contract for the Council to deliver homelessness, housing advice and housing register services to residents of the Borough. The current service contract is for a period of three years with the option for a further three year extension subject to satisfactory performance and funding. The current contract commenced on 1st April 2014.

The service offers customers advice and assistance in enabling them to remain in their homes or to assist with moves into more suitable and sustainable accommodation by offering a range of housing options. Advice is provided regardless of priority and intentionality and tailored towards the needs of the customer. This approach enables all alternative options to be explored and wherever possible resulting in the prevention of homelessness. If it is inevitable that the homelessness will not be able to be prevented the service will take a formal homeless application and carry out investigations as to whether they are eligible for assistance under the homelessness legislation.

The service operates 37 hours per week from premises within Newcastle town centre and operates an emergency out of hour's service at all other times. NHA offers the following services:

- General Housing Advice
- Specialist advice and assistance on tenancy law and security of tenure
- General Benefits advice
- Access to homelessness prevention schemes
- Referrals to specialist support providers
- Assistance in accessing accommodation
- Homes Direct (online housing options advice toolkit and online registration system for the housing register)
- Links to private sector assistance and adaptations of home
- Money advice

The Council works with Midland Heart to regularly review the service to ensure that it remains responsive and effective focusing on prevention and early intervention.

★ Review findings

It should be noted that all the staff within the team have been in post for a number of years and have amassed valuable knowledge and expertise. It is clear that the team show passion and commitment towards tackling the issue of homelessness and those affected by it.

The NHA service is a busy service, responding to the growing demand for housing advice and assistance.

There are also a range of agencies that provide services in the borough that complement the work of NHA. Some of these services receive funding from the Council to assist service delivery.

Commissioning in Newcastle

For many years a commissioning framework has been in place for Council commissioned services. The framework ensures that the Council receives outcome-led, value-for-money, services from the organisations that better meet the Council's priorities while providing a fair and transparent funding allocation process.

There are three key objectives: -

1. To make better use of Council resources
2. To provide a transparent and equitable process for the Voluntary and Community (Third Sector) and Private Sector to access funding
3. To deliver against the Council's Corporate Priorities and the Sustainable Community Strategy Priorities

Newcastle Partnership Commissioning

In an attempt to deal with the ongoing reductions in funding, the Council recognises that more can be achieved collectively by partnership working than individually. Therefore work has taken place to develop the commissioning role within the Newcastle Partnership. In 2015 the partnership took over the role of commissioning services which were previously delivered by the Council's third sector commissioning process.

There are three homelessness prevention services that are commissioned via the Newcastle partnership. These services enrich the main NHA service by providing bespoke homelessness assistance and prevention services for specific client groups.

These are:

Young Person's Homelessness Prevention

The service aims to prevent homelessness amongst young people by delivering a homeless prevention education programme and providing short term tenancy support. The programme enables young people to learn about the realities of homelessness and how it may impact on their lives. It aims to encourage young people to think about their future move from home as being part of a planned journey into adult life and not a crisis response to immediate problems. The short term support works towards equipping young people with the necessary skills to maintain a tenancy and to broaden the housing opportunities available to young

people. The service is currently known as Independence First and delivered by Arch North Staffs.

Furniture Re-use

The Furniture Re-use service provides recycled furniture to people from the Borough who may have been re-housed through the statutory homelessness service and are in need of furniture to able them to live in a property. The service plays a significant role in the prevention of homelessness because being able to furnish a property helps to sustain a tenancy and therefore prevent the reoccurrence of homelessness. The organisation currently delivering this contract is The Furniture Mine is the organisation which currently provides this service on behalf of the Council.

Homelessness Prevention Debt and Financial Advice Service

The Homelessness prevention debt and financial advice service is available to customers approaching our NHA service who are experiencing financial hardship and will benefit from assistance given when their debt situation is putting their home at risk. This includes both residents who rent accommodation and are home owners in the borough.

The current debt and money advice service is being delivered by the Income Maximisation Team within Aspire Housing. The service is an extremely valuable homelessness prevention tool for the Council, especially in the current financial climate.

Joint Commissioning with Stoke on Trent City Council

The Rough Sleepers Outreach Service

In 2011, Cabinet gave approval for Officers to embark on a joint commissioning process with Stoke on Trent City Council to combine the resources from both local authorities and develop a service which meets the needs of both authority areas whilst maximising efficiencies. Following a robust re-tendering exercise, Brighter Futures Housing Association currently delivers the service across the two authority areas.

The service operates in line with NSNO principles and responds to reports of rough sleepers. The sessions provide advice and guidance for rough sleepers on what options are available to help to secure accommodation and support services for them. The service plays a key role in helping people get off the streets and is the key partner in the delivery of the rough sleepers 'winter provision' service that local authorities have a responsibility to provide.

Following the success of the first jointly commissioned rough sleeper's outreach service, the service is currently being re-commissioned again in partnership with Stoke on Trent City Council.

Voluntary Organisation Homelessness Grants below the value of £5000

Any grants provided by the Council to voluntary organisations that are for a value less than £5000, are administered through the Council's Grant's Assessment Panel. The Panel considers the applications in line with the Council's priorities. Through this process, the Council currently funds three services which contribute to homelessness prevention. These are:

Elizabeth House – DV helpline

Elizabeth House is situated in the Borough and provides emergency and temporary accommodation to women and their children who have experienced domestic violence and

they are unable to remain in their previous accommodation. The Council provides funding which contributes to the costs of operating a 24 hr DV helpline.

Gingerbread – refuge

Gingerbread provides residential and non-residential housing and tenancy advice to vulnerable lone parent families and single pregnant women who may be at risk of becoming homeless. The funding provided by the Council enables Gingerbread to provide a service to Newcastle residents, who meet their eligibility criteria.

Arch North Staffs – private sector housing options

Arch North Staffs has a wealth of experience working within the Private rented sector in North Staffordshire and the grant's assessment panel has agreed to fund a Private Rented Sector Project Officer for 5 hours each week. The Officer will work closely with Newcastle Housing Advice Staff in order to extend the current offer within the private rented sector in the Borough for our customers.

In line with improvements to other areas of commissioning and the provision of funding within the Council, consideration will be given as to how any further funding which may become available will be commissioned.

Shropshire & Staffordshire Homelessness Partnership

Shared Housing Pilot for under 35 year olds

Through the partnership the Council has benefited from the development and delivery of the Shared Accommodation Pilot for under 35 year olds. The partnership commissioned a service to be developed which would provide support and assistance to people aged 34 and under in obtaining and managing shared tenancies. The Service would also deliver a matching service for both tenants and landlords and work with landlords to ensure that the accommodation used is of a high standard. The service has been provided by Arch North Staffs and it has been a resounding success, Arch are currently exploring ways to continue and develop the service now that the original funding streams are coming to an end.

Homelessness Prevention schemes and services

In order to successfully prevent homelessness before crisis occurs, the Council needs to have various options available that they can offer to customers.

The use of prevention initiatives is proven to be far more cost effective than reactive responses to crisis situations. The challenge for the Council is to find the right balance between the need to make immediate savings in services and investment in measures which will result in long term savings.

Deposit Guarantee Scheme

The scheme operates by the Council guaranteeing the value of the rent deposit with the private landlord for two years and reimbursing the landlord if any damage occurs during the two year tenancy period. The scheme has been in operation for a number of years and has enabled customers to access private rented accommodation, who otherwise would have been at risk of homelessness due to them being unable to access the amount of money required for a rent deposit.

During the period of the current strategy, the number of customers accessing a deposit guarantee has fallen dramatically compared to previous years where this particular scheme was deemed to be the council's most successful homelessness prevention scheme.

An issue that had previously been identified was that the Council guarantee's the tenancy for two years with the expectation that the tenant should have saved the equivalent amount to replace the deposit amount when the two year period is complete. In response to this, the council amended the scheme to include the requirement that the customer must have a bank account to enable saving, in order to be eligible for the deposit. If customers did not already have a bank account it would be necessary for them to set one up. The Council had made arrangements that customers could arrange for an account with the Staffordshire Credit Union. The aim of stipulating the requirement of an account was not only to encourage customers to save for their deposit, but also to improve the financial inclusion options for customers, unfortunately after introducing this step, the take up of the scheme has dropped and staff at NHA believe that the requirement of a registering with the Credit Union is a factor in the decline. The Council has therefore removed the requirement to register with the Credit Union.

★ Review findings

Take up of Deposit Guarantee has fallen

Some landlords would prefer a cash deposit over a guarantee

Tenants are not saving for the deposit during the Council's two year guarantee period

Some landlords have indicated that they do not intend to let to customers in receipt of Universal Credit

Despite removing the requirement to join the Staffordshire Credit Union if customers do not have a bank account, take up numbers are still low.

Rent Guarantee

In addition to the requirement for customers to provide a deposit when accessing private rented accommodation, it is also usual practice for private landlords to request at least four weeks rent in advance before considering someone for their property. This adds to the financial burden for our customers, so the Council has agreed to guarantee the rent for a four week period, in a similar process as the deposit guarantee. The take up of the rent guarantee has declined since previous years.

★ Review findings

Take up of the Rent Guarantee scheme has fallen

Some landlords would prefer cash over a guarantee for rent

One off payment fund

This scheme enables one off payments to be made which will assist in the prevention of someone becoming homeless. Cases are considered on an individual basis and Advisers at NHA are given the opportunity to be innovative and flexible in how this funding is spent, as long as the outcome is the prevention of homelessness. Previous examples as to how this has been used are to cover the cost of removal fee's or a credit reference check, which will enable someone to move into a property.

During the period of the current strategy, the Council has now incorporated into the one off payment fund, the budget for mediation and legal advice services. If a customer will benefit from either mediation or legal advice, these services will now be spot purchased on an individual customer basis as opposed to the council commissioning a particular provider to offer these services.

Also during the period of the current strategy, a robust review of the Council's Sanctuary scheme was conducted. Following the review the decision was made to end the scheme in its current format and deliver some of the original schemes objectives with lower level target hardening works. This work is now also delivered through the one off payment fund.

★ Review findings

The One of Payment fund is currently underutilised with funds remaining at the end of the financial year

Homelessness Prevention Loans

The homelessness prevention fund has been used to prevent homelessness in the form of the provision of interest free loans, repayments are then recycled back into the fund. It is delivered by the Staffordshire Credit Union in partnership with NHA and the debt advice service. The aim of the service was to provide an interest free loan to customers who may alternatively have struggled to obtain a required sum of money needed to purchase or pay for something which would prevent them being at risk of homelessness. Examples of what the fund has been used for in the past have been to assist in the repayment of rent arrears and to clear a pay day loan. It was also the intention of the scheme to introduce customers to the Credit Union who may have previously experienced financial exclusion or turned to loan sharks as methods of obtaining sums of money. Unfortunately, there has been very little take-up of the fund. The fund has an eligibility criterion which includes a financial assessment of a customer's income and expenditure to ensure that the customer has the means to pay back the loan at 0%. Through the eligibility process we have found that a number of customers who would benefit from accessing a homelessness prevention loan have such tight income and expenditures that a three year loan at 0% is still unsustainable

★ Review findings

Customers are unable to afford homeless prevention loans, even at zero APR

4.3 Supply of Accommodation

The provision of new housing and other affordable options can in certain circumstances help people to address their housing issues / needs at an earlier stage thus preventing homelessness. However as the evidence in this Review highlights the demand for housing continues to increase at a faster rate than the supply of affordable housing options.

There has been a decrease in property development in the Borough, both in the private and social sectors of the housing market. It is therefore essential that the Council looks at every possible opportunity available to increasing access to long term accommodation in the Borough. One area of work is that of bringing empty homes back into use. Empty homes represent waste, financial expense and missed opportunity. They can blight communities, attract fly tipping and vandals and tie up the resources of the Council and the emergency services. Bringing empty homes back into use is a sustainable way to contributing to meet future housing demand.

The Council's Private Sector Housing Team in line with the Council's Empty Home's Strategy work hard to bring long term empty homes back into use. In 2014/15, a total of 322 empty homes including 66 long term empty homes have been brought back into use through Council intervention.

Emergency and 'short term' Temporary Accommodation

The Council is not only faced with supply issues in the 'permanent' housing market but also in the provision of temporary accommodation. Despite the prevention work delivered in the Borough, there are still instances where people do become homeless and the Council has a statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation, either whilst investigations are being carried out or a more permanent housing solution is found. For example, the Council has a statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation for eligible homeless families, until their homeless duty ends. The accommodation also needs to be suitable for the needs of the household and it is nationally recognised that families should not be placed in B&B accommodation for longer than 6 weeks.

In some emergency situations, the Council has to use B&B style accommodation; however it will where possible avoid it for more suitable alternatives. The Council fully acknowledges that B&B accommodation it is not the most user friendly option for households faced with homelessness, particularly if they have children.

Historically the Council has been extremely successful in preventing the need for temporary accommodation when discharging its duties to homeless households. However, after a long period of minimal bed and breakfast and temporary accommodation usage, the trends are reversing, during 2013 the numbers in temporary accommodation have begun to rise and the Council has accommodated 42 households in temporary accommodation compared to 14 households in 2012.

Work has been carried out to try and find hotels within Newcastle willing to accommodate homeless households on a more regular basis. However many of the businesses contacted in Newcastle are smaller, family-run businesses and are not set up to manage the clients placed through the homeless service, who are often vulnerable or present with challenging circumstances.

The table below shows the breakdown of the type of household assisted and the average length of stay for each year.

Category	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Single Person households	26	10	17	12	36
Two person households, no children	2	0	2	0	2
One or two person households with children	6	5	9	2	4
Total Households	34	15	28	14	42
Average length of stay (nights)	15.5	4	9	6	15

★ Review findings

It is getting increasingly more difficult to source emergency accommodation due to various accommodation providers not wishing to accommodate our customers.

We have placed customers in temporary accommodation who have then misbehaved themselves, this has resulted in certain providers refusing to accommodate any more of our customers

The emergency accommodation available to NHA is in high demand due a number of North Staffordshire agencies using it for their customers

The introduction of Universal Credit may have an impact upon the future choices we have for TA options for certain customers

In emergency situations despite our desire not to we may have to place young people in emergency accommodation.

Permanent – sustainable accommodation

Home ownership has been increasingly more difficult and this has led to increased demand for social and affordable housing options.

Homes Direct - Choice Based Lettings

The Housing Register is composed of households seeking housing association rented accommodation as well as existing housing association tenants seeking to transfer. The housing register comprises of many different household groups including single people, childless couples, families with children and elderly people. Households are registered in accordance with their housing needs and based upon their household size and type. The housing register is managed by NHA.

The Council's choice based lettings (CBL) scheme known as Homes Direct, allows those on the housing register to search and bid for available properties. The scheme is managed by NHA according to the Council's Allocation's Policy.

Preventing homelessness through allocations, the council can't reward re-housing priority to every household that is at risk of homelessness, however the Allocation's policy does provide alternatives to making a homeless approach for households in need. The Allocation's policy gives priority for households that are severely overcrowded, living with significant disrepair or has a move on priority from planned moves from home or supported housing schemes.

The Council also has nomination rights of at least 50% from all registered providers in the Borough. This is a system whereby partner social housing providers inform NHA of a vacancy and suitable applicants are nominated from the housing register. The type of accommodation that is nominated depends upon the stock that has become available from the social housing provider.

Housing Allocation's Policy

Under Part V1 of the Housing Act 1996 local authorities are required to have an Allocations policy and procedure in place to allocate social housing and under Part V11 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by Homelessness Act 2002) to make provision for homeless households. Therefore alongside the housing register, the Council's Allocations Policy outlines how an applicants' housing need will be assessed and prioritised against other applicants and the mechanism for letting social housing in the borough.

In 2010 at the beginning of our third homelessness strategy the Council had a joint allocations policy with Aspire Housing, the largest social housing provider in the Borough. In 2012 the Allocations Policy was reviewed to take into account some changes that had been introduced in legislation. In addition to this, Housing Officers together with Aspire Housing identified further amendments which needed to be made to the policy following the introduction of Homesdirect and the introduction of Aspire Housing's own Allocation Policy for the 25% of properties that are not let through Homesdirect. The Allocation Policy Review has been completed and approved by cabinet in March 2015. The revised policy is due to go live in September 2015. We are confident that the review has resulted in a policy which is robust and reflects the current and future local environment for social housing.

Demand for Housing

A snapshot at the beginning of April 2015, highlighted that there were a total of 1437 applicants registered on the Homesdirect Housing Register. Of these 993 were waiting list applicants and 444 were existing housing association tenants seeking a transfer to alternative housing.

The Private Rented Sector

The private rented sector offers an alternative source of accommodation that can prevent homelessness. By taking into account the needs and aspirations of both landlords and households, working with the private rented sector can help to avoid homelessness and provide more settled homes for those in insecure accommodation. The demand for private rented properties is high in Newcastle, which means that low income / benefit dependant households may be in competition with working people for the same properties. More people are also turning to the sector since mortgages have become more difficult to obtain. Nevertheless the Council believes that working with the private rented sector is essential in order to increase housing opportunities for our customers.

Nationally there are approximately 22.4 million homes in the PRS and over 1.4 million landlords (CIH Housing in the west midlands July 2013). In the West Midlands the sector has increased although it still remains smaller than the social housing sector. The tenure provides a huge range in terms of costs and standards, 40 per cent were built prior to 1919, and therefore are more likely to fail to meet modern standards (37 per cent failed the decent homes standard in 2010). There are accreditation schemes which help to raise standards and support landlords. Newcastle is part of the North Staffordshire landlord's forum

Discharging the Homelessness Duty into the Private Rented Sector

The Localism Act introduced a new power that allows Local Authorities to meet their statutory homelessness duty by providing good quality privately rented homes.

Past homelessness legislation enabled homeless households to refuse offers of accommodation in the private rented sector and insist that they should be housed in temporary accommodation until a long-term social home becomes available.

Following approval of the Council's Strategic Tenancy Strategy, cabinet members supported the notion that where appropriate and by no means to the detriment of the household, Newcastle could use this power to discharge its homelessness duty into the private rented sector.

Whilst this option offers an alternative solution for people experiencing homelessness in Newcastle, the power comes with a number of duties and responsibilities for the Council. These were set out by Government in the suitability of accommodation order

The Council sees improving access to private rented properties, as part of the wider homelessness prevention agenda, rather than specifically for the new power to discharge our homelessness duty.

The private rented sector offers an additional source of good quality accommodation across the borough and working with private landlords can therefore not only help to avoid homelessness but also provide an alternative housing option for those in housing need.

At present the Council assists customers to access accommodation into the private rented sector, via the Rent Deposit and rent in advance guarantee schemes. As mentioned already in this review, these schemes provide a financial guarantee to landlords and letting agents (instead of a cash deposit) to enable households to secure privately rented accommodation.

In the past the two schemes have been an effective homelessness prevention tool for the Council, however, as this review has already highlighted, the number of households assisted through the scheme has fallen significantly over the past 12 to 18 months.

It is thought that this is the result of a number of factors which include:

- The policy requirement for customers to join the Staffordshire Credit Union
- It is becoming more difficult for customers to find properties that are affordable and within the LHA rates
- There is an increased demand for private sector stock from other groups of people, who in the past would have gone into home ownership

★ Review findings

Access to the private rented sector is crucial in both addressing and preventing homelessness

There is competition for properties in the private rented sector.

Some Private Landlords are unwilling or have no need to let to customers who seek assistance from NHA

Landlords must feel confident that there will be support available should tenancies start to fail

There are many properties in the private rented sector which are unaffordable

Landlords have raised concerns regarding the introduction of UC and housing costs no longer being paid direct to the landlord

Assistance and incentives are fundamental in enabling better access to the PRS in Newcastle, however the current service has limits on capacity on the work that can be done.

Supporting Vulnerable People

A vulnerable person is someone who is or may be in need of services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and / or who is unable to take care of themselves against harm or exploitation. Such vulnerability can mean that people have a greater risk of homelessness for either short or long periods of their lives.

Young people (including those leaving care)

Young people who are experiencing homeless issues are an extremely vulnerable group, who may have often encountered educational and / or family disruption, violence at home, and mental health and / or substance misuse issues. A high proportion may also not be in education, employment or training. It is clear that providing accommodation alone is not the sole solution for this group as their needs go far beyond a simply a roof over their head.

Historically, the Council has had a duty to house 16 & 17 year olds affected by homelessness who were defined as children, under the Children (leaving Care) Act 2000 as they have a priority need when it came to assessing their homelessness situation. However in 2009 case law (G v LB Southwark 2009) 16 & 17 year olds are now defined as being the responsibility of Children's Services and may fall under the criteria of the Children's Act 1989. This means that if found to be in need, the 16 / 17 year will be become the

responsibility of Children's services and be assisted as a 'child in need' rather than under homelessness legislation.

Despite the Southwark judgement work is still ongoing between the council, partner authorities and the Children's services at County in order to develop an effective process for jointly assessing the housing and support needs of this group to ensure that they receive prompt assistance to remedy their homelessness issues.

The risk of homelessness does not however only affect 16 & 17 year olds, young people with or without children and on low incomes can be particularly vulnerable to homelessness and its consequences. They have restricted access to the private rented sector due to local housing allowance eligibility rules. This may be exacerbated further if the young person is trying to complete studies or training.

★ Review findings

It is becoming increasingly more difficult to access accommodation specifically for young people, who seek assistance at NHA

During the period of the last strategy, Newcastle saw the closure of its only supported accommodation for young people, due to County Council funding cuts

Due to funding criteria in Stoke on Trent access into the North Staffordshire YMCA is extremely limited.

The LHA rates have led to a reduction in the availability of properties for younger people, as the shared room rate was increased to 35 years

People at risk of Domestic Violence

Domestic abuse can affect women, men and children. The abuse may be physical or psychological, causing severe harm. The principle consideration for most escaping violence is to find safety. For many this may mean leaving the family home as they no longer feel it is a safe place to be. Newcastle has a well-established multi agency response to domestic violence.

Arch North Staffs – Elizabeth House Refuge

Elizabeth House provides 15 bed spaces for women and children (boys must be under the age of 15). The service offers advice and advocacy, offer emotional and practical support to residents and assists them to overcome the trauma of abuse helps them to develop new confidence and achieve independence. It also supports the development of skills and access to employment and had referral mechanisms in place for additional forms of support (for example drug abuse or mental health issues).

★ Review findings

In 2013 Domestic violence and relationship breakdown is the highest cause of homelessness in our borough.

Rough Sleepers

In response to the revised government guidance, we have carried out annual rough sleeper autumn estimates. The estimates were based on consultation with and verification by local partners likely to encounter rough sleepers during the course of their activities, such as the Rough Sleeper's Outreach Team, members of the Homelessness Forum, and Voluntary Groups. The returns to government over the last five years are shown in the table below.

Year	Annual Rough Sleeper Estimate
2010	1
2011	0
2012	1
2013	4
2014	3

Source: NBC annual estimate submission to DCLG

The levels of rough sleeping in Newcastle based upon year on year statistics are increasing, however overall figures still remain low, the Council believes this is due to the work of the jointly commissioned Rough Sleepers Outreach Service (currently delivered by Brighter Futures) that operates in the borough.

The Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) is implemented by the Council, when the temperature has been sub-zero for three consecutive days or when the weather is severe enough to increase the risk of serious harm to people sleeping rough. Extreme weather includes cold, wind and rain. Measures are in place to address this, namely emergency temporary accommodation is arranged for anyone sleeping rough (following verification) until the weather improves. Whilst in the accommodation the Rough Sleeper's Outreach Team will work with NHA to provide advice and assistance in order to prevention the reoccurrence of rough sleeping. During the 2014 – 2015 we accommodated 1 person under SWEP provision.

The Council is committed to tackling rough sleeping and will continue to work with local agencies and the community to ensure incidences of rough sleeping are minimised and where possible eliminated.

★ Review findings

The number of rough sleepers in the borough has increased since the last review, however overall figures still remain low and are monitored through the data provided by the Rough Sleeper's outreach service.

The Council believes that the reason the number of rough sleepers in the borough still remain low is due to the provision of a rough sleeper's outreach service.

Mental Health and Homelessness

People with mental health issues are known to be at a higher risk of homelessness and have further difficulties in tenancy sustainment. It is also widely accepted that there are high rates of mental health issues for people who are already experiencing homelessness.

Arch North Staffs operates a scheme called 'Up' which offers accommodation and support to people with mental health issues

Brighter Futures and North Staffs Mind operate a service called 'New Days' in Newcastle. New Days provides support to anyone who has concerns about their mental health.

The majority of mental health illness is treated through primary care; therefore GP registration is very important. Homeless people who sleep rough or are placed in homeless hostel may not be registered with a local GP. Due to the difficulties experienced in accessing primary care, homeless people have used A&E departments for health care which is expensive and inappropriate.

★ Review findings

Health and Wellbeing boards are in the best position to ensure that the mental health needs of the whole local population are understood and prioritised appropriately in local commissioning

People with Drug and Alcohol issues

Those with drug and alcohol issues run the risk of homelessness when their addiction affects their ability to manage their affairs and / or exacerbates behaviour that may result in them losing their home. Also those who are homeless are at a higher risk of developing a drug or alcohol problem, which in turn can make re-housing more difficult as they are more likely to be excluded from supported accommodation. Whilst there are alcohol and drug services, not all are accessible to or geared to the needs of homeless people.

Homeless people with complex drug and/or alcohol problems face particular difficulties in finding accommodation or help and support to meet their needs.

However the numbers of those accepted as homeless because of a dependency are low. The reason for this could be that decisions in case law have directed that an alcohol or drug dependency relates to a life style choice and is not a relevant factor of establishing a priority need.

The Burton Addiction Centre & O'Connor Centre Newcastle offers 21 units of accommodation for rehabilitation. The service also offers 15 units of floating support for people aged between 18 & 74 years old. The floating support service is available for people in Newcastle, Cannock, Stafford and Staffordshire Moorlands.

★ Review findings

Health and Wellbeing boards are in the best position to ensure that the drug and alcohol needs of the whole local population are understood and prioritised appropriately in local commissioning

People with Disabilities (physical, learning or sensory)

We do not have any reportable data that suggests customers are presenting as homeless or at risk of homelessness due to their disability. Available information suggests that the biggest area of unmet need for people with physical disabilities is for adaptations in their own properties.

Choices housing association delivers a range of services to individuals who want to live independently.

Offenders

Many offenders can lose their accommodation during custody. It is a well-recognised fact that stable accommodation can also reduce the risk of re-offending therefore preventing homelessness for this client group has a much wider benefit for the community.

The West Midlands move on protocol assists offenders in gaining suitable accommodation on release from prison. The protocol is regularly reviewed to ensure that it is up to date and fit for purpose.

Currently Heantun Housing receives funding from Staffordshire County Council to provide 150 units of floating support to high risk offenders throughout Staffordshire.

The Saltbox offers support to ex-offenders aged between 21 and 65 years old. The scheme offers the person accommodation in a property under a license with a support package, although the service predominately operates in Stoke on Trent, there is a property in Newcastle which offers support to 6 ex-offenders.

★ Review findings

There are very low levels of prison leavers who present as homeless to NHA

Older People

The main housing issues for older people tend to relate to the need for repairs and adaptations to enable them to remain in their own accommodation.

The Private Sector Housing Team and the Countywide Revival Home Improvement Agency supports older and disabled people with the installation of major disabled adaptations in their homes.

The NHA service does not encounter many older people presenting as homeless in Newcastle, however when an older person does present it can be extremely difficult to find services that meet the older person's needs.

★ Review findings

Whilst the older population is increasing, at present our homelessness service does not encounter many older people presenting as homeless

Gypsies and Travellers

There is an established Traveller's Site within the Borough, which is managed by Aspire Housing, following an assessment, funding was gained in order to increase the number of pitches from 17 to 19. Feedback from both NHA and housing register data indicate that there have been no incidents of this group presenting either in an emergency homeless situation or seeking housing assistance.

Complex Needs

Vulnerable people with complex needs are often identified by their multiple support needs. Services tend to be structured around single issues and this group may struggle to access support that meets all their needs. Sometimes a person's support need may be not severe enough to qualify for support or is too high to deal with under mainstream support services.

★ Review findings

Vulnerable people with complex needs may not be able to access services which offer the required level of support for multiple needs.

Providing services for people with complex needs can be challenging due to the diverse mix of needs a person may have.

Support Services

Prior to April 2011, Staffordshire County Council had an annual grant to provide 'housing related support' known as Supporting People (SP) funding. Removal of the ring fence on SP funding coincided with reductions in central government grant to local authorities which impacted upon this budget. Newcastle has always benefited from SP funding which has provided housing related support available to vulnerable customers at risk of homelessness. In particular for young people, people with mental health needs and people with substance misuse and / or an offending history. The support is either provided in a person's own home, to enable them to sustain their accommodation (e.g guidance on how to manage bills or operate their home in a way which does not put their tenancy at risk), or as part of the accommodation package offered to them.

During 2014 many of the borough's SP services experienced significant cuts in their funding streams. In some cases services have been able to remodel service delivery or raise funds from alternative sources. There will undoubtedly be impacts from the reductions, experienced by the service users, the services themselves and the borough. However on a positive note, affected organisations have been forward thinking and have developed innovative solutions in response of the cuts.

The table below lists the services in Newcastle that receive County Council funding.

Service Name	Provider	Service Type	Primary Client Group	Units	Newcastle
Rocklands Sheltered Scheme	Alpha (R.S.L.) Limited	Sheltered Housing	Older people with support needs	43	100.0%
Regent Court Sheltered Scheme	Alpha (R.S.L.) Limited	Sheltered Housing	Older people with support needs	27	100.0%
Extra Care Mill Rise	Aspire Housing Limited	Extracare Housing	Frail Elderly	60	100.0%
Funding contribution -The BAC O'Connor Centre Supported Accommodation Newcastle	Burton Addiction Centre	Supported Housing	Substance Misuse	21	100.0%
Funding contribution - Community Re-integration Support Project Newcastle	Burton Addiction Centre	Floating Support	Substance Misuse	15	25.0%
Extra Care Lea Court	Housing 21	Extracare Housing	Frail Elderly	63	100.0%
Sheltered Housing	Anchor Trust	Sheltered	Older people with	155	20%

		Housing	support needs		
Floating support to socially excluded groups	Arch (North Staffs) Ltd	Floating Support	Socially Excluded Groups	79	50%
Domestic Abuse Support Services	Arch (North Staffs) Ltd	Floating Support Refuge /	People at risk of Domestic Abuse	97	50%
Sheltered Housing	Aspire Housing Limited	Sheltered Housing	Older people with support needs	594	50%
Sheltered Housing	Sanctuary Housing Association	Sheltered Housing	Older people with support needs	314	25%
Staffordshire Countywide Offender Service	Heantun Housing Association Limited	Floating Support	Offenders or People at risk of Offending	150	12.5%
Revival Home Improvement Agency	Staffordshire Housing Association	Home Improvement	Older people with support needs		12.5%

Resources

DCLG Homelessness Funding

The government has continued to provide funding for homelessness prevention both to local authorities direct and through regional partnerships. The purpose of the funding is to enable local authorities to deliver prevention initiatives which will address homelessness in their local areas.

Local authorities receive an annual Homelessness Prevention Grant from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) which is rolled in the Business Rate Retention Scheme (BRRS). The amount is no longer ring fenced to homelessness; although the DCLG do expect Local Authorities to use the funding to prevent homelessness in their areas.

We have received £124374.08 from the DCLG to deliver homelessness prevention services during 2015.

Discretionary Housing Payments

The Council's Discretionary Housing payments (DHP) assist customers who rent and receive housing benefit, but still have a shortfall in their rent. The DHPs are intended to be short-term payments, to help households whose tenancies are at risk due to them being unable to meet their housing costs. The provision of DHPs can assist us in our aim of homelessness prevention and many of the DHP issued have been included in our homelessness prevention figures.

We have received a government contribution of £159,189 for discretionary housing payments in 2015.

Accessing external funding sources

The Council is proactive in identifying funding sources that will assist us in preventing homelessness. When opportunities arise we have been successful in bringing in additional resources, through the following partnerships:

- Single Homelessness Funding – expansion of the Stoke Community matron Service to North Staffordshire
- Domestic Violence refugee funding

The delivery of these services assists us in our aims to prevent homelessness.

★ Review findings

We have a very uncertain future in relation to the funding of services which assist us in preventing homelessness.

Future aspirations to achieve the Gold Standard will require resources to be made available

There is expectation that Homeless Grant allocations will be reduced in future spending reviews

Many Government funding opportunities are now made with the expectation to match fund and also have further funding in place to continue services once the initial funding is exhausted

Homelessness grant allocations are not ring fenced

It is anticipated that reductions in funding for supported accommodation and floating support services for vulnerable people at risk of homelessness is likely to have a knock on effect across the homelessness and housing advice service.

Partnership approach

The production and delivery of a Homelessness Prevention Strategy is the statutory responsibility of the local authority. We acknowledge that the development and implementation of a meaningful strategy is not possible in isolation and requires multi-agency input at all levels.

A partnership approach to devising and delivering a Homelessness Prevention Strategy is relevant now more than ever before. We live in a different world to that in which homelessness prevention activities were launched 10 years ago.

Challenges include:

- high levels of deprivation and poverty
- difficult housing market conditions
- recession, economic downturn and increased unemployment
- frugal government fiscal policy (including budget cuts and reform to welfare spending)

Ultimately, this environment means that there is increasing demand for services and assistance but reduced resources and capacity to deliver. Clear strategic direction and effective partnership delivery is crucial in these difficult times if we are to maintain delivering our successful programme of homelessness prevention.

Newcastle has strong and established partnerships across the community, voluntary and statutory sector. In order for the Homelessness Prevention Strategy to achieve its aims and objectives will be the result of a wide range of partners involved in homelessness prevention working together.

5. Issues & Recommendations for the Homelessness Strategy

5.1 Summary of Homelessness Review Findings

- The Council needs to consider whether it is prepared to contribute both financially and strategically to achieve the Gold Standard.
- Welfare Reform does not have appeared to have produced a direct increase in homelessness, so far.
- We are yet to see the full effect of Universal Credit in Newcastle as it has only been introduced for certain customers from April 2015.
- Consideration must be given as how to identify households at risk of falling into arrears under Universal Credit.
- We need to be aware of the new structures within health and plan how to maximise partnership opportunities. We also need to identify our respective roles in coordinating the achievement of shared outcomes (as detailed in the Public Health NHS and Adult Social Care Outcome Frameworks).
- There is currently little analysis nationally or locally about the cost of homelessness to health.
- TA usage has increased both locally and nationally
- Customers who need assistance have more complex needs
- TA providers are becoming more reluctant to allow our customers to access
- LA are accessing TA provision outside their local authority boundaries
- The Council has a wide range of overarching strategies that affect and impact upon the lives of the homeless or those who are at risk of homelessness. However few mention this in any detail.
- There are less social rented homes available and an increasing need to rely on the private sector. This may influence our ability to give people a wide housing choice
- 2013 / 14 showed an increase in the number of homeless decisions the service was making
- Consideration needs to be given as to whether the new strategy can realistically address the needs of all homeless and potentially homeless people within the borough
- Not all NHA customers will make a statutory homelessness application and many potential homelessness cases are prevented due to the actions and assistance from the team
- At present interest rates are low, any upward changes may impact on both home owners and buy to let landlords
- It should be noted that all the staff within the team have been in post for a number of years and have amassed valuable knowledge and expertise. It is clear that the team show passion and commitment towards tackling the issue of homelessness and those affected by it.
- The NHA service is a busy service, responding to the growing demand for housing advice and assistance.
- Take up of Deposit Guarantee has fallen

- Some landlords would prefer a cash deposit over a guarantee
- Tenants are not saving for the deposit during the Council's two year guarantee period
- Some landlords have indicated that they do not intend to let to customers in receipt of Universal Credit
- Despite removing the requirement to join the Staffordshire Credit Union if customers do not have a bank account, take up numbers are still low
- Take up of the Rent Guarantee scheme has fallen
- Some landlords would prefer cash over a guarantee for rent
- The One Off Payment fund is currently underutilised with funds remaining at the end of the financial year
- Customers are unable to afford homeless prevention loans, even at zero APR
- It is getting increasingly more difficult to source emergency accommodation due to various accommodation providers not wishing to accommodate our customers.
- We have placed customers in temporary accommodation who have then misbehaved themselves, this has resulted in certain providers refusing to accommodate our customers
- The emergency accommodation available to NHA is in high demand due a number of North Staffordshire agencies using it for their customers
- The introduction of Universal Credit may have an impact upon the future choices we have for TA options for certain customers
- In emergency situations despite our desire not to we may have to place young people in emergency accommodation.
- Access to the private rented sector is crucial in both addressing and preventing homelessness
- There is competition for properties in the private rented sector.
- Some Private Landlords are unwilling or have no need to let to customers who seek assistance from NHA
- Landlords must feel confident that there will be support available should tenancies start to fail
- There are many properties in the private rented sector which are unaffordable
- Landlords have raised concerns regarding the introduction of UC and housing costs no longer being paid direct to the landlord
- Assistance and incentives are fundamental in enabling better access to the PRS in Newcastle, however the current service has limits on capacity on the work that can be done.
- It is becoming increasingly more difficult to access accommodation specifically for young people, who seek assistance at NHA
- During the period of the last strategy, Newcastle saw the closure of its only supported accommodation for young people, due to County Council funding cuts
- Due to funding criteria in Stoke on Trent access into the North Staffordshire YMCA is extremely limited.
- The LHA rates have led to a reduction in the availability of properties for younger people, as the shared room rate was increased to 35 years
- In 2013 Domestic violence and relationship breakdown is the highest cause of homelessness in our borough
- The number of rough sleepers in the borough has increased since the last review, however overall figures still remain low and are monitored through the data provided by the Rough Sleeper's outreach service.
- The Council believes that the reason the number of rough sleepers in the borough still remain low is due to the provision of a rough sleeper's outreach service.
- Health and Wellbeing boards are in the best position to ensure that the mental health needs of the whole local population are understood and prioritised appropriately in local commissioning

- Health and Wellbeing boards are in the best position to ensure that the drug and alcohol needs of the whole local population are understood and prioritised appropriately in local commissioning
- There are very low levels of prison leavers who present as homeless to NHA
- Whilst the older population is increasing, at present our service does not encounter many older people presenting as homeless
- Vulnerable people with complex needs may not receive the required level of support for multiple needs.
- Providing services for people with complex needs can be challenging due to the diverse mix of needs a person may have
- We have a very uncertain future in relation to the funding of services which assist us in preventing homelessness.
- Future aspirations to achieve the Gold Standard will require resources to be made available
- There is expectation that Homeless Grant allocations will be reduced in future spending reviews
- Many Government funding opportunities are now made with the expectation to match fund and also have further funding in place to continue services once the initial funding is exhausted
- Homelessness grant allocations are not ring fenced
- It is anticipated that reductions in funding for supported accommodation and floating support services for vulnerable people at risk of homelessness is likely to have a knock on effect across the homelessness and housing advice service.

5.2 Recommended Priorities for the new Newcastle under Lyme Homelessness Strategy

After careful consideration of the evidence gathered during the production of this review and the issues identified and consulted upon with our partners and stakeholders, we have identified the following priorities for the Homelessness Strategy 2016 – 2021.

1. Prevention of Homelessness
2. Support homeless households into sustainable housing solutions
3. Work in partnership with other agencies to address the causes of homelessness in Newcastle