

**Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council**  
**Homelessness Review 2019**

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# 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.

The Strategy must set out how the authority will prevent and reduce homelessness and provide support to those affected by it. In a bid to improve accountability and local responses to rough sleeping, the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy (2018) stipulates that all local authorities must produce a revised Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy by winter 2019.

## 1.2 Achievements since our last Strategy

Newcastle Council and its partners have achieved a great deal over the past few years.

- **Successful implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 within the Newcastle Housing Advice Service (NHA)**  
The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has been successfully implemented within NHA. The service has always operated with a prevention ethos, however, the legislation has changed the way that homeless cases are now managed and the NHA service has been improved to effectively deal with these changes.
- **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 strengthen and enhance this service, which provides outreach and support to rough sleepers in both Newcastle and Stoke-on-Trent.
- **Review of the Housing Allocations Policy**  
In line with the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, our Allocation's Policy has been reviewed and amended to enable us to meet our responsibilities under this new legislation.
- **A new temporary accommodation (TA) units**  
The Council now has arrangements in place for the use of 8 new temporary accommodation units within 2 properties to accommodate homelessness households. The provision allows for low level support to customers during their stay and following their move on to longer term accommodation.
- **Successful bid outcome to recruit a Rough Sleeper Coordinator for the Borough**  
During the period of the current strategy, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) made £528,000 of funding available to regional groups of local authorities to invest in the prevention of homelessness. The Borough Council has been successful in the receipt of £45,000 for the recruitment of a Rough Sleeper Coordinator, for the period of 2019 and 2020.

- **MHCLG Domestic Abuse funding**  
In partnership with Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Staffordshire Moorlands and Grow North Staffs, we were able to extend support in the community where refuge or other support accommodation is not appropriate across North Staffordshire.
- **The recommissioning of a borough wide Welfare Advice Service**  
The Borough Council has commissioned a generalist independent welfare advice service. In addition to the borough wide service is access to specialist housing advice which includes court representation when required.
- **Delivery of 188 affordable homes**  
Since the production of the last Homelessness Strategy in 2016, 188 affordable homes have been delivered in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

### 1.3 Review Process

The aim of this review is to understand the current and possible future situations in Newcastle and identify any changes that may have taken place since the last Homelessness review in 2015. 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 2025.

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, the 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. Nationally the Government has had the priority to reduce the Country's budget deficit through a range of measures including an extensive reduction in public spending. Investment in local government has reduced significantly on a national scale, which together with substantial changes to the welfare system and a 'broken' housing market has had a significant impact on homelessness.

### 2.1 National Context

Since the last homelessness review, there have been significant changes which have impacted homelessness and service provision in the borough and nationwide.

#### 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. These changes include the introduction of Universal Credit which brings together a range of working age benefits into one payment, including housing benefit; Personal Independence Payments (PIP) which replaces Disability Living Allowance for people aged 16 to 64; new rules to restrict the amount of Housing Benefit working age council or housing association tenants could claim if they are deemed to be under occupying their home; and a new regime for Job Seekers Allowance.

Reforms continue to impact those in receipt of benefits, from April 2016 Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates were frozen for four years. Rents tend to rise faster than prices (CPI) and these changes have negatively impacted access to the private rental sector to the extent that, according to a recent report by Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH, August 2018), private renting has now become unaffordable for most low income households.

#### 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.

#### Brexit

The impact that Brexit may have on homelessness is hard to predict, dependent upon the final arrangements, we may see a number of EEA nationals with uncertain statuses with regard to employment, benefits and housing rights.

### **Homelessness Reduction Act 2017**

The 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act is the biggest change to the rights of homeless people in England for 15 years. It places new legal duties on local housing authorities, amends existing homelessness legislation within Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and places a renewed emphasis on the prevention of homelessness.

### **Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018**

The Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out the Government's plans to help people who are sleeping rough. Its vision is to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and to end it by 2027 and builds on other programmes underway to tackle homelessness, such as the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The Government is supporting the Strategy with £1.2 billion of funding to tackle homelessness, including the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI), the Cold Weather Fund and Rapid Rehousing Pathway.

The Strategy includes a range of 61 commitments made by departments across Government, intended both to help those who are sleeping on our streets or currently at risk of doing so and to lay the foundation around three core values: prevention, intervention and a rapid rehousing approach to recovery. Prevention focuses on providing timely support before someone becomes homeless. Intervention sets out how the Strategy will help people who are already in crisis to get swift, targeted support to get them off the streets and the third principle, Recovery, emphasises how people will be supported to find a new home quickly and rebuild their lives via a new rapid rehousing approach.

### **Rough Sleeping Delivery Plan 2018**

Following the publication of the Rough Sleeping strategy, the Government published its Rough Sleeping Delivery Plan, which identifies the priorities and plans to tackle rough sleeping. The plan includes a number of approaches and measures, which complement other government action in place to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping. The measures include:

- a new specialist team to oversee the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI), made up of nine specialist rough sleeping advisers and five specialist advisers covering health, employment, prisons and probation, drawn from and funded by government departments and agencies with specialist knowledge across a wide-range of areas including; housing, mental health and addiction.
- a £30 million fund for 2018 to 2019 with further funding agreed for 2019 to 2020 targeted at local authorities with high numbers of people sleeping rough; the Rough Sleeping Advisory Team will work with local authority areas to support them to develop tailored local interventions to reduce the number of people sleeping on the streets.
- £100,000 funding to support frontline Rough Sleeping workers across the country to make sure they have the right skills and knowledge to work with vulnerable rough sleepers.

## 2.2 Local context

### Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council's Corporate Plan (2018-22)

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

- Local Services that Work for Local People
- Growing our People and Places
- Healthy, Active and Safe Borough
- A Town Centre for All

The plan sets out how the Council will work to make the borough an even better place for everyone who lives, works, studies or visits Newcastle.

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 strategic partnership for the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme. The Partnership replaces the former Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and is the mechanism for the delivery of the statutory partnership function in the Borough.

The Partnership represents the different sectors in the Borough and plays a vital role in bringing together a range of organisations with a shared purpose through co-operative and co-ordinated joint working that will improve social, economic and environmental wellbeing for our residents.

The Newcastle Partnership aims to be inclusive and is intended to be broadly representative of public, private, voluntary and community sectors in the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme. The Partnership aims to be accountable to the local community it serves and open and transparent in all its dealings.

The shared vision for the Newcastle Partnership is:

“Newcastle Communities together, securing a prosperous future”

The Partnership is committed to continuously improving the quality of life and experiences of people, who live, work, invest, study and visit Newcastle-under-Lyme.

The vision for the Partnership will be delivered via two Partnership priorities:

- Enhancing economic growth; and
- Tackling vulnerability

The Partnership aims to achieve its ambitions through:

- A common strategic framework made up of a common vision, priorities, and outcomes;
- The alignment of activities and resources to deliver against the priorities of the Partnership;
- Joint delivery supported by effective performance management of outcomes linked to strategic priorities;



- Reduce duplication and bureaucracy and improved co-operation through commissioning and delivery within the Partnership's structure;
- Communicating the achievements of the Partnership and remaining accountable to the whole community of the Borough.

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council is the accountable body (lead partner) for the Newcastle Partnership.

### **Newcastle under Lyme's Housing Strategy**

Newcastle's Housing Strategy (2016 -2021) is the overarching document for all housing activity and investment in the borough by the Council and its partners.

The strategy seeks to support the Council to achieve its aims and objectives for housing within the Borough, working to improve the quality, choice, supply and access to housing for current and future residents.

The strategy has the following strategic objectives;

1. To support the delivery of affordable housing and development
2. To provide help and advice for finding a home
3. To reduce the number of empty homes
4. To give support to the Private Sector
5. To promote independence and inclusion to our most vulnerable residents.

The strategy sets out how these objectives have been prioritised and the action plan demonstrates how these objectives will be met.

## **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'

The 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act places new legal duties on local housing authorities, amends existing homelessness legislation within Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and places a renewed emphasis on the prevention of homelessness

. The changes include:

1. Prevention Duty 'take reasonable steps to help the applicant to secure that accommodation does not cease to become available'. This applies to all eligible applicants who are threatened with homelessness within 56 days. Housing authorities have a duty to

assess and to provide a personalised housing plan. The duty ends in the following circumstances:

- The applicant is successfully prevented from becoming homeless
- The 56 day timescale lapses (except in the case of a section 21 notice)
- The applicant becomes homeless, which then triggers the relief duty below
- The applicant deliberately and unreasonably refuses to cooperate

2. Relief duty: 'take reasonable steps to help the applicant to secure that suitable accommodation becomes available'. This applies to all eligible applicants who are homeless. As with the Prevention duty, the local authority has a duty to assess and provide a personalised housing plan. The duty ends in the following circumstances:

- The applicant is successfully relieved from homelessness
- The 56 day timescale lapses
- The applicant deliberately and unreasonably refuses to cooperate
- The applicant refuses a suitable offer of accommodation

Applicants who are in a priority need, who are deemed to be unintentionally homeless and who remain homeless when the relief duty ends will fall into the original re-housing duty. This duty secures that accommodation is available for occupation by the applicant.

3. Vulnerable Groups: The Act requires advice services to be designed with certain vulnerable groups in mind, for example, care leavers, former armed forces, people leaving custody, victims of domestic abuse or people with mental health issues.

4. Duty to refer: Specified public authorities will have a duty to notify a local authority of service users thought to be homeless or at risk of homelessness. The public authorities need to gain the consent of the individual before referring them.

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

## 3. Newcastle under Lyme – The Local Picture

### 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 129,000 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 following data has been extracted from the Newcastle under Lyme Data Pack (September 2018), Staffordshire County Council, Strategy Team.*

#### 3.1.1 Population

- Newcastle-under-Lyme is resident to 129,000 people. The population has a lower proportion of people aged under five and under 16 compared to England. There are more people aged 16-64 and 65 and over in Newcastle-under-Lyme compared to average.
- The overall population of Newcastle-under-Lyme is projected to increase between 2017 and 2027 by 5% with a significant growth in people aged 65 and over (15%) and aged 85 and over (27%). The rate of increase in the number of older people in Newcastle-under-Lyme is faster than the England average and equates to 900 additional residents aged 85 and over by 2027.
- 11% of Newcastle-under-Lyme residents (14,400 people) live within the most deprived national quintile.
- The dependency ratio for older people in Newcastle-under-Lyme is 32 older people for every 100 people of working age which is higher than England.

#### 3.1.2 Be able to access more good jobs and feel the benefits of economic growth

- The proportion of children in Newcastle-under-Lyme who reach a good level of development at the age of five (75%) is better than the national average (71%).  
*(This indicator refers to the percentage of children achieving Grade 5 or above in English and Maths).*
- GCSE attainment for Newcastle-under-Lyme pupils is similar to the England average. There are however inequalities within the borough with attainment ranging from 21% in Silverdale & Parkside ward to 75% in Keele ward.
- Newcastle-under-Lyme has a higher than average proportion of children who are absent or permanently excluded from school.
- The percentage of adults aged 16-64 with NVQ level 32 or above is lower than the national average. There is also a higher number of adults with no qualifications compared to average.
- Unemployment and youth unemployment rates in Newcastle-under-Lyme (as at May 2018) are lower than the national average.
- The gap in the employment rate between those with a long-term health condition and the general population is 29%, similar to the national average (29%). Other vulnerable groups (for example those with mental health conditions or who have a learning disability) have relatively low employment rates.

- Around 28.0% (34,000) of the population in Newcastle-under-Lyme are estimated to be financially stressed, i.e. find it difficult or very difficult to cope on their current income. This is lower than the national average (27.5%).
- The proportion of older people in Newcastle-under-Lyme who are aged 60 and over living in income deprived households is significantly better than the national average.
- The average house price (£130,500) now stands at 5.2 times the average gross salary (£24,943).

### 3.1.3 Be healthier and more independent

- Overall life expectancy at birth in Newcastle-under-Lyme is 79 years for men, similar to the national average, and 83 years for women, lower than the national average. Men and women living in the most deprived areas of Newcastle-under-Lyme live eight and ten years less than those living in less deprived areas respectively.
- Healthy life expectancy in Newcastle-under-Lyme is 62 years for men and 64 years for women; both lower than average. Women in Newcastle-under-Lyme spend more of their lives in poor health than men (19 years compared to 17).
- Around 27% of children aged four to five in Newcastle-under-Lyme have excess weight (overweight or obese) with rates being higher than average. Around 34% of children aged 10-11 have excess weight.
- Teenage pregnancy rates in Newcastle-under-Lyme are higher than England and higher in three wards.
- During 2016/17 around 200 children under 15 were admitted for unintentional and deliberate injuries, with rates similar to England.
- The rate of hospital admissions caused by self-harm and alcohol was higher than the England averages.
- Around two out of three adults have excess weight (either obese or overweight) which is higher than the national average. The proportion of people who are obese in Newcastle-under-Lyme is also higher than the England average.
- Two out of ten Newcastle-under-Lyme adults are physically inactive, similar to the England average (equating to around 24,600 people). Around half of Newcastle-under-Lyme adults are not eating the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables per day.
- The number of people on dementia, depression, diabetes and hypertension registers in Newcastle-under-Lyme is higher than the national averages - although this could reflect good case finding, diagnosis and recording. However, there is a higher proportion of residents in Newcastle-under-Lyme with a limiting long-term illness compared to the national average, particularly amongst those aged 65 and over which would suggest levels of long term conditions are high.
- Emergency hospital admissions are higher than the national average. The number of Newcastle-under-Lyme residents who die early from causes considered preventable is also higher than the national average.
- End of life care is a concern for the borough with the proportion dying at home or usual place of residence worse (42%) than the national average (46%).

### 3.1.4 Feel safer, happier and more supported

- Data from 'Feeling the Difference' suggests that 93% Newcastle-under-Lyme respondents were satisfied with the area as a place to live.
- The rate of children in need is higher than the Staffordshire average.
- Newcastle-under-Lyme has a higher proportion of lone pensioner households compared to the national average.
- More residents in Newcastle-under-Lyme provide unpaid care compared to the England average. This equates to around 14,700 people. In particular, 15% (3,400 people) of residents aged 65 and over provide unpaid care which is higher than the England average of 14%.
- More than one in ten Newcastle-under-Lyme households are living in fuel poverty. This is higher than the national average.
- Based on Feeling the Difference Survey, more than twice as many people are fearful of being a victim of crime (17%) compared with those who have actually experienced crime (6%) in Newcastle-under-Lyme.
- The rate of overall crime in Newcastle-under-Lyme is below the national average. However, levels of anti-social behaviour and violent crime are higher than the national average.

## 3.2 Housing in Newcastle under Lyme

### 3.2.1 Number of dwellings and tenure

There are currently 56,470 dwellings in Newcastle of which 9900 are Registered Provider stock, 46,560 are within the owner occupied and private rented sector, 0 are owned by the local authority. (*source: number of dwellings by tenure, table 100 dwelling stock England 2018 [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)*).

### 3.2.2 Property condition

In 2016 The Council commissioned Building Research Establishment (BRE) to undertake a private sector housing stock condition survey. The survey estimated that there are 5,761 dwellings in the private rented sector, and 1,140 of these have category 1 Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) hazards. This equates to 20 per cent of properties in the private rented sector. 12.7 per cent (730) of private rented dwellings in Newcastle-under-Lyme are estimated to have an EPC rating below band E.

### 3.2.3 Right to Buy

In 1980 the Housing Act gave tenants who rented local authority stock an opportunity to buy their homes. In 2000, the local authority housing stock was transferred to Aspire Housing (Registered Provider of Social Housing) with existing tenants retaining a preserved Right to Buy. From 2016 to 2019 there have been 70 Right to Buy sales in Newcastle under Lyme.

### 3.2.4. Affordability

The Strategic Market Housing Assessment (SMHA) update in 2017 concluded that 'Newcastle needs 242 affordable homes each year to meet newly arising need over the next five years.

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

The table below shows the average price by type of property in Newcastle under Lyme.

Date	Average Sold Price	Average Detached Price	Average Semi-Detached Price	Average Terraced Price	Average Flat / Maisonette Price
Jan 2019	£153,818	£231,612	£146,534	£115,443	£108,158
Jan 2018	£149,298	£223,164	£141,617	£112,175	£108,429
Jan 2017	£142,217	£213,957	£134,321	£106,885	£103,009
Jan 2016	£136,290	£203,875	£128,942	£103,066	£96,521
Jan 2015	£128,085	£190,761	£120,939	£97,411	£92,228
Jan 2014	£126,313	£188,066	£119,093	£96,225	£91,647

Source: [www.LandRegistry.data.gov.uk](http://www.LandRegistry.data.gov.uk)

### 3.3 Renting

#### 3.3.1 Renting from a Registered Provider

The table below illustrates the average weekly Registered Provider rent within Newcastle-under-Lyme between 2014 and 2018.

Registered Provider Average Weekly Rents for Newcastle-under-Lyme				
2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
£73.88	£77.37	£79.20	£78.08	£77.04

Source: *housing statistics communities.gov table 704*

Aspire Housing is the largest registered provider within Newcastle. The table below illustrates its average weekly rents per number of bedrooms for Aspire stock.

Aspire Housing – Average Weekly Rent for General Needs Social Housing – 2019				
	General needs	General needs - (£s)	Affordable rent -	Affordable rent - (£s)
Bedsit	115	£66.85	2	£69.64
One Bedroom	1916	£73.08	35	£73.59
Two bedroom	2644	£82.01	200	£85.82
Three bedroom	2320	£89.26	155	£96.95
Four Bedroom	134	£96.57	32	£114.21
Five Bedroom	2	£128.17	2	£142.89
Total	<b>7131</b>		<b>426</b>	

Source: Statistical Data Return dataset 2019 –

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistical-data-return-2018-to-2019>

Note: figures shown do not include service charges

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

The affordability gap has increased the demand for affordable rented housing. The table below shows the number of households waiting for housing on the Housing Register in Newcastle by bedroom requirement.

<b>Households on Housing Register as 1<sup>st</sup> April by bedroom requirement</b>					
	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
Households requiring 1 Bedroom	834	582	622	568	678
Households requiring 2 Bedrooms	557	378	383	329	356
Households requiring 3 Bedrooms	197	141	152	188	182
Households requiring more than 3 Bedrooms	35	28	28	37	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>1623</b>	<b>1129</b>	<b>1185</b>	<b>1122</b>	<b>1258</b>

Source: Local authority housing statistics

The table above illustrates that the highest demand on the register is for one and two bedroom properties. The information within the tables above also highlight that the numbers on the waiting list in the Borough far outweighs the number of relets per year of social housing stock.

### 3.3.2 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 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

<b>Type of Property</b>	<b>Newcastle Average Rent</b>	<b>West Midlands Average Rent</b>	<b>England Average Rent</b>
1 Bed House	£ 427 Monthly	£ 514 Monthly	£ 731 Monthly
2 Bed House	£518 Monthly	£ 623 Monthly	£800 Monthly
3 Bed House	£635 Monthly	£ 732 Monthly	£ 916 Monthly
4 Bed or more House	£ 997 Monthly	£1111 Monthly	£1611 Monthly

Source: Gov.uk private-rental-market-summary-statistics-april-2018-to-march-2019

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 2019 and 2018

	<b>Shared</b>	<b>1 Bed</b>	<b>2 Bed</b>	<b>3 Bed</b>	<b>4 Bed</b>
Weekly 2019	£55.19.	£80.55	£90.90	£109.32	£144.04

Weekly 2018	£53.58	£80.55	£90.90	£109.32	£139.84.
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Source: LHA rates-NBC website 2019

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 due to rental fees.

#### ★ Review findings

The demand for social rented homes far outweighs the supply available.

There is an increasing need to access accommodation in the private sector in order to meet housing need.

Due to the limited supply of accommodation we must wherever possible support households to remain in their current accommodation.

Landlords want to work with us but also want assurance that support is available if things go wrong in tenancies.

## 4. Current Levels of Homelessness

### 4.1 Levels and nature 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. The Council is required to submit to the MHCLG relating to approaches made to them by homeless applicants. Historically, these statistics have been known as the P1E returns. However since the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 the submission of data has changed to a system known as Delta H-click, data from H-click is still being classed as experimental therefore within this review is data both from P1e and H-click sources.

The data gives 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.

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.

#### 4.1.1 Homelessness Decisions

The table below shows the number of decisions between 2015 and 2017, prior to the introduction of H-click (HRA 2017).



	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
2015	11	9	17	11	1	49
2016	10	7	12	8	0	37
2017	10	8	13	10	0	41

Source: NULBC Contract Monitoring Stats

The table above shows that during the three years the total number of homeless households owed a duty decreased in 2016 then began to increase again in 2017. The table below shows the performance information captured through the Delta recording systems, following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act. Please note this information is still classed as experimental data, while the monitoring systems continue to be developed between local Authorities and the MHCLG.

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
H-Click 2018/9	April-June	July-September	October - December	January-March	
Initial decision if duty owed	84	83	96	116	379
Prevention duty	49	49	60	68	226
Relief duty	34	44	36	48	162
Not Homeless	1	1	2	1	5
Main Duty	5	6	2	4	17
TA at end of quarter	4	4	4	4	16

When considering this information compared to the number of homeless decisions, the statistics show that during each quarter of H-click data, there has been an increase numbers.

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

Activity	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/19
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Telephone Enquiries	9181	8629	8258	9898	11981
Reception Enquiries Housing Options and Homelessness	1581	1354	1447	1280	1575
Reception Enquiries Housing Register	3226	2428	2373	2343	2075
Interviews (by appointment)	566	526	576	494	538
Interviews (walk-ins / emergency)	86	54	115	116	126
Homeless Decisions	102	37	39	40	*n/a
Homelessness Preventions	642	580	571	563	*n/a

Source: NULBC Contract Monitoring Stats

★ Review findings

Following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, there has been more than a 10% increase in the number of individuals the NHA service are assisting.

#### 4.1.2 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 up to 2017 using P1e data and where possible data from 2018 using the H-click reporting systems. Please note that the two data sources are not like for like. The P1e data reports on those households owed a duty and H-click data reports on all applicants owed a prevention or relief duty.

##### Age

The majority of those accepted as homeless fall within the age group of 25 – 44 year olds. This has remained consistent with data from previous reviews.

Age of Households owed a statutory Duty (P1e) Yearly				
	2014	2015	2016	2017
Age	No	No	No	No
16-24	3	2	3	2
25-44	8	9	7	7
45-59	0	0	0	1
60-64	0	0	0	0
65-74	0	0	0	0
75 & Over	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>

Source: NULBC Contract Monitoring Stats (P1e)

Age of Applicants owed a prevention or relief Duty (H-click) Quarterly				
	April to June 2018	July September 2018	October to December 2018	January to March 2019

Age	No	No	No	No
16-17	2	0	3	7
18-24	19	32	21	29
25-34	24	25	31	36
35-44	17	19	23	23
45-54	10	8	8	10
55-64	8	10	6	7
65-74	3	1	1	3
75 & Over	1	1	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>116</b>

Source: NULBC Contract Monitoring Stats (H-click)

Household Type	2014	2015	2016	2017
	No	No	No	No
Couple with or expecting dependent children	1	3	3	4
Lone parent (male) household with or expecting dependent children	0	0	0	0
Lone parent (female) household with or expecting dependent children	4	1	1	2
One person household (male)	4	4	4	4
One person household (female)	2	2	2	0
All other household groups	0	1	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>

Source: NULBC Contract Monitoring Stats

As the data shows just over half of the households accepted as homeless by Newcastle over the past four years are one person households and just under are households with dependent children.

### Ethnicity

Ethnic Group	2014	2015	2016	2017
	No	No	No	No
White	9	10	10	9
Black or Black British	0	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British	0	0	0	0
Mixed	2	1	0	1
Other ethnic group	0	0	0	0
Not Stated	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>

Source: NULBC Contract Monitoring Stats

Ethnicity of Applicants owed a prevention or relief Duty (H-click) Quarterly				
	April to June 2018	July to September 2018	October to December 2018	January to March 2019
	No	No	No	No
White	69	89	84	103
Black, African, Caribbean, Black British	7	0	4	7
Asian or Asian Black	2	3	0	0
Mixed or Multiple ethnic Group	1	1	0	0
Other	2	1	4	4
Not Known	3	2	3	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>116</b>

Data collected on the ethnicity of priority need homeless households demonstrates that the majority of service users describe themselves as White. Data 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.

### Reasons for Priority Need

Priority Need	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Households with Children	5	4	2	2
Household includes a pregnant women and there are no other dependent children	0	0	0	0
Applicant aged 16 /17 years	0	0	0	0
Applicant formerly in care and aged 18 to 20 years old	0	0	0	0
Old Age	0	1	0	0
Physical Disability	0	0	0	0
Mental illness or disability	2	4	4	4
Drug dependency	0	0	0	0
Alcohol Dependency	0	0	0	0
Former Asylum Seeker	0	0	0	0
Homelessness due to emergency (fire or flood etc)	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0
Been in Care	0	0	0	0
Served in HM Armed Forces	0	0	0	0
Been in Custody / On remand	0	0	0	0

Violence / Threat of Violence	0	0	0	0
Domestic Violence	4	2	4	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>

Source: NULBC Contract Monitoring Stats (P1e)

<b>Support Needs of a Household owed a prevention or relief duty by local authority – H-click (Quarterly)</b>				
	April to June 2018	July to September 2018	October to December 2018	January to March 2019
Households with no support needs	39	41	42	65
Households with unknown support needs	0	0	0	0
Households with 1 or more support needs	45	55	53	51
Of which				
Young Person aged 16 – 17 years		3	5	5
Young Person aged 18 – 25 requiring support to manage to live independently	2	1	1	1
Young Parent requiring support to manage independently	0	0	0	1
Care leaver 18 -20 years	8	7	7	6
Care leaver 21+years	0	2	1	0
Physical ill health and disability	11	7	12	9
History of mental health problems	19	21	19	19
Learning disability	2	1	1	0
At risk of / has experienced sexual abuse / exploitation	1	1	1	1
At risk of / has experienced domestic abuse	12	20	13	11
At risk of / has experienced abuse (non) domestic abuse	1	2	2	1
Drug dependency needs	3	7	7	7
Alcohol dependency needs	2	3	6	3
Offending history	3	3	8	4
History of repeat homelessness	4	1	5	0
History of rough sleeping	2	0	5	3
Former asylum seeker	0	0	2	2
Old age	0	0	1	2
Served in HM Forces	1	1	0	0
Access to education, employment or training	1	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>75</b>

The table shows that the majority of priority need homeless households are those with dependent children, mental illness or disability and Domestic Violence.

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 are also 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 data recording, 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	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Parent no longer willing to accommodate	0	5	4	4
Other relatives or friends no longer willing to accommodate	3	1	1	1
Non Violent breakdown of relationship	0	0	0	0
Violence: Violent breakdown of relationship involving partner	4	3	3	3
Violence: Violent breakdown of relationship involving associated persons	0	0	0	0
Violence: Racially motivated violence	0	0	0	0
Violence: Other forms of violence	0	0	0	0
Harassment, threats or intimidation: Racially motivated harassment	0	0	0	0
Harassment, threats or intimidation: Other forms of harassment	0	0	0	0
Mortgage Arrears (repossession or other loss of Home)	0	0	0	0
Rent arrears on: Local authority or other public sector dwellings	0	0	0	0
Rent arrears on: Registered provider dwelling	0	0	0	0
Rent arrears on: private sector dwelling	0	0	0	0
Loss of rented or tied accommodation due to termination of AST	3	0	0	0
Loss of rented or tied accommodation due to: Reasons other than termination of AST	0	0	0	0
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	0	0	0	0
Left an institution or LA care: Left prison/ on remand	0	0	0	0
Left an institution or LA Care: Left hospital	0	0	0	0
Other reasons for loss of last settled home: Left HM Forces	0	0	0	0

Other reason for loss of last settled home: Other reasons (eg homeless in emergency, sleeping rough or in hostel, returned from abroad).	1	2	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>

Source: NULBC Contract Monitoring Stats

Reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a prevention or relief duty.				
	April to June 2018	July to September 2018	October to December 2018	January to March 2019
<b>End of assured shorthold (AST) Private rented tenancy due to...</b>				
<b>Rent arrears due to..</b>				
Tenant difficulty budgeting or making other payments	3	1	1	1
Increase in rent	0	1	0	0
Reduction in employment income	0	0	0	2
Changes in benefit entitlement	0	0	0	0
Change in personal circumstances	0	1	4	5
<b>Breach of tenancy not related to rent arrears</b>	0	1	0	0
<b>Landlord wishing to sell or re-let the property</b>	7	11	9	12
<b>Tenant complained to the council / agent / landlord / about disrepair</b>	0	1	1	1
<b>Illegal eviction</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Tenant abandoned the property</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Other reasons / not known</b>	5	6	1	4
<b>End of non AST private rented tenancy</b>	0	0	0	1
<b>Family or Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate</b>	12	13	16	15
<b>Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner</b>	5	12	11	23
<b>Domestic Abuse</b>	11	22	20	17
<b>Other Violence or harassment</b>	0	1	1	3
<b>End of social rented tenancy, due to</b>				
Rent arrears	0	0	2	3
Breach of tenancy, not related to rent arrears	0	1	1	1
Other reasons / not known	0	0	0	0
<b>Eviction from supported housing, due to..</b>				
Rent arrears	0	0	0	0
Breach of tenancy or licence, not related to rent arrears	0	4	6	3
Other reasons / not known	6	4	5	4
<b>Left Institution with no accommodation available</b>	1	1	2	0

<b>Required to leave accommodation provided by home office as asylum support</b>	0	0	1	1
<b>Other reasons / not known</b>	34	16	14	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>116</b>

Source H-Click Delta 2018

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).

In addition the figures above also evidence that Domestic Abuse, non-violent relationship breakdown with partner, the landlord wishing to sell or re-let the property and other reasons are also regular reasons for the loss of the last settled home.

★ Review findings

In addition to the national main causes of homelessness and loss of last settled home, Domestic Abuse, non-violent relationship breakdown and landlords wishing to sell or re-let their private rented tenancies are regular reasons for households in Newcastle.

Other reasons are recorded as a regular reason for loss of last settled home, as data recording develops through H-click we will need to identify whether there are also trends developing under this category.

Annual figures under H-Click analysis are still uncertain whilst trends bed in. What is clear is that the introduction of the HRA has significantly increased the volume of those entitled to assistance. This is also impacting upon the need for temporary accommodation and staff resources and dependencies on limited supported accommodation.

## 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, 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 2018-2019 was £171,687.00 of which £166,924.46 was spent.

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

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

The NHA service is delivered under a contract for the Council to deliver homelessness, housing advice and housing register services to residents of the Borough.

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 NHA service has a designated officer who works with private landlords. At present the service assists customers to access accommodation into the private rented sector, via the rent deposit and rent in advance guarantee schemes. The service also works with landlords to improve relationships between landlords and tenants where relationships have broken down and the tenancy is at risk of being ended. Due to the limits on what alternative accommodation is available in the borough, the team work hard to sustain current tenancies wherever possible.

The Council works with the service provider 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 as demonstrated above.

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.

Open Door Weekly Drop in

Open Door operates twice weekly drop sessions which aim to provide a Hub based approach of support along with the provision of hot food and drinks to those who are vulnerable and / or homeless in Newcastle.

This year we have commissioned a further 8 units of temporary accommodation. Open Door Stoke-on-Trent is working in partnership with ourselves and NHA to provide the accommodation unit with a low level support package. There are two properties providing 4 units of accommodation each, this can be per night agreements or on a longer term week to

week basis. The properties have shared facilities with laundry and cooking facilities. Support is available to help customers whilst they stay and to also to help prepare to move on to more long term sustainable accommodation and this support continues with the customer to help with the transition to their new home. The project commenced September 2019 and is commissioned for an initial 12 month contract subject to satisfactory performance and further funding being available.

## **Joint Commissioning with Stoke on Trent City Council**

### **The Rough Sleepers Outreach Service**

In 2011 and 2015, 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 rough sleeper's outreach service which meets the needs of both authority areas whilst maximising efficiencies.

The service operates in line with No Second Night Out (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.

The service has continued to evolve throughout the service duration, acknowledging the aims and objectives of the National Rough Sleeper's Strategy 2018.

Following the success of this jointly commissioned service, Cabinet has given approval for this service to again be re-commissioned in partnership with Stoke-on-Trent City Council once the present contractual arrangement comes 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 guarantying 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.

#### **★ Review findings**

The deposit guarantee scheme is a useful tool in the prevention toolkit. It is specifically useful for customers with complex needs who may have needs that cannot be supported by Registered Housing Providers

## Rent Guarantee

In addition to the requirement for customers to provide a deposit when accessing private rented accommodation, it is also usual practice for 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, this scheme was originally developed so the Council could agree 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 because many landlords will not accept the guarantee and request that a monetary payment is made before the commencement of the tenancy.

### ★ Review findings

Take up of the Rent Guarantee scheme has fallen because Landlords request a monetary payment prior to the start of the tenancy.

## 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.

The Council has also incorporated into the one off payment fund, the budget for mediation, legal advice services and referrals for furniture support, and a dedicated sum to ensure that Private Sector Landlords can engage with incentives to support our customers into their accommodation. If a customer will benefit, 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, it has become standard practice for registered providers to request an upfront monetary payment for at least the value of four weeks rent, before a tenancy can commence. Despite the support of discretionary housing payments in suitable cases, we have found that many of our homeless customers require assistance with this payment to enable them to access accommodation.

### ★ Review findings

Further investigation is required on the impact the requirement of a cash payment for rent in advance is having on the one off payment fund.

The one off payment is proven to be a flexible approach for diverse incentives to support vulnerable customers as a homeless prevention tool.

## 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 Housing Strategy work hard to bring long term empty homes back into use with a focus on long term empties in a deteriorating condition. In 17/18, a total of 156 properties were recorded as being empty homes for over two years, 15 of these have been brought back into use through the direct intervention of the Council.

### 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. We have also seen an increase in usage since the introduction of the HRA.

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 Bed & Breakfast (B&B) accommodation for longer than 6 weeks. 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.

During the period of the current strategy we have increased the number of temporary accommodation units we have available to 10. This consists of the original 2 family units and an additional 8 one bedroom units.

Work continues to try and find further accommodation providers within Newcastle willing to accommodate homeless households in emergency situations on a more regular basis. However many of the feedback we are receiving is that the services are not set up to manage the many of our 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.

<b>Households Assisted in TA</b>					
<b>Category</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>
Single Person households	40	40	55	62	61
Two person households, no children	1	2	2	4	2

One or two person households with children	6	4	6	9	7
<b>Total Households</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>70</b>
Average length of stay (nights)	16	20	15	18	19

#### ★ Review findings

We have seen an increase in more than 50% in the need to place people in temporary accommodation during the past 5 years.

It is increasingly more difficult to source emergency accommodation that is suitable to for our customers with more complex needs.

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 we are in direct competition with a number of North Staffordshire agencies who also use it to temporarily accommodate their customers.

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

In emergency situations we do have to rely on using most emergency accommodation which is not based in our borough.

#### Permanent – sustainable accommodation

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

#### 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, and 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), 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.

A snapshot at the beginning of April 2019 highlighted that there were a total of 1258 applicants registered on the Housing Register.

### **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 line with the introduction of the HRA our Allocation's Policy was reviewed and amended to enable us to meet our responsibilities under the new legislation.

### **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.

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. There are accreditation schemes which help to raise standards and support landlords. Newcastle is part of the North Staffordshire landlord's forum and our staff actively participate in its delivery. The Council understands that working with private landlords can therefore not only help to avoid homelessness but also provide an alternative housing option for those in housing need.

### **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.

#### ★ Review findings

Access to and sustaining current tenancies in the private rented sector is crucial in both addressing and preventing homelessness. Developing good working relationships with landlords is key in support our aims to prevent 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, this is accentuated further by low local housing allowance rates across North Staffordshire.

Assistance and incentives are fundamental in enabling better access to the private rented sector in Newcastle. Work needs to continue to engage with landlords to further enhance services.

### **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.

Since the Southwark judgement work has been 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. During 2018 work commenced on a

thorough review of the Countywide 16 & 17 year old Homeless Protocol. This is in the final stages of completion and it is anticipated that it will be adopted by the end of 2019.

In addition, Children's services at County and Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council as their role of 'Corporate Parent' have developed a local offer for Care Leavers to ensure that looked after children and young people are prepared for independence. Within the offer is the development of a pathway plan which sets out what the young person needs and what support they will get. Accommodation and housing is part of the offer and within the Borough is a project between Children's services, the Council, NHA and Aspire Housing. The project identifies looked after children who are due to leave care services in the next 12 months and the agencies work together to ensure that suitable properties are available to meet the needs of the young people. The project is seen as a successful model that is to be replicated across the whole of Staffordshire. This will also be supported with a joint protocol for Care Leavers to be developed between County and all Staffordshire Districts. County have also been successful in a recent MHCLG funding round which enabled the recruitment of 2 support workers who offer support to prevent homelessness in care leavers across Staffordshire.

The risk of homelessness does not however only affect 16 & 17 year olds or those leaving care, 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

The pathway model for Care Leavers is considered good practise and is to be replicated across Staffordshire.

The Council welcomes the added resources the posts at County have brought to the area.

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

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 Abuse

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 abuse.

This includes a children and young person's independent domestic violence advocate, and pan Staffordshire Domestic Abuse service commissioned through a partnership of Staffordshire Commissioner's Office, Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire County Council. The service is for both Vulnerable Victims and Perpetrators and includes prevention approaches, Independent Domestic Abuse Advisors (IDVAs) to support individuals, plus awareness campaigning and training.

The Council also supports the MARAC pilot which meets in order to deescalate risk to the most vulnerable victims (survivors) of DA in order to ultimately prevent homicide.

The Council was also successful in the receipt of a joint funding bid with Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Moorlands Councils and Grow. The funding has provided a joint domestic abuse housing advice advocate that operates across the three local authority areas plus units of supported accommodation in the private sector, again spread across the three local authority areas.

#### Grow – 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).

In October 2019, the Government confirmed its plans to amend the Domestic Violence Bill and place a new statutory duty on local authorities to provide support. Ahead of the duty coming into force further funding will be made available to local authorities. We will work with our partners to ensure we meet the new duties and support those affected by domestic abuse in our borough.

#### ★ Review findings

The advocate grant funded role has been a welcome boost to support customers, statutory and voluntary agencies within the Borough

Domestic violence and relationship breakdown is a regular cause of homelessness in our borough.

In 2021 there will be a new statutory duty placed upon local authorities to provide support to survivors of domestic abuse.

#### Rough Sleepers

In the past Rough Sleepers have not tended to be represented in P1e data and we have relied on data provided via our outreach service and annual estimates. In response to the revised government guidance, we carry out an annual rough sleeper estimate every November. The estimates are 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
2019 (subject to final Homelessness Link verification)	6
2018	4
2017	5
2016	0
2015	7

Source: NBC annual estimate submission to DCLG

The number of individuals who sleep rough in Newcastle remain in single figures per night and are relatively comparative to previous years. However there has been an increase in the

number of people referred to and verified as rough sleepers in the borough. Using data from the outreach service, between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 29<sup>th</sup> September 2019 37 people have been identified as sleeping rough in the Borough. Using MHCLG definitions these are broken down in 13 New, 9 returning and 15 Stock. The majority of customers (15) are aged between 35 and 44, they are predominantly white males however we have seen an increase in the number of females who have slept rough (7).

The data also identifies a high prevalence of mental ill health and substance misuse amongst those who are sleeping rough. Partners report that this combination makes it very difficult to support rough sleepers and finding appropriate forms of accommodation, especially in Newcastle is also a challenge.

We have also seen a dramatic increase in begging particularly in the town centre by people who may portray themselves as but are not actually homeless. Public awareness of homelessness (in particular rough sleeping) and its impact on people and communities has also grown significantly over the past few years.

In comparison to other local authorities our overall figures still remain low; the Council believes this is due to the work of the jointly commissioned Rough Sleepers Outreach Service that operates in the borough and complementary services delivered by our partners.

The Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) is implemented each winter by the Council and its partners. In previous years this has been activated 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. However for the winter period 2019 -2020 SWEP will be activated when the temperature is forecast to be below zero for one night or more. When SWEP is active measures are in place to provide emergency shelter for anyone sleeping rough (following verification) until the weather improves. Whilst in the provision, the Rough Sleeper's Outreach Team will work with NHA to provide advice and assistance in order to try and prevent the reoccurrence of rough sleeping of individuals. Delivering SWEP is extremely challenging and resource intensive, the MHCLG offers local authorities the opportunity to bid for funding to enhance the SWEP offer available in their local areas. The Council would welcome the opportunity to work with partners to increase the provision available in Newcastle however to date has not found a partner agency willing to offer emergency provision for SWEP.

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, overall figures are monitored through the data provided by the Rough Sleeper's outreach service.

There has been an increase in the number of female rough sleepers.

Rough sleeping and begging has become much more visible in the town centre since the last review. Unlike annual rough sleeping estimates there are no national counts or estimates on the number of beggars in the UK.

The data identifies a high prevalence of mental ill health and substance misuse amongst those who are sleeping rough.

Finding suitable and sustainable accommodation in the Borough to support rough sleepers off the street is extremely difficult for all services working with rough sleepers.

There is no accommodation available in the borough which is specifically developed for rough sleepers.

Further provision is required locally to support the needs of rough sleepers and the annual delivery of the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol.

### 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.

Partners have reported an increased prevalence of mental health issues amongst service users, some of which may not have had a clinical diagnosis.

The Lyme Trust is a locally based charity that provides supported accommodation for people living with mental health problems. The service also supports people with substance misuse and addiction difficulties alongside any mental health issues.

Brighter Futures operates a service called 'Safe Recovery' in Newcastle. The service provides targeted support to Newcastle residents aged 18 and over with multiple and complex needs who without support could be at risk of homelessness. Access is via referrals made through the Newcastle Partnership Hub.

#### ★ 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

Feedback from Partner Agencies identify the beneficial work of the Safe Recovery service and partners to discuss future 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.

One Recovery Staffordshire, operates in Newcastle, workers are trained to treat primary addictions whilst developing recovery plans and linking in with other services to ensure personal needs are met.

There is no accommodation in the borough that offers specific rehabilitation support and services for purely drug and alcohol issues.

#### ★ 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.

Local support services have reported an increase in the number of individuals who are seeking assistance that have been previously supported in other local authority areas. This is having an impact on service provision.

#### 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, however regular engagement with probation and prison services are vital to ensure we are actively involved in regional developments.

## 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 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.

Partners report that they are seeing an increase in the number of customers who have complex needs.

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

## Hidden Homeless

The final area to consider when assessing levels of homelessness is the incidence of 'hidden homelessness' those who can be described as homeless but have found a temporary solution such as staying with friends or family or living in squats or other insecure accommodation. It's extremely difficult to quantify levels of hidden homelessness in the Borough, however we must acknowledge that they exist.

### ★ Review findings

The incidence of the 'hidden homelessness' exists in all local authority areas, although difficult to quantify we must acknowledge they exist. It is important that we develop plans that advertise and raise awareness of the services that area available in the borough.

## Resources

### MHCLG Homelessness Funding

#### Homelessness Prevention Grant

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 MHCLG which is partly rolled into the Business Rate Retention Scheme (BRRS). This amount is not ring fenced to homelessness; although the DCLG do expect Local Authorities to use the funding to prevent homelessness in their areas.

We have received £125,504 from the MHCLG to deliver homelessness prevention services during 2019 to 2020. Post 2020 we have not yet been notified as to what amount, if any we will be allocated.

#### Flexible Homelessness Support Grant

In addition to our main homelessness allocation we have received a further grant known as the Flexible homelessness support grant. We have received £40,000 for the past three financial years 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20. This grant funding has been ring fenced. We are not aware whether there is further grant funding allocated to Council's under this heading post 2020.

#### New Burden Funding

Finally we received a one off payment of c£100K under the new burden's scheme, this enabled us to implement the new duties bestowed upon us via the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. This grant was used to support the NHA service for the implementation of activities and to increase staff resources.

#### Rough Sleeper Initiative Funding

During 2019 -2020 following a bid to the Rough Sleeper Initiative Fund, we received £45,000 to recruit a rough sleeper coordinator in Newcastle for an 18 month contract.

#### 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 £171,687.00 for discretionary housing payments in 2018 - 2019.

### 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, during the current strategy we have been successful in securing additional domestic abuse funding across Newcastle, Stoke and Staffordshire Moorlands local authority areas.

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.

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 fully ring fenced.

Reductions in funding for supported accommodation and floating support services for vulnerable people at risk of homelessness do 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 and Rough Sleeping 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 and Rough Sleeping 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 and Rough Sleeping Strategy

### 5.1 Summary of Homelessness Review Findings

- The demand for social rented homes far outweighs the supply available.
- There is an increasing need to access accommodation in the private sector in order to meet housing need.
- Due to the limited supply of accommodation we must wherever possible support households to remain in their current accommodation.
- Landlords want to work with us but also want assurance that support is available if things go wrong in tenancies.
- Following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, there has been more than a 10% increase in the number of individuals the NHA service are assisting.
- In addition to the national main causes of homelessness and loss of last settled home, Domestic Abuse, non-violent relationship breakdown and landlords wishing to sell or re-let their private rented tenancies are regular reasons for households in Newcastle.
- Other reasons are recorded as a regular reason for loss of last settled home, as data recording develops through H-click we will need to identify whether there are also trends developing under this category.
- Annual figures under H-Click analysis are still uncertain whilst trends bed in. What is clear is that the introduction of the HRA has significantly increased the volume of those entitled to assistance. This is also impacting upon the need for temporary accommodation, staff resources and dependencies on limited supported accommodation.
- 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.
- The deposit guarantee scheme is a useful tool in the prevention toolkit. It is specifically useful for customers with complex needs who may have needs that cannot be supported by Registered Housing Providers.
- Take up of the Rent Guarantee scheme has fallen, the main reason being: Landlords request a monetary payment prior to the start of the tenancy over the Council's guarantee for rent.
- Further investigation is required on the impact the requirement of a cash payment for rent in advance is having on the one off payment fund.
- The one off payment is proven to be flexible approach for diverse incentives to support vulnerable customers as a homeless prevention tool.
- We have seen an increase of more than 50% the need to place people in temporary accommodation during the past 5 years.
- It is increasingly more difficult to source emergency accommodation that is suitable to for our customers with more complex needs.
- 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 we are in direct competition with a number of North Staffordshire agencies who also use it to temporarily accommodate their customers.
- In emergency situations despite our desire not to we may have to place young people in emergency accommodation.
- In emergency situations we do have to rely on using most emergency accommodation which is not based in our borough.
- Access to and sustaining current tenancies in the private rented sector is crucial in both addressing and preventing homelessness. Developing good working relationships with landlords is key in support our aims to prevent 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, this is accentuated further by low local housing allowance rates across North Staffordshire.
- Assistance and incentives are fundamental in enabling better access to the PRS in Newcastle.
- The pathway model for Care Leavers is considered good practice and is to be replicated across Staffordshire.
- The Council welcomes the added resources the posts at County have brought to the area.
- It is becoming increasingly more difficult to access accommodation for young people, who seek assistance at NHA
- 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 year
- The advocate grant funded role has been a welcome boost to support customers, statutory and voluntary agencies within the Borough
- Domestic violence and relationship breakdown is a regular cause of homelessness in our borough.
- In 2021 there will be a new statutory duty placed upon local authorities to provide support to survivors of domestic abuse.
- The number of rough sleepers in the borough has increased since the last review, overall figures are monitored through the data provided by the Rough Sleeper's outreach service.
- There has been an increase in the number of female rough sleepers.
- Rough sleeping and begging has become much more visible in the town centre since the last review. Unlike annual rough sleeping estimates there are no national counts or estimates on the number of beggars in the UK.
- The data identifies a high prevalence of mental ill health and substance misuse amongst those who are sleeping rough.
- Finding suitable and sustainable accommodation in the Borough to support rough sleepers off the street is extremely difficult for all services working with rough sleepers.
- There is no accommodation available in the borough which is specifically developed for rough sleepers.
- Further provision is required locally to support the needs of rough sleepers and the annual delivery of the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol.
- 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
- Feedback from Partner Agencies identify the beneficial work of the Safe Recovery service and discussions with partners about future 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.
- Local support services have reported an increase in the number of individuals who are seeking assistance that have been previously supported in other local authority areas. This is having an impact on service provision.
- There are very low levels of prison leavers who present as homeless to NHA, however regular engagement with probation and prison services are vital to ensure we are actively involved in regional developments.
- Whilst the older population is increasing, at present our homelessness service does not encounter many older people presenting as homeless.
- Vulnerable people with complex needs may not be able to access services which offer the required level of support for multiple needs.
- Partners report that they are seeing an increase in the number of customers who have complex needs.
- Providing services for people with complex needs can be challenging due to the diverse mix of needs a person may have.
- The incidence of the 'hidden homelessness' exists in all local authority areas, although difficult to quantify we must acknowledge they exist. It is important that we develop plans that advertise and raise awareness of the services that area available in the borough.
- We have a very uncertain future in relation to the funding of services which assist us in preventing homelessness.
- 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 fully ring fenced.
- Reductions in funding for supported accommodation and floating support services for vulnerable people at risk of homelessness do have a knock on effect across the homelessness and housing advice service.

## 5.2 Recommended Priorities for the new Newcastle under Lyme Homelessness and Rough Sleeping 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 and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020 – 2025.

1. Preventing Homelessness
2. Support homeless households into sustainable housing solutions
3. Work in partnership to address the causes of homelessness in Newcastle
4. Tackling Rough Sleeping