



North Tyneside Council

**North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2013 - 2018**  
**Appendix 5: Consultation Report**

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## **1. Purpose of the report**

This report details the consultation and engagement process adopted to assist with the development of the North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2013 -18. It summarises the information received into one document and explains how it has been used to help inform the strategy.

## **2. Introduction**

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities to formulate a homelessness strategy by carrying out a homelessness review for their district. The published strategy should be based on the results of that review and the life of the strategy should be no more than 5 years.

The first North Tyneside Homelessness Strategy was published in 2003. In 2008 it was reviewed and the Homelessness Strategy 2008 -13 published. A review of that strategy, and establishing the current picture of homelessness within the borough took place September 2012 – March 2013.

Homelessness can have a detrimental effect on individuals, families and communities and can undermine social cohesion. Homelessness is often linked to alcohol and drug abuse, poor physical & mental health, crime and anti-social behaviour, poor educational attainment, debt, unemployment and the breakdown of support networks.

Tackling the effects of homelessness can be costly to the public purse, when compared to the costs associated with proactively seeking to prevent homelessness in the first place. Evidence demonstrates that investment in local homelessness prevention services saves significant amounts of public money across local statutory agencies, including housing, health, criminal justice and community safety. A report produced by DCLG in 2012 that reviewed the costs of homelessness provided an initial overview of government's and other organisations' costs to them resulting from homelessness. A gross total cost to public services ranges from £24,000 to £30,000 per person, per year.

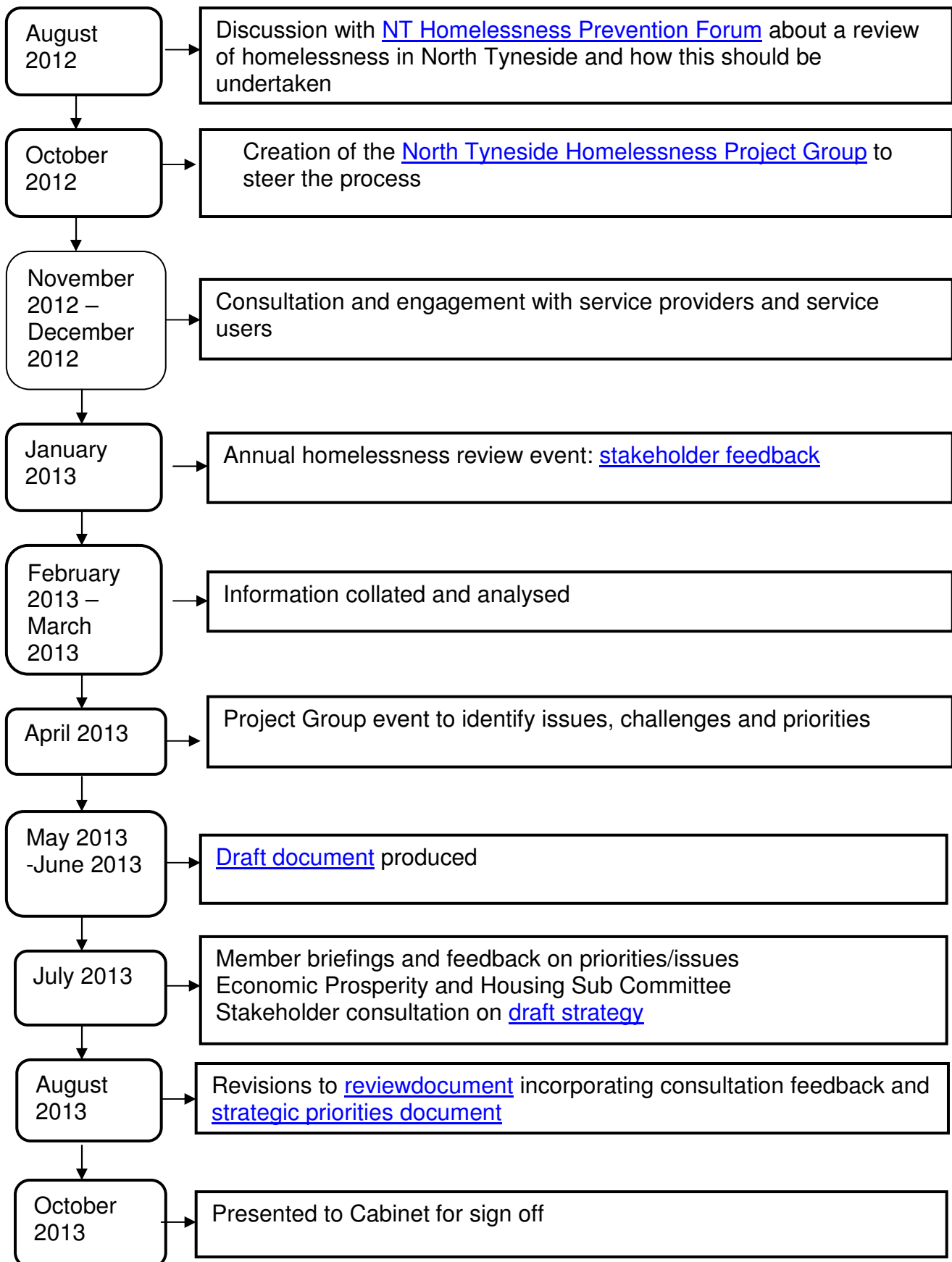
Homelessness prevention strategies should seek to deliver improved and improving services to anyone in the local area, who is genuinely homeless or threatened with homelessness, regardless of whether they may be owed the main statutory homelessness duty or not.

Local authorities are encouraged to ensure that robust homelessness prevention strategies are developed and delivered in partnership across a range of statutory and voluntary sector partners, and focus on early intervention and prevention.

The Homelessness Act 2002 states that the purpose of this strategic approach is:

- To prevent homelessness in the district of the authority;
- To secure accommodation that is or will be available for people in the district who are or who may become homeless; and
- To provide support for people in the district who are or who may become homeless.

### 3. Consultation and engagement process



At our August 2012 North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention Forum meeting a discussion took place around the requirement to review the existing homelessness strategy and develop a new one for North Tyneside. It was agreed to create a project group to oversee all aspects of the review work and recommend future strategic priorities, including the identification of and agreeing to the most appropriate ways of engaging with stakeholders, service providers and service users to ensure that their feedback was meaningful and influenced the shaping of the documents produced for 2013 -18 strategy.

The project group, made up of council officers from Housing Strategy, North Tyneside Homes, Children's Services and Adult Social Care, Public Health and partner representatives from Isos Housing and Norcare has met on a bi monthly basis. Work has included looking at homeless services and data to establish the current picture of homelessness in the borough, identifying trends, issues, and gaps and recommending what the homelessness prevention strategy 2013 -18 should focus on. Progress on this work has been reported to the North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention Forum.

The North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention Forum has an independent Chair and meets on a quarterly basis to discuss the impact that housing and homelessness related legislative and policy changes may have on services and service users, listen to guest speakers on a range of subjects that contribute to addressing homelessness and ensure that housing and the housing support needs of homeless people remain high profile.

The annual homelessness strategy review event takes place in January of each year. Key aims of this event are to review the previous year's work, look at legislative changes and their implications for borough based homelessness services and assist with the identification of priorities for the next year's action plan. It provides partners and wider organisations with the opportunity to have their say and contribute to the preventing homelessness agenda.

The 2012 -13 event was attended by 50 people, attendance has increased year on year, with [positive feedback](#) received on the content, delivery and networking opportunities. Aims of the event focused on the current national and local homelessness context with a particular focus on youth homelessness, how through strong partnerships people have successfully moved on from a difficult period in their lives and through a workshop session looked at the 10 challenges included in the government's prevention strategy 'Making Every Contact Count: a joint approach to preventing homelessness' to identify where North Tyneside currently is in terms of the challenges, what needs to be done and who the lead will be.

Engagement with service providers took place through agency visits and the completion of a [questionnaire](#). This questionnaire focused on what currently works well to contribute to service delivery, the barriers and challenges providers considered to be an issue for them in preventing homelessness and what would they like the next strategy to tackle. Four providers participated in this.

On behalf of the local authority providers met with their service users and completed a [questionnaire](#) with them. The service user questions looked at how someone had become homeless in the first instance, did they know what to do in that situation, did they receive the right help and what support and guidance would they offer to someone in a similar situation. Information was received from 18 service users.

To establish if the health needs of homeless people are being met, North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention Forum agreed to a [health needs audit](#) being undertaken. Using the Homeless Link toolkit that focuses on four themes; access and usage of health services, physical and mental health, drug and alcohol use and access to screening and vaccinations, six organisations participated over a one month period (September 2012) with 35 surveys being completed.

A [briefing paper](#) was presented to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Environment in June 2013. This paper outlined the development of a homelessness prevention strategy for the borough and the work undertaken to date.

A [presentation](#) took place at the all Member Briefing sessions held 2 and 3 July, with feedback sought. This information was also shared at the Economic, Prosperity and Housing sub committee held 23 July 2013. The presentation and feedback form were also circulated to Members through their weekly newsletter on 8 July 2013. The closing date for feedback was 26 July 2013. 22 members participated in this.

The draft homelessness review report was circulated to the North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention Forum, internal officers including Heads of Service and Strategic Directors, neighbouring local authorities, and Chief Executives from registered providers. This was accompanied by a [feedback form](#) asking if our future priorities are right, if anything is missing and if any other factors should be considered. The closing date for this was 7 August 2013, with 5 returns.

## **4. Feedback**

### **4.1 Annual homelessness strategy review event**

Information from the stakeholders who attended the annual homelessness strategy workshop session concluded that:

- Partners thought a strong commitment to effectively deal with homelessness in the borough already exists;
- A lot of good work and partnerships already exist to address homelessness;
- Current services should be reviewed and feedback sought to highlight what is working well and where improvements could be made;
- The development of transparent and cross service pathways that meet a range of client groups are needed;
- Written advice to service users on their housing decision and options available to them should be provided; and
- Service guidelines for providers and service users on what to do in a housing crisis and where to go for advice should be made available.

### **4.2 Service providers**

Three main barriers were identified by service providers that they felt impacted on them successfully contributing to preventing homelessness. These were:

- Ongoing funding sustainability and changes to funding allocations;

- The lack of appropriate move on accommodation for their service users to move in to; and
- No generic outreach support for service users to tap in to, when needed.

Service providers considered the main challenges that service users face to be:

- Securing appropriate housing and having furniture and utensils to make a home with;
- Being able to afford a home;
- The ability to successfully maintain a tenancy;
- Being equipped with the right life skills, including budget advice to sustain a tenancy;
- Having access to employment and training opportunities; and
- Overcoming the 'unknown' of welfare reform.

Service providers felt the strategy should tackle:

- Increasing the supply of supported housing and outreach support;
- Raising awareness on where to go for housing and homelessness advice;
- Improved partnership working; and
- Enabling service users to access employment, training opportunities and improved access to health services.

### **4.3 Service users**

Key findings from the work that service providers undertook with their service users were:

- The main reasons for homelessness include family relationship breakdown, financial arrears, prison release or hospital discharge;
- Being able to talk to someone about their housing crisis before it is too late; and
- Information should be readily available and easily accessible on what happens when you are in a homeless situation, where to go and what to do.

Service users thought the following would be beneficial to help someone keep their home:

- Budget and money management advice being available;
- Access to training and employment opportunities;
- Tenancy management advice;
- Ongoing support from an outreach worker; and
- Following any rules that are set!

#### **4.4 Homeless Health Needs Audit**

The two main findings from this work were:

- People thought they would benefit from timely access to specialist mental health services; and
- Talking therapies, practical support and activities to enhance positive mood and wellbeing would be helpful.

#### **4.5 Elected Members**

Outcomes from the sessions held with elected members and information circulated to them concluded that they agreed with the proposed strategic priorities. Additional comments and observations that have been considered for inclusion are:

- Clarification on the process for young people leaving care in a planned way and moving into a home;
- The use of temporary accommodation;
- Exploring alternative housing uses for some council owned properties;
- Working with a range of developers and registered providers to increase the mix of social housing;
- Recognising that not everyone may have access to web based information, therefore written guidance that can be handed out also needs to be considered;
- Access to the private rented sector; and
- Working with our residents to minimise the impact of changes to their disposable income through Welfare Reform.

#### **4.6 Wider consultation**

All those who participated in this agreed that the review document is reflective of homelessness and homelessness services in the borough. Four agreed with the proposed strategic priorities, with one in disagreement. Thoughts and ideas for inclusion were:

- Understanding the causes of homelessness and listening to people affected by it, then shaping services to meet that understanding;
- A greater emphasis on working with other agencies on issues of support and prevention would be useful. To deal with matters of worklessness, health problems addictions and loneliness etc:
- The four priorities are overarching, and then need to focus on the main causes of homelessness (as evidenced by the stats and feedback).

### **5. How has the information and feedback been used**

The information that has been gathered and feedback received following work with stakeholders, service providers and service users has helped to inform the future strategic priorities that are set out in the strategy and identified actions that are included in the action plan. This plan will be monitored on a quarterly basis and refreshed annually to ensure that emerging legislative and policy changes are included in any work undertaken to prevent homelessness.