



A review of homelessness in North Tyneside 2008 -2013

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Two key documents make up the North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2013 – 2018.

The first, this one ‘a review of homelessness in North Tyneside 2008 -2013’ looks at:

- Why we need a homelessness prevention strategy;
- What has been achieved in terms of homelessness prevention during the life span of the homelessness strategy 2008 -2013;
- Explores current homelessness data and how this has informed the current picture of homelessness in the borough; and
- Identifies the strategic priorities for 2013 -2018.

The second document, is the strategy and action plan and sets out the strategic priorities in more detail. It identifies why they are a priority and what needs to be done to achieve our objectives. The action plan will be monitored quarterly and reviewed and amended each year to ensure that ongoing and emerging priorities are incorporated.

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1. Homelessness: what does it mean?

“Homelessness means not having a home – most people who are homeless don't sleep on the street. Even if you have a roof over your head you can still be homeless. This is because you may not have any rights to stay where you live or your home might be unsuitable for you due to severe overcrowding or other reasons.” (Shelter, 2011)

2. Why do we need a homelessness prevention strategy?

The 1996 Housing Act is the key legislation in respect of homelessness. If the “main duty” is accepted for a household, the local authority has a duty to provide temporary accommodation until settled accommodation is available. This duty is usually discharged and brought to an end with an offer of social housing. In response to a national increase in homeless applications and people living in temporary accommodation government introduced the Homelessness Act 2002.

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

The Act goes on to state 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.

The Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities 2006 provides statutory guidance including the interpretation of the homelessness strategy and review requirements set out in the Homelessness Act 2002.

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

The review findings and supporting information will help to inform this strategy. Understanding the causes of homelessness and listening to people who have experienced or been affected by homelessness will help to enable housing and homelessness services to be shaped and delivered within the borough that meet that understanding.

3. What are the benefits of having a homelessness prevention strategy?

As a council we have a moral duty to ensure the health and wellbeing of all our residents. Homelessness can have a detrimental effect on individuals, families and communities and can undermine social cohesion. Homelessness is linked to alcohol and drug abuse, poor physical and mental health, crime and anti-social behaviour, poor educational attainment, debt, worklessness 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 homeless 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: evidence review the costs of homelessness 2012** provided an initial overview of government and other organisations evidence of the magnitude of financial costs to them resulting from homelessness. A gross total cost to public services ranges from £24,000 to £30,000 per person, per year.

4. Context, research and best practice

4.1 The national context

The national reform agenda has meant local homelessness services have had to adapt quickly to deliver services more efficiently, and to mitigate potential homelessness impacts arising from welfare reform. Key legislative changes that have had, or will have a direct impact on the way in which councils deliver housing and homelessness services include:

A vision to end rough sleeping: No Second Night Out Nationwide: July 2011

followed a no second night out pilot exercise in London. The report recommends that all local authorities adopt a 'no second night out' approach to reducing rough sleeping and addressing single homelessness through developing services and partnerships to ensure that anyone found sleeping rough is supported indoors to prevent them having to spend a second night on the streets. To support national delivery of this vision, £20 million investment has been made available through the Homelessness Transition Fund.

Localism Act 2011: devolves greater powers to councils and neighbourhoods giving local communities more control over housing and planning decisions. In terms of the impact on homelessness the Act means:

- Local authorities will be able to set qualifying criteria for housing assistance, and will be able to discharge homeless duties by offering accommodation in the private rented sector. Existing tenants wishing to transfer will no longer have to go through the same allocation process as other applicants; and
- Local authorities will be able to offer new tenants 'flexible tenure' (fixed term secure tenancies) rather than traditional 'lifetime' tenancies, to make better use of social housing stock. The Act also makes a number of technical changes to facilitate the use of fixed-term tenancies by social landlords.

Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England: November 2011 sets out a package of reforms that address concerns across the housing market. It aims to make it easier to secure mortgages on new homes, improve fairness in social housing and help bring long term empty homes back into use. Increasing the number of affordable homes available will help to reduce homelessness.

Welfare Reform Act 2012: March 2012 introduces the biggest change to the welfare system for over 60 years. It includes a range of proposals that will directly or indirectly impact on tenants and landlords. From a housing perspective the Act aims to:

- Contain growing housing benefit expenditure;
- Make better use of available social housing stock and tackle high levels of under occupation;
- Encourage greater mobility within the social rented sector; and
- Improve work incentives for working age claimants so that people are not better off being on benefits.

The impact of the changes will vary between local authority areas, with demand for social housing, smaller homes and rent arrears expected to increase.

Making Every Contact Count: a joint approach to preventing homelessness: August 2012 focuses on how services can be managed in a way that prevents all households, regardless of whether they are families, couples, or single people, from reaching a crisis point of being faced with homelessness. It reinforces that it is not just about providing a home, but about tackling wider issues such as improving health and wellbeing, reducing re-offending and enabling people to access training and employment opportunities. The document sets out five common themes that should contribute to a local strategic response. These are:

- Agencies working together to target those at risk of homelessness;
- Identifying and tackling the underlying causes of homelessness as part of housing needs assessments by referral to appropriate support;
- Local authorities co-ordinating access to services for vulnerable people; multi agency action, case work, agencies responding flexibly;
- Increasing access to the private sector; supporting people to remain in private sector tenancies; and
- A focus on youth homelessness.

Local authority homelessness prevention strategies should align themselves with the national agenda and reflect local commitment to developing services that will meet the 10 challenges, known as the '**gold standard**' that are included in the report. These are:

- To adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness, which has buy in across all local authority services;
- To actively work in partnership with the voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs;
- To offer a Housing Options prevention service to all clients including written advice;
- To adopt a No Second Night Out model or an effective local alternative;
- To have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that include appropriate accommodation and support;

- To develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both client and landlord;
- To actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme;
- To have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually to be responsive to emerging needs;
- To not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation; and
- To not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and for no longer than 6 weeks.

Supplementary guidance on the homelessness changes in the Localism Act 2011 and on the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012 – November 2012 covers the changes that sections 148 and 149 of the Localism Act make to homelessness legislation. It explains how, in practice the new power that allows private rented sector offers to be made to end the main homelessness duty should work and what local authorities should do as a consequence of the new power's introduction.

The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012 – November 2012 requires local authorities to put in place arrangements to ensure that the private rented sector offer accommodation is suitable. In determining whether accommodation is suitable for a household, the local housing authority must take into account the location of the accommodation, including:

- Where the accommodation is situated outside the district of the local housing authority, the distance of the accommodation from the district of the authority;
- The significance of any disruption that would be caused by the location of the accommodation to the employment, caring responsibilities or education of the person or members of the person's household; and
- The proximity and accessibility of the accommodation to medical facilities, local services, amenities, transport and other support which are currently used and are essential to either the person or members of the person's household.

Consideration must also be given to the physical condition of the property and that the landlord is a 'fit and proper' person.

The Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preference for Former Armed Forces Personnel) (England) Regulations 2012: November 2012 section 166A confirms additional preference must be given to certain members of the armed forces who have urgent housing need and who fall within one of the existing reasonable preference categories.

4.2 Research and best practice

Several homeless research reports and studies have been published since 2008 that focus on specific client groups and the issues they face in overcoming their homelessness. These include:

The Cyrenians: Homelessness Pathways to Exclusion and Opportunities for Intervention 2011 over 80 homeless people across the North East region participated in this. It established that there are two pathways into homelessness; a 'lifelong' one and a 'life events' one. Disadvantages stemmed from childhood and continued into adulthood with parental addictions and domestic abuse the two key factors with damaging effects. 25% of those who participated in this study had been in local authority care at some point during their childhood.

Barnardos: Exploring Socially Excluded Young People's Strategies for bridging the gap between income and expenditure 2012 explores how socially excluded 16 - 25 year olds in the North East region manage the funds available to them in a challenging economic climate and the strategies they use to manage the financial gap.

Making Every Adult Matter: a four point manifesto for tackling multiple needs and exclusions 2009 includes proposals to improve the lives of people with multiple needs and exclusions, including those with problems around substance misuse, mental health, homelessness and offending. This was followed up with a review paper: **Progress on multiple needs and exclusions in 2012**.

JRF: tackling homelessness and exclusion: understanding complex lives 2011 highlights the prevalence of mental health issues, traumatic childhood experiences and suicide attempts amongst people accessing low level homelessness support services.

Homeless Link Better Together: preventing reoffending and homelessness 2011 examines how the criminal justice and homelessness sectors work together to prevent homelessness and reoffending. It identifies that partnership working provides better support and outcomes for the client.

JRF: improving housing outcomes for young people 2011 includes a number of initiatives that aim to help young people access an ever shrinking housing market.

Homeless Link: young and homeless 2012 evidences more young people are becoming homeless or being threatened with homelessness across England.

Crisis: homelessness kills 2012 looks at the mortality of homeless people in England between 2001 - 2009. Homeless men have an average life expectancy of 47 years; this drops to 43 years for homeless women, with over a third of deaths being attributed to drug and alcohol misuse.

Depaul UK Making it Matter: improving the health of young homeless people 2012 explores the health issues that affect young homeless people and identifies barriers that they may experience in accessing relevant health services. Young people from North Tyneside participated in this.

In 2013 **Making it Matter: Putting it into practice: help and guidance for commissioners, health and wellbeing boards and providers** was published to assist Health and Wellbeing Boards, Clinical Commissioning Groups, commissioners and providers address the complex needs of young people.

4.3 The regional context

A Regional Homelessness Group made up of the 12 North East local authorities, Homeless Link, Shelter, Crisis, Youth Homeless North East and Northern Rock Foundation have been working together to address rough sleeping and single homelessness since mid 2011. DCLG funding has been made available to the region to help tackle single homelessness and rough sleeping.

A regional action plan has been developed that sets out how local authorities aim to achieve the objectives, in particular meeting the needs of rough sleepers and implementing no second night out, but other projects that will help to minimise homelessness are also being developed. Individual action plans that focus on reducing rough sleeping have been developed for each local authority area, recognising that the issues, capacity and actions differ between authorities.

The top regional priorities are to:

- Help existing entrenched rough sleepers off the streets and into sustainable accommodation;
- Implement No Second Night Out across the region;
- Help the most difficult people to work with, including those with multiple exclusions;
- Ensure that anything that is commissioned complements or adds value to existing provision and the Homelessness Transition Fund regional projects; and
- Work in partnership with other statutory and voluntary sector agencies to prevent homelessness and maximise resources.

Within Tyne and Wear the local authorities and their respective housing organisations have worked together to create Tyne and Wear Homes, a sub regional choice based lettings scheme. This allows people, once registered for housing, to apply for social housing across the sub region from one central source, rather than filling in several application forms. The scheme includes an electronic housing option toolkit that once completed can provide applicants with information on sub regional housing opportunities and more detailed advice on a range of services within a preferred area.

Youth Homeless North East, previously known as North East Regional Youth Homeless Network provides a regional focus for the sector in addressing youth homelessness. It provides a voice for young people to influence service provision, policy and strategy change, promote innovation and best practice to ultimately bring about change to end youth homelessness. A regional youth housing strategy 2013 -2014 with 6 key priorities and supporting action plan was launched January 2013.

4.4 The local context

There are several key local strategies and plans that have been considered alongside the development of the homelessness prevention strategy 2013 – 2018. These are:

Our North Tyneside Council Plan 2014 - 2018 has four key themes, our people, our places, our economy and our partners. Priorities within these themes include the provision of services that respond quickly to people's needs, keeping people safe, providing new homes, including quality, affordable housing, creating more job opportunities and apprenticeships and ensuring that people have the necessary skills to do them, helping people to be healthier and fulfil their potential and building stronger working relationships with our partners.

The **Strategic Housing Partnership Plan 2013 - 2014** sets out key performance indicators and identifies actions that will deliver the strategic housing role. Preventing homelessness is included in Priority 3: Enable a range of housing options to prevent homelessness and promote independent living.

The **Private Sector Empty Homes Delivery Plan 2012- 2015** aims to encourage all empty home owners to bring their properties back into use, providing innovative solutions to tackling empty homes and increasing housing options in North Tyneside.

The **Tenancy Strategy 2013 - 2018** provides guidance to registered providers operating in North Tyneside, including the Council's own landlord function, North Tyneside Homes. Guidance is underpinned by the need to make best use of the housing stock to meet local housing need, maintain and create successful, sustainable communities and prevent homelessness.

The **Homefinder Lettings Policy** aims to help people access secure, suitable and affordable homes within North Tyneside.

The **Community Safety Strategy 2011 - 2014** has three key priorities. These are to safeguard our communities, improve quality of life and improve public confidence.

North Tyneside Joint Strategic Needs Assessment has five key themes that outline some of the challenges and the priorities that need to be addressed to reduce health and wellbeing inequalities and improve the life chances of those who are homeless.

North Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group Locality Commissioning Plan 2012 - 13 – 2014 - 15 sets out how we will work together to maximise the health and wellbeing of North Tyneside communities by making the best use of NHS resources.

The **Looked After Children Delivery Plan 2010 -14** sets out the strategic vision for delivering sustainable improvements in the lives of looked after children which ensure they are able to fulfil their potential.

The **North Tyneside Children and Young People's Plan 2010-14** contains the priorities for enhancing children's services, and improving outcomes for children, young people and families, particularly those most vulnerable.

5. What we have achieved in partnership since 2008

Delivery of the North Tyneside Homelessness Strategy 2008 - 2013 has been within a broader context. We have worked with our partners to improve and develop housing related services and tackle homelessness. A range of homelessness prevention measures have been introduced, services have been remodelled to meet changing need and policy changes have been implemented. Shared achievements include:

- The development of new supported housing schemes:
 - Maritime Court: a purpose built scheme consisting of 9 x 1 bed self contained flats by Isos Housing for 16 – 24 year olds with 24 hour on site support provided by Places for People;
 - New Beginnings: 14 x 1 bed flats for young parents with on site facilities and support and three satellite properties managed by North Tyneside Homes;
 - Domestic abuse scheme: purpose built properties by Isos Housing comprising of 14 self contained homes replacing the outdated shared facilities previously available. 24 hour support is provided through Harbour;
- Barnardos crash pad scheme for 16 – 17 year olds, and up to 21 years old if a care leaver;
- Successful funding bids to modernise existing services and implement new ones, such as:

- The award of £439,991 to Depaul UK from the Homelessness Change Programme 2011 to increase capacity and improve living standards within their supported housing scheme;
 - £25,000 being received in 2010 from the Crisis PRS funding pot for the development of a local authority Bond Bank scheme to assist non priority homeless applicants access the private rented sector;
 - £40,000 being awarded from the same funding stream in 2012 enabling Depaul UK to create a Private Rented Access Development Scheme to support 18 -35 year olds, some of whom may have an offending background secure a private rented sector tenancy; and
 - £48,000 being awarded from the regional homelessness group for the creation of a Co-ordinator post to work with a cohort of people with multiple needs. Support will also be available from the national Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) coalition.
- Working with Job Centre Plus in the creation of Working Homes Outreach Team to support people by removing barriers, such as homelessness before providing assistance into employment. The linking of housing and employability in a joined up service has helped to address multiple needs, whilst reducing and preventing homelessness;
 - An Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) based within the Accident and Emergency Team, North Tyneside General Hospital. Medical staff are able to refer, where there have been no reported domestic abuse incidents to the Police, to the IDVA with the individual's consent, to enable them to receive information on services and support available to them;
 - The restructuring and centralisation of the homelessness team to become the housing advice team. Changes to working practices have led to an increase in preventions and a decrease in homelessness acceptances;
 - Changes to the allocations policy, including revised priority banding awarded to those leaving supported housing, the introduction of Tyne and Wear Homes that has increased housing choice, location and tenure, and the development of a web based enhanced housing options tool to assist people with their housing choices;
 - Meeting DCLGs temporary accommodation target within the timeframe. This led to a review of temporary accommodation use and rationalisation of the provision to meet emerging client need;
 - Isos Housing and the local authority Youth Homeless Prevention Officer raising awareness of homelessness in secondary schools through a series of pupil briefing sessions;
 - The introduction of a Support Gateway for supported housing and outreach support. This has resulted in the removal of waiting lists for schemes enabling quicker access to services;
 - Ongoing success of the local authority Deposit Guarantee Scheme. Over 280 private sector tenancies have been created since the scheme began in June 2007;
 - Continued delivery of the Sanctuary Scheme to enable households at risk of homelessness through domestic abuse to remain in their own home;

- Implementation of North Tyneside's Joint Protocol between North Tyneside Homes and Children's Services for homeless 16 and 17 year olds;
- The creation of trainer flats for young people leaving care, both in the private and social housing sector;
- A planned move on and priority banding awarded for housing to young people who are being supported by Children's Services, the Leaving Care Team or who are considered to be vulnerable by a recognised care or support professional and an appropriate care or support service is in place;
- Delivery of the Mortgage Rescue Scheme that, since 2010 has resulted in 34 households being able to remain in their own home;
- The introduction of North Tyneside Homes Financial Inclusion Team to work with tenants affected by welfare reform changes, and for new tenants the provision of support and financial advice and assistance for the first 6 weeks of their tenancy;
- A Tenancy Support Officer post being created within Revenue and Benefits to work with private sector tenants affected by the welfare reform changes; and
- The completion of 623 affordable homes throughout the borough.

6. Setting the scene

6.1 Population

The 2011 census confirmed the population of North Tyneside to be 200,800; of this 9,839 (4.9%) residents are from a Black Minority or Ethnic background (BME). If current trends continue then population projections indicate that it is likely to rise to 224,900 by 2035, an increase of 26,600 people (13.4%).

There are more females than males, with a growing increase in the number of single person and lone parent households. There is an increase in the number of people aged 65 years and over, with this age group growing by 46.6% by 2035.

6.2 Housing

There are 91,300 households in the borough. This has grown by 7.6% since the 2001 census. The total housing stock is 94,792, of which 3,239 properties (3.4%) across all tenures are currently empty.

Almost 62,000 homes (65%) are privately owned, with approximately 20,700 homes (22%) rented from the local authority (16%) or a registered provider (6%). Just over 12,000 homes (13%) are in the private rented sector. Since the 2001 census private renting has doubled, with owner occupation declining, reversing a long term trend.

North Tyneside Homes let 1,516 properties during 2012 -2013. The number of homes available from social re-lets is broadly the same as the number of people who register each year, so the list is perpetual. As at 1 April 2013 there were 4,446 households on the Housing Register, 40 of these were priority homeless applicants.

The SHMA update 2011 identified an annual shortfall of 479 affordable homes in the borough. Approximately 100 affordable homes are built each year, so there is a continued reliance on social housing to meet housing need.

94% of council and 100% of registered provider's properties meet the decent homes standard. 65% of private sector homes meet the standard, but 35% (25,500) are still classed as non decent, with the number of non decent private sector properties in six council wards being above the local and national average.

The ability of someone being able to buy their own home is dependent on the relationship between their income and the purchase price of the property; this is known as the affordability ratio. The affordability ratio for the borough is 5.84 for a single income household and 3.84 for dual income. This is higher than the government guidance that states 3.5 for a single income household and 2.9 for a dual income household. To purchase an entry level two bed terraced property in the borough requires an annual income of £24,400 for a single income household and £29,500 for a dual income household. The average cost of buying a home in North Tyneside is £117,557.¹

Entry level rent into the private rented sector has increased by 6% since the 2009 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). The South West is the cheapest area to rent at £400 for a two bed flat. The North West is the most expensive with the rent for a one bed flat being greater than the cost of buying an entry level property. To privately rent an entry level two bed terraced property requires an annual income of £24,000. Access to the private rented sector can also be restricted by the upfront costs, such as deposit and rent in advance that prospective tenants have to pay.

It is estimated that around 3,300 working age households (local authority and registered provider tenants) will be affected by the under occupancy charge. Approximately 300 people in the private sector aged under 35 years will be affected by changes to the shared accommodation rate that have been introduced through the welfare reform changes.

6.3 Employment

An estimated 77.5% of the population aged 16 - 64 years are either in employment or actively looking for work. North Tyneside has the lowest rate of Job Seekers Allowance claimants in Tyne and Wear. 18 -24 year olds represent the largest group of unemployed (11.1%); this is higher than the regional (10.9%) and national (7.1%) average. Unemployment is higher amongst males (10.8%) than females (8%).

Since 2001 the number of people who have never worked and are long term unemployed has risen 49% to 7,660.

9% of young people aged 16–18 years are classed as NEET (not in education, employment or training).

Unemployment amongst those who experience homelessness remains high, as without a settled address it is often difficult to gain and sustain employment.

6.4 Health

North Tyneside is ranked 60th worst out of 348 local authorities for the number of residents in bad health. Deprivation is higher than the national average and around 7,500 children live in poverty.

¹ North Tyneside Survey of House Prices 2012

Life expectancy for both men and women is slightly lower than the national average; however life expectancy for men is 11 years lower and for women 9 years lower in the most deprived areas of the borough, i.e. Riverside, Wallsend, Howdon and Chirton than the least deprived ones.

In North Tyneside alcohol is the second biggest lifestyle health risk after tobacco use. Alcohol misuse is a major problem and concern in terms of health, social and economic consequences. Alcohol and drug dependency are both prevalent amongst those who have been homeless or who are homeless.

Hospital stays for self harm and alcohol related harm are higher than the national average; reducing harmful alcohol consumption is a priority for North of Tyne NHS.

Poor mental health and wellbeing in some parts of the borough are directly linked to socio economic deprivation and vulnerability. Depression and mental health issues are more common amongst the homeless population than the general population.

Teenage pregnancy rates are higher in the North East of England than the national average. Since the implementation of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy in 1999 - 2000, North Tyneside has seen a 44.5% reduction in teenage pregnancies between 1998 - 2011. This is better than the national reduction of 34% for the same period. Despite this reduction, young women who have a birth in their teenage years are more vulnerable to poorer health, educational and social outcomes than those who have a birth aged 20 – 39 years. Reducing unintended teenage pregnancies and support for young parents remain priority areas for North Tyneside.

6.5 Crime

North Tyneside is the safest metropolitan borough in England, with recorded episodes of crime and disorder and anti social behaviour continuing to fall. There are still some areas in the borough where crime and disorder remain high, when compared to the rest of the borough. These areas generally coincide with wider social problems, such as poor health, worklessness, and vulnerability.

For 2012 -2013 all crimes fell by 6%, with drug related crimes reducing by 15% and violent crime falling by 7%. 20% of all recorded crime was flagged with alcohol as an influencing factor; this figure rises to 52% for violence against a person.

Safer North Tyneside is a multi-agency partnership that addresses community safety issues. The work that the partnership has undertaken since 2008 has helped to significantly reduce crime, with 90% of residents feeling safe during the day and 62% feeling safe after dark.

The North Tyneside Reducing Re-offending thematic group includes representatives from several service areas that work together to support the delivery of an action plan that has 10 priorities, including improving the housing outcomes for ex offenders. This group reports to the Safer North Tyneside Partnership Board.

To support people coming out of prison a regional service called 'Through the Gate Plus' launched November 2012. The primary aim of the service is to support prisoners leading up to their release date to ensure accommodation is accessed and appropriate local support services are in place to reduce the number of prisoners who are released at risk of homelessness and re-offending.

7. Homelessness: the current picture

The review of homelessness within North Tyneside has been steered by the North Tyneside Homelessness Project Group. This 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 looked at a range of homelessness information and data to establish the current homelessness picture, identified trends, issues, and gaps and recommended what the homelessness prevention strategy 2013 -2018 should focus on.

The work, including any recommendations that the group has put forward has been presented to the North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention Forum (Appendix 1) for final agreement and sign off.

7.1 Funding

Several funding streams contribute to tackling homelessness through the delivery of affordable housing, supported housing, outreach support, homelessness prevention, advice, health and specific client group support.

Funding Source	Amount £m 2013- 2014	Amount £m 2014 -2015	Used for
Housing General Fund (including CLG Homelessness Grant)	£0.48m	TBC	Housing advice and homelessness prevention.
Former Supporting People Programme	£3.4m	TBC	Providing supported housing services and outreach support services to vulnerable groups.
Discretionary Housing Payments Fund (DWP and council)	£0.83m	TBC	To 'top up' housing benefit payments for vulnerable households who experience exceptional hardship.

For 2013 – 2014 the Council has significantly increased the funding level for discretionary housing payments to ensure that more support will be given to those affected by the welfare reform changes. £331,993 has been received from the Department of Work and Pension (DWP) with the local authority investing almost £490,000. At the same time government funding that contributes to supported housing and outreach services has reduced.

7.2 The Housing Advice Team

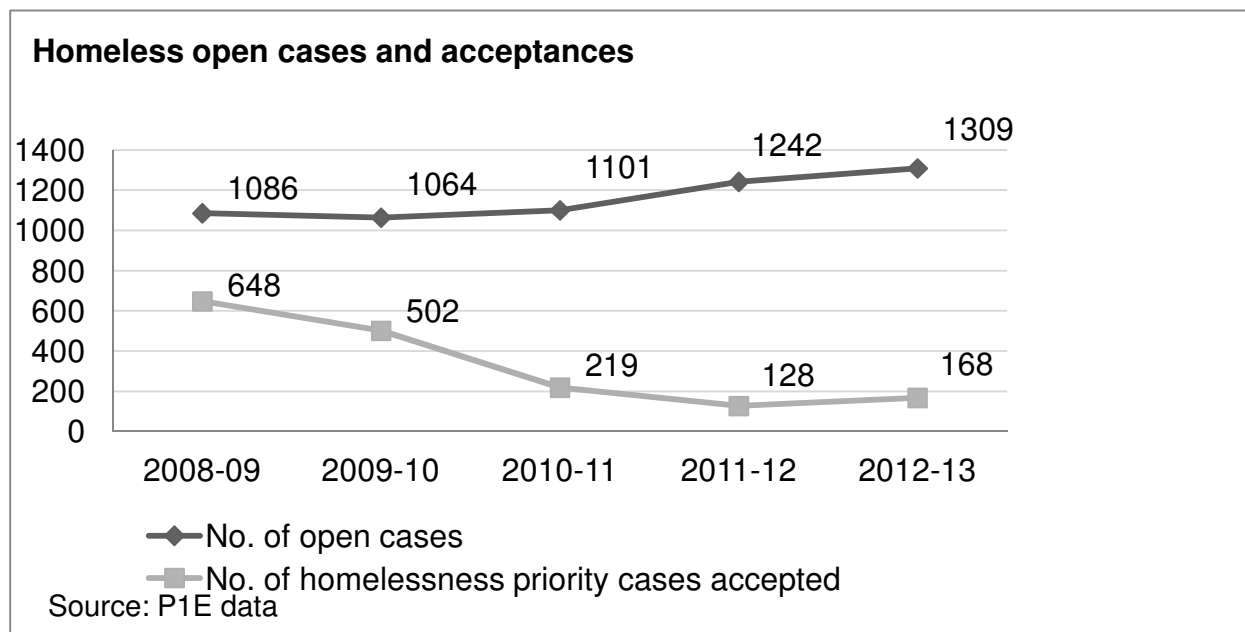
The housing advice team is the first point of contact for anyone in need of housing advice. The team provides free, responsive and complete housing advice to anyone who is threatened with homelessness or who is actual homeless.

A service restructure in 2012 has resulted in people receiving an initial telephone assessment, known as triage to determine if their situation can be resolved at that point or if an interview is needed. Only those people who need to be seen are; this has led to people being seen quicker. The length of an interview has also been extended to

maximise the advice and support a person receives. Anyone who presents as roofless is seen on the same day.

7.3 Homeless presentations, acceptances and decisions

During 2012 -2013 there were a total of 2,942 presentations to the housing advice team, of these 570 were from people who stated they were roofless on that day. 1,309 cases were opened, with 168 households being accepted as homeless and in priority need. 962 households had their threatened homelessness successfully prevented through a range of measures.



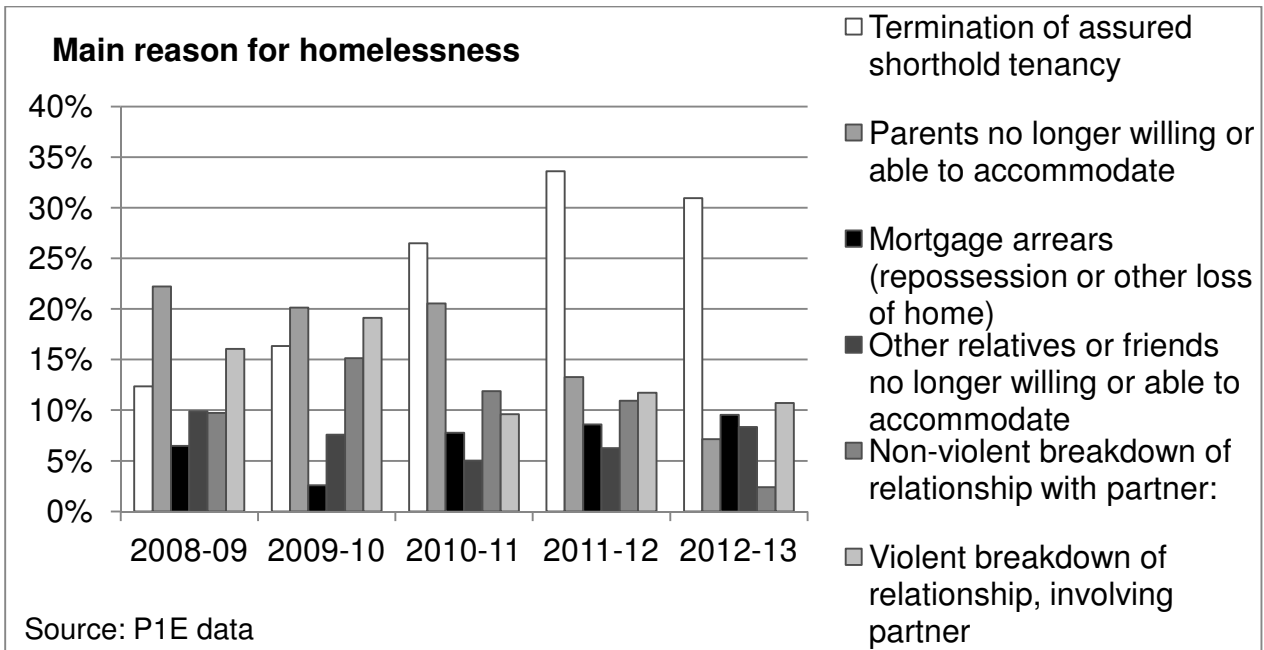
In 2008 - 2009 the top three reasons for homelessness were parents no longer willing to accommodate, violent breakdown of a relationship, involving partner and the termination of an assured shorthold tenancy.

By 2010 -2011 the top three reasons had changed to termination of an assured shorthold tenancy, parents no longer willing to accommodate and non violent breakdown of relationship involving partner.

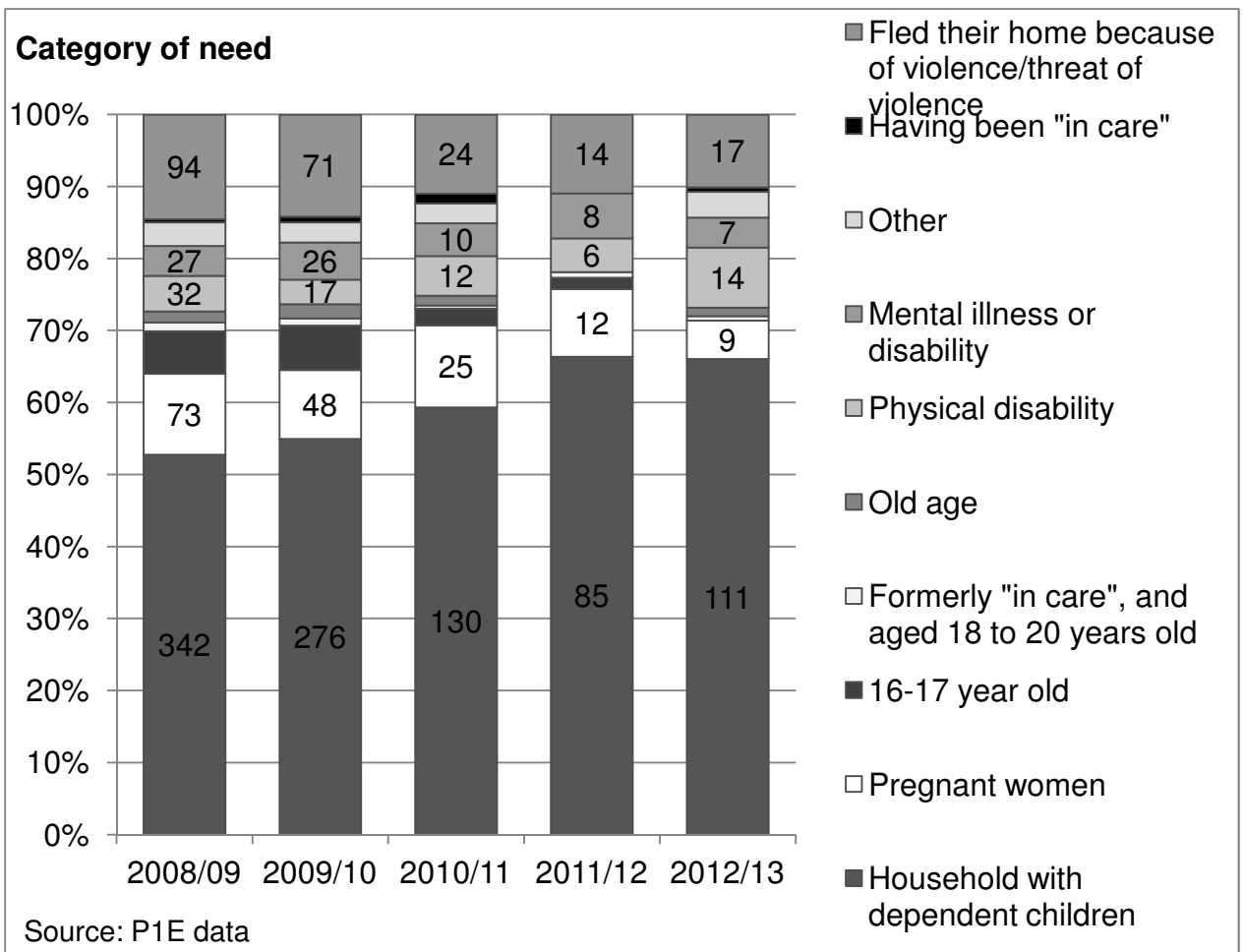
The termination of an assured shorthold tenancy remains the main reason for homelessness, with parents no longer willing to accommodate falling out of the top three reasons for 2012 -2013 and being replaced by mortgage arrears (repossession or other loss of home).

These changes can be attributed to more homeless prevention measures being available to households in a housing crisis and changes to the Council's housing allocations policy, e.g. improved assistance to households at risk of or actual domestic abuse.

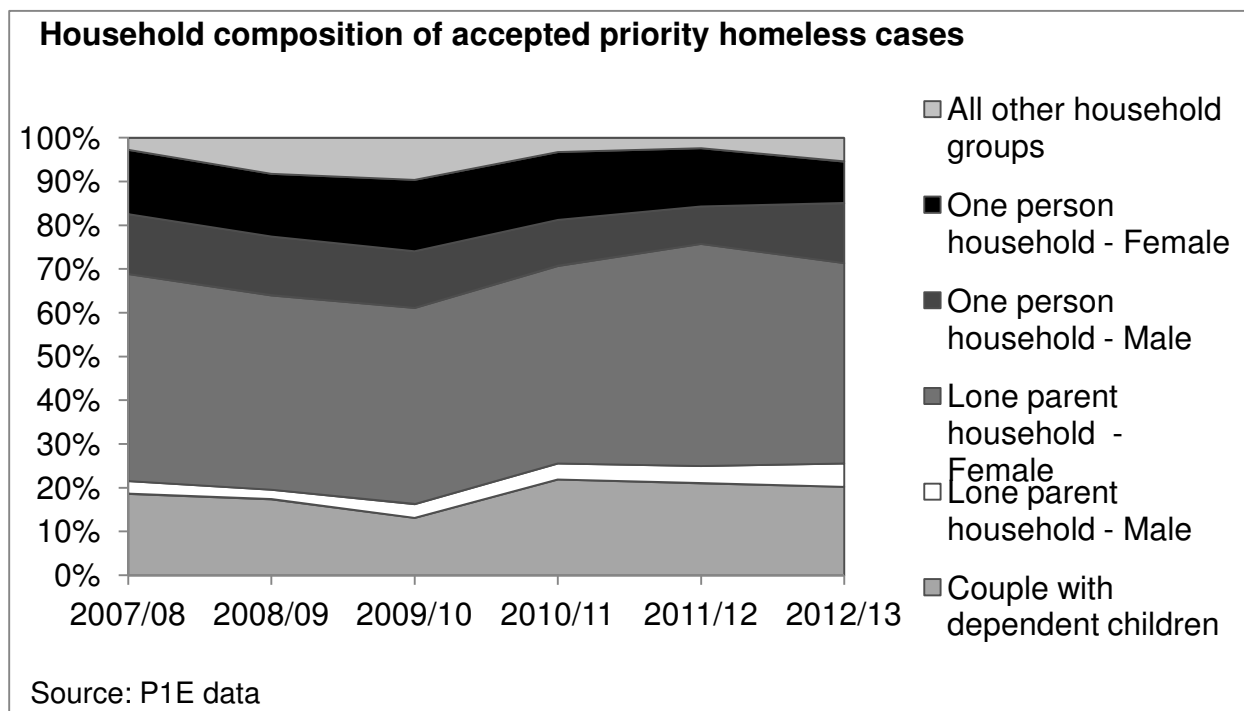
The Youth Homeless Prevention Officer (YHPO) has also been instrumental in reducing the number of 16 -17 year olds who present as homeless to the housing advice team. During 2012 – 2013 the YHPO interviewed 125 young people with 84 of them having their housing crisis prevented by work undertaken that allowed them to remain with family and friends or securing supported housing.



The main category of need for people being accepted as homeless and in priority need is households with dependant children. This is followed by households who are either homeless due to actual or threatened violence. Several categories do not have cases recorded against them; these are former asylum seeker, drug or alcohol dependency and being in custody/remand. This is because these issues are not the primary reason for the household being accepted as homeless and in priority need.



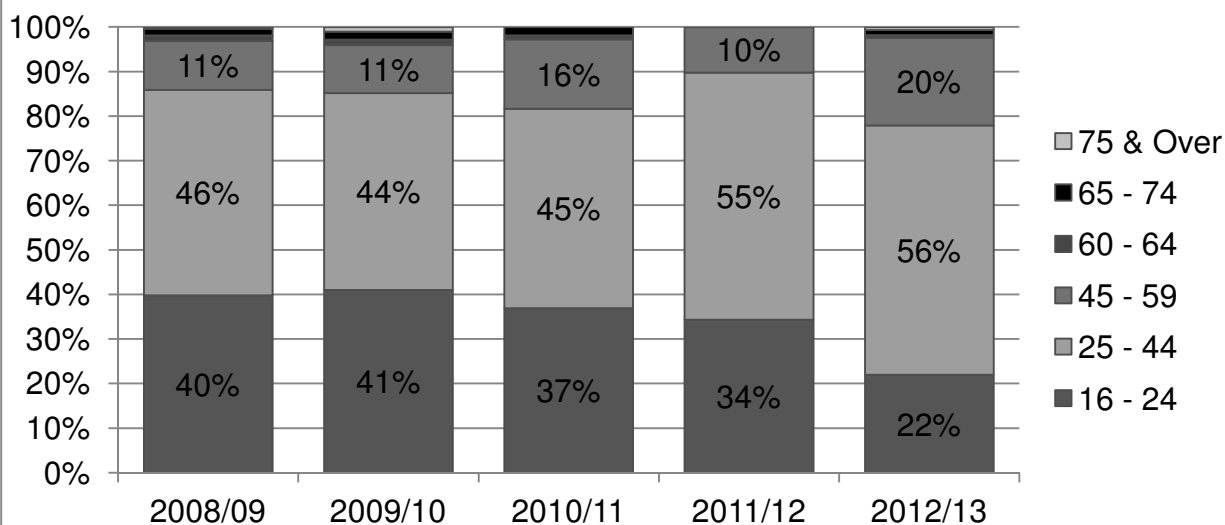
Of those households accepted as homeless and in priority need the household composition has remained stable over the past 4 years. Households with dependent children remains the highest accepted category of need. Within this household type female lone parents with dependent children are the most frequent household accepted followed by couples with dependent children. Few male lone parents with dependent children apply. Only a small number of single people who present as homeless are accepted as priority need.



The most prevalent age range of people accepted as homeless and in priority need remains 25 – 44 years of age. This has risen from 46% in 2008 – 09 to 56% in 2012 -13. Over the same period the number of 16 - 24 year olds accepted has fallen from 40% in 2008 - 09 to 22% in 2012-13.

This is due to a number of initiatives being introduced including the Support Gateway, a managed housing procedure for young people leaving care and North Tyneside Homes appointing an officer to work with all new tenants under the age of 30 years to assist with housing benefit claims, setting up direct debits etc: to support tenancy sustainment. The success of this role has resulted in the service being made available to all new North Tyneside Homes tenants.

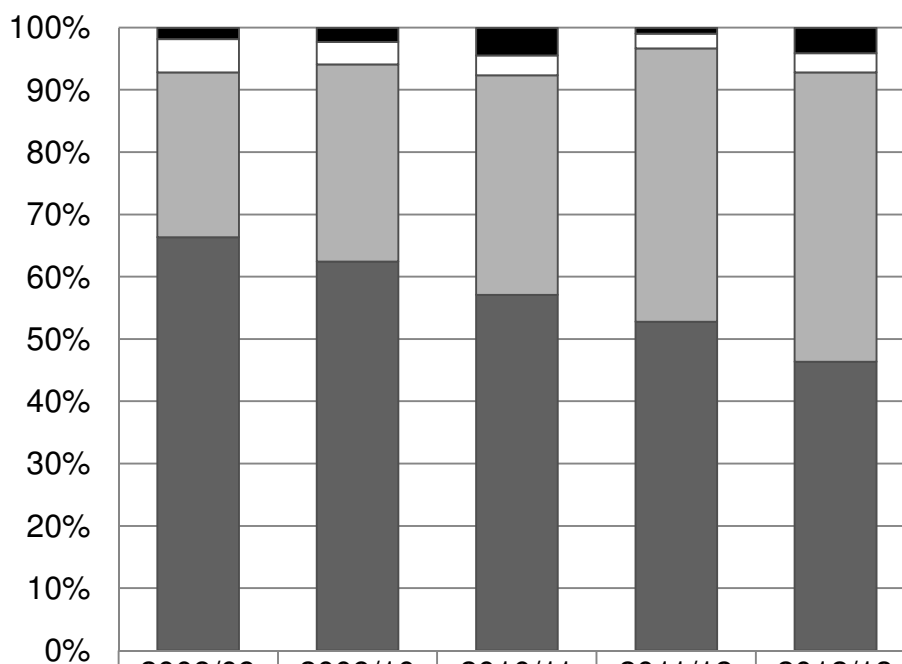
% Age range of applicants accepted as homeless



Source: P1E data

The ethnicity of households with a homeless decision (priority or non priority) against their application is reflective of the ethnicity household composition of the borough.

Homeless decisions and outcomes by ethnicity



	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
■ BME Not in priority need	16	17	14	2	13
□ BME In priority need	47	27	10	5	10
■ White British Not in priority need	232	238	111	93	149
■ White British In priority need	583	470	180	112	149

Source: P1E data

7.4 Homeless prevention

A homeless prevention is when the local authority takes action to provide housing assistance to a household that is considered to be at risk of homelessness, and the household is able to remain in their own home or alternative permanent housing for the next 6 months.

In 2009 - 2010 North Tyneside was performing below the national and regional averages with 3.5 cases of prevention and relief per 1,000 households. In 2010 -2011 performance increased to 8.5 cases per 1,000 household, with 11.4 cases per 1,000 households being achieved in 2011- 2012. In 2012 -2013, 10.5 cases per 1,000 household was achieved.

The most successful homeless prevention measure in North Tyneside is conciliation to help people to remain with family and friends, followed by providing other assistance to enable a household to remain in the private rented or social housing sector. 70% of homeless prevention cases remain in their own home. This is better than the regional outcome of 52% and the national outcome of 49%.

Reporting on the number of cases where positive action was successful in preventing homelessness has only been recorded on the P1E return since 2010. The table indicates measures used in North Tyneside:

Number of cases where positive action was successful in preventing homelessness (remain in own home)	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012 - 2013
Mediation using external or internal trained family mediators	0	1	1
Conciliation including home visits for family/friend threatened exclusions	192	402	336
Financial payments from a homeless prevention fund	3	0	0
Debt Advice	28	24	27
Resolving Housing Benefit problems	26	14	8
Resolving rent or service charge arrears in the social or private rented sector	5	3	1
Sanctuary scheme measures for domestic violence	1	2	1
Crisis intervention - providing emergency support	0	0	0
Negotiation or legal advocacy to remain in accommodation in the private rented sector	21	32	53
Providing other assistance to remain in accommodation in the private or social rented sector	80	180	177
Mortgage arrears interventions or mortgage rescue	18	8	8
Other	143	62	112
TOTAL cases able to remain in existing home	517	728	724

(Source: P1E data)

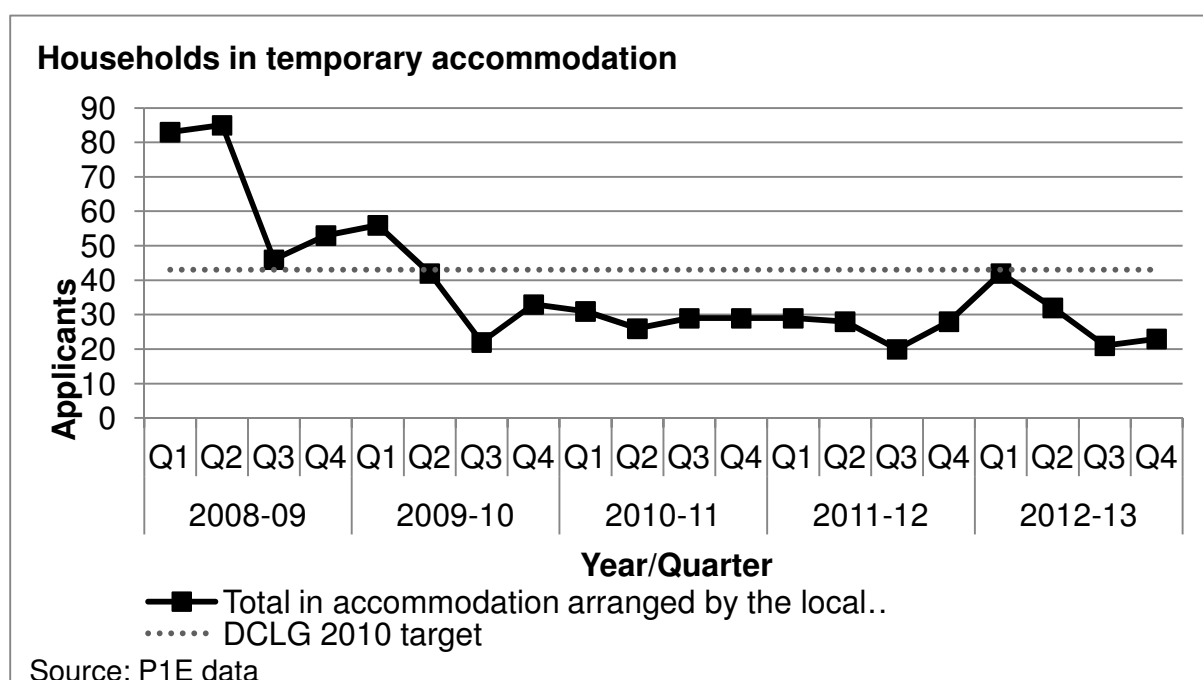
7.5 Temporary accommodation

Households are placed in temporary accommodation if there is a duty to do so, i.e. they are believed to be unintentionally homeless and in priority need while their application is investigated and a formal decision made, or they have already been accepted as homeless and in priority need. Temporary accommodation is provided until the council's

statutory duty comes to an end, this is normally through a household moving into a permanent home. In North Tyneside temporary accommodation is provided through existing council houses and flats of varying sizes dispersed throughout the borough. Only in exceptional circumstances is bed and breakfast accommodation used for homeless applicants.

In 2004, DCLG announced that all local authorities had to reduce the number of households placed in temporary accommodation by half by 2010. Each authority had a base figure to work from. For North Tyneside this was 85 so by December 2010 we had to ensure that there were no more than 43 placements in all types of temporary accommodation.

This target was met September 2009 with 42 households accommodated. Since then the number of households accommodated has continued to be within the DCLG target.



7.6 Repeat homelessness

A person is recorded as a repeat homelessness case if they are accepted as homeless and in priority need within 2 years of a previous statutory duty being ended. In 2007 - 2008 there were 20 cases of repeat homelessness; this fell to 5 in 2008 - 2009, and rose to 10 in 2009 -2010. Since 2010 -2011 there have been no reported cases of repeat homelessness.

7.7 Rough sleeping

A rough sleeper is someone who sleeps or lives outside because they do not have their own home.

In 2010 new methodology on how to establish rough sleeping with a local authority area was produced. From autumn 2010 all local authorities have had to submit an annual figure to DCLG indicating the number of people sleeping rough in their area on any given night.

This can be done through an estimate or a count that is carried out between 1 October –

30 November. The North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention Forum makes the decision to count or estimate. To date an estimate has always been carried out. Detailed work takes place with over 40 statutory and voluntary organisations to estimate the level of rough sleeping within the borough on any given night.

Count	No of rough sleepers identified
May 2008	0-10
March 2009	0-10
June 2010	5
Oct 2010	8
Oct 2011	8
Oct 2012	3

NB – methodology changes resulted in 2 counts on 2010.

In addition to the annual rough sleeper survey, we have followed national guidance from Homeless Link and developed a **Severe Weather Emergency Protocol** that is in place during the winter months. If the weather is predicted to be life threatening then anyone who presents as roofless or who is known to be sleeping rough is provided with temporary accommodation for the duration of the severe weather, regardless of statutory duties.

North Tyneside is committed to the principles of No Second Night Out and through the delivery of a local action plan we aim to meet the outcomes within available resources. A regional launch of 'No Second Night Out' took place December 2012, with publicity materials widely circulated informing people on how to report someone they believed to be sleeping rough. All notifications are recorded on a regional database to monitor activity.

7.8 Other housing and homelessness services

In addition to the housing advice team there are a range of housing, homelessness and support services available in the borough that are provided through our partners to assist actual homeless or threatened with homeless households.

A review of the homeless services funded through the previously known Supporting People Grant took place in 2010. This led to the creation of the Support Gateway in 2011. This is a single point of access for statutory organisations to refer into, if a service user, who is eligible for services in North Tyneside, is in need of supported housing or outreach support. Eight housing providers offer supported housing and/or outreach support to:

- Young people,
- Young parents;
- Ex offenders;
- Survivors of domestic abuse; and
- Those with a history of substance misuse.

The introduction of Support Gateway has resulted in reduced waiting times to access schemes and the removal of waiting lists, therefore more people have received a service, and information is available to evidence the demand and highlight the gaps in current services.

In 2012 Barnardos introduced a crash pad scheme for single 16 -17 year olds, this extends to 21 years of age for care leavers. Funded through the Northern Rock Foundation, 9 young people have been supported. There are 3 host families in North Tyneside.

Partners also provide generic advice, debt counselling, specific client group support, such as domestic abuse and support to access health services that contribute to a person's successful transition from homelessness to securing a home. These include Barnardos, Project Answer, Transient Team, Acorns, Props, and the Citizen Advice Bureau (Appendix 2).

7.9 Youth homelessness

The term youth homelessness covers young people aged 16 – 24 years. Good progress has been made over the last few years in tackling youth homelessness through the educational work undertaken by the Youth Homeless Prevention Officer in schools. 47 sessions were carried out in schools during 2012 -2013. Improved access to prevention measures that minimise the number of young people experiencing a housing crisis in the first instance also contribute to this.

Since 2008 - 2009 priority homeless acceptances from 16 – 24 year olds have fallen by 18% and parents no longer willing to accommodate has dropped out of the top three reasons for homelessness within the borough.

Being able to stay at home for as long as possible contributes to improved life chances for young people. However for some leaving home is not a planned process, they may need to leave due to risk of violence, abuse or financial constraints. For those young people we need to ensure that services can effectively respond to the immediate housing crisis and provide support and intervention. This includes those young people leaving care.

8. Engagement and consultation

8.1 North Tyneside Homelessness Project Group

This 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 looked at homeless services and data to establish the current picture of homelessness in North Tyneside, identified trends, issues, and gaps and recommended what the homelessness prevention strategy 2013 -2018 should focus on. This work has been reported to the North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention Forum.

8.2 North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention Forum

The forum has an independent Chair and meets on a quarterly basis to discuss the impact that housing and homelessness related legislative and policy changes will 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.

Membership is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it is reflective of the priorities for the year ahead.

8.3 Homelessness Strategy Review Event

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 homelessness services within the borough 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 -2013 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 by whom.

Information from the workshop session concluded that:

- Partners think there is a strong commitment to effectively deal with homelessness in the borough;
- 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 is 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.

8.4 Service provider feedback

To gather the views of our partners on current homelessness services and their thoughts on priorities for this strategy a series of face to face meetings took place. A questionnaire was also circulated.

Service providers identified three main barriers that they felt impacted on them successfully contributing to preventing homelessness:

- 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.

8.5 Service user feedback

To understand a service user's perspective of being homeless, reasons for homelessness, what could have helped or prevented their homelessness and the barriers they encountered, service providers held some focus group sessions with their client groups. Key findings from this work are:

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

Service user thoughts around what would help someone to keep their home included:

- 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!

8.6 Homeless health needs audit

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. The two main findings from the work were:

- People 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.

9. The challenges ahead

For all the positive work that has collectively taken place over the last five years to reduce homelessness and improve prevention measures, changes to funding streams, policy and legislation mean we have to be able to identify and deliver housing solutions that overcome ever changing challenges and barriers.

Almost 6,000 working age tenants are currently in receipt of housing benefit that is paid directly to their rent account. Once Universal Credit is in place it will be the responsibility of the tenant to pay their rent out of their income received. Tenants must be fully informed to ensure that they do this. In these cases, rent arrears may increase, with evictions from both social and private sector landlords rising. There will be a greater reliance on the use of discretionary housing benefit payments so that those households who need support to minimise the impact of the changes receive it.

The number of households presenting as threatened with or actual homeless is predicted to go up if they are subject to less disposable income and unable to financially manage the additional housing costs introduced through under occupancy charges for social housing and changes to the shared accommodation rate. To enable tenants to make informed choices on their housing, they must be aware of all the housing options available to them.

The current housing stock can not meet the demand for smaller studio, one and two bed homes as people who are affected by these changes attempt to downsize. We need to work with our housing partners to build homes that meet housing need. Consideration also needs to be given to exploratory work taking place around the feasibility of people affected by the shared accommodation rate sharing a home.

There are still too many homes in the private sector that are not fit for purpose. With the demand for private sector rented homes growing, we must look at how we can work with private landlords to improve property standards where this is possible, increase the number of homes available for rent and lift households out of deprivation.

Service providers have expressed concerns over the continuance of funding they receive to provide and deliver housing and homelessness services. The amount they receive and the time period it covers is a key concern. All funding opportunities must be considered and where possible, funding bids submitted with successful outcomes to ensure that services continue to deliver innovative ways of working that meet the housing and support the needs of our vulnerable residents.

Support Gateway has helped to evidence the demand and highlight the gaps in current supported housing and outreach services. This information will be used to help shape future procurement exercises to ensure that new services meet client need.

Housing related support is provided to vulnerable client groups, but feedback indicates that people would benefit from being able to access generic advice and support as and when needed to help them to sustain their tenancy. Pre tenancy training that includes how to manage finances, budgeting skills, tenancy management, developing social, emotional and life skills would also be beneficial to reduce the number of tenancies that fail.

Good progress has been made in the expansion of vocational pathways and apprenticeship opportunities. Post 16 opportunities need to be developed further to ensure young people have the necessary employment skills. Supporting working age adults to access employment training to maximise their chances of securing a job also needs to be encouraged.

There is a small group of people who are known to more than one service provider as their lifestyles are so chaotic and their support needs multiple, yet they either do not meet the eligibility criteria for services, they fail to engage or they choose not to engage. We need to focus on identifying who these people are and through intensive work assist them to access appropriate services, receive the help and support they require to break the cycle and move on from this troubled time in their lives. For some this can be achieved through the successful delivery of the MEAM project.

The homeless health needs audit identified that a quicker response time to referrals and medical appointment dates been given were needed to assist people with poor mental health and substance dependencies. People were keen to address their health and dependency situation, but were often deterred by the lengthy waiting periods. Non traditional approaches, such as alternative therapies and workshops to successfully improve mood and wellbeing were also highlighted. This can be addressed through closer working with our Health and Wellbeing Board, sub groups and Clinical Commissioning Group.

10. Our strategic priorities for 2013 - 2018

Our strategic priorities have been developed from the information gathered and the recommendations made by the North Tyneside Homelessness Project group. Our priorities, highlighting tasks that will be carried out to achieve them are:

- **Priority One: widen housing choice**
 - Develop a range of housing options that provide a pathway from short term emergency accommodation through to independent housing;
 - Appraise options for making best use of the existing housing stock;
 - Improve access to the private rented sector;
 - Enable the delivery of more affordable homes; and
 - Work with partners to identify and address barriers to accessing permanent accommodation.

- **Priority Two: support people to secure and sustain a home**
 - Use feedback from service providers and service users to help shape future service planning; and
 - Work with partners to improve support and housing options for those people with multiple needs.
- **Priority Three: provide timely and accessible housing and homelessness information**
 - Review and revise current information available on housing and homelessness services;
 - Review and improve the enhanced housing options toolkit;
 - Increase the number of homeless awareness sessions in the secondary schools; and
 - Engage partners and the public to monitor the level of rough sleeping in the borough.
- **Priority Four: deliver excellent housing advice and homelessness services**
 - Review the housing advice service; and
 - Assess the impact of the Welfare Reform Act (2012) upon homelessness and homelessness services.

Identifying what we need to do to achieve these strategic priorities, including resources and timescales are set out in the North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention Strategy and Action Plan 2013- 2018.