

Newcastle's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review 2019

Reviewing progress since our 2014 - 19
Homelessness Strategy and exploring the current
profile of homelessness in the city

Executive Summary



Newcastle's Homelessness Review 2019 - Summary

Context (see chapter two)

Newcastle faces an extremely challenging context in which to prevent and relieve homelessness. We have longstanding challenges associated to poverty and a weaker labour market...

Newcastle is among the **25% most deprived** local authorities in the country

8.8% of neighbourhoods in Newcastle are among the **10% most deprived** in the whole of England

Population rates of **severe and multiple disadvantage** that appear **far higher than in England** and among the highest in the core cities.

21.1% of working age households are 'workless' in Newcastle in 2018, compared to an English average of 13.9%

Lowest earners in Newcastle have seen their wages fall in real terms by 17% from 2009 to 2018.

Compounded by significant and rapid changes in government policy...

Watts et al., (2019) highlighted that Newcastle has ***"experienced a triple burden since 2010, facing amongst the most severe cuts in local authority budgets, among the worst impacted by welfare cuts, and one of the first areas to experience Universal Credit and its attended implementation and design challenges."*** (p.39)



An estimated **annual loss of £122 million in working age benefits amongst 40,000 Newcastle residents** by the end of 2022-23.



An estimated **£327 million reduction in our budget by 2022-23**, due to government cuts and increasing cost pressures



The **roll out of Universal Credit is 46% complete in Newcastle**, compared to 28% across Great Britain (May 2019)

However, there are positive contextual factors...

Newcastle ranks significantly better in Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019) when it comes to:

The **physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services** (240th)

The **quality of the living environment** in the city (272nd).

Newcastle has **among the lowest private rent levels of the core cities**

Newcastle has **social lettings rates that are three times the English average** and twice those in most other northern core cities.

Newcastle has maintained this rate the last five years, whereas in most other core cities, social lettings rates have been reducing.

Our responses (see chapter three)

Our approach to preventing and relieving homelessness is guided by our Active Inclusion Newcastle partnership approach.

Through this approach **we aim to maximise our resources to support residents to maintain the foundations for a stable life:**

- somewhere to **live**
- an **i**ncome
- **f**inancial inclusion
- **e**mployment opportunities

Watts et al (2019) described our approach as having four core characteristics:

it is **weighted towards early prevention** and the mitigation of early signs of homelessness risk

it is **partnership-driven** reflecting the view that homelessness prevention is – and in a context of austerity must be – ‘everyone’s business’

it is **proactive at the policy and practice level**

it is **data and evidence-informed**, with a strong focus on continuous learning and service improvement.

In 2016, Newcastle was announced as one of three Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer ‘early adopters’ to pilot new initiatives to tackle homelessness in local areas.



Our £936,223 Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer funding has supported a public service transformation programme from 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2019. This has focused on system change and supporting homelessness prevention at an earlier stage by working with a wider group of residents at risk before they reach crisis point.

The premise of our approach has been to get a deeper, collective understanding of this by:

- **Strengthening our understanding of residents’ lives**, to help us to adapt where we can to make working together easier
- **Strengthening residents’ understanding of the changed context that they are living in**, so that we can support them to respond to changing demands
- Using this understanding to **inform local and national policy and practice**

Our Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer programme included a range of different projects within the following themes:

- **Responding as consistently and effectively as we can** to residents who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness
- **Working towards more integrated responses** for residents
- Moving towards **outcomes focused commissioning**
- **Improving our collective understanding**

We aim to maximise our collective resources to make homelessness everyone's business through our primary prevention activities...

Primary prevention activities

Our primary prevention activities are focused on providing a framework to improve the coordination and consistency of information, advice and support, helping partners to promote financial inclusion and prevent homelessness.



134 different agencies take part in our strategic, delivery and case management partnerships



Our partnership arrangements are linked to *“an array of city-level protocols and policies [that have] been developed to seek to avoid homelessness at various known trigger points for it wherever possible”* (Watts et al., 2019: 144).



In 2018-19, we provided our **universal advice and information to 3,550 subscribers** and saw **76,937 hits to access to our online information**. Between 2014-15 and 2018-19, **2,735 professionals and volunteers participated in our training offer**



Our **quarterly homelessness reviews** enable us to take a structured approach to the analysis of data. Our **Homelessness Prevention Forum** provides an opportunity to disseminate and discuss the findings.

We also aim to prevent homelessness at the earliest opportunity through our secondary prevention activities...

Secondary prevention activities

In Newcastle, we have a broad range of secondary prevention activities that are focused on proactively identifying and supporting residents who are 'at risk' or immediately 'threatened' with homelessness:

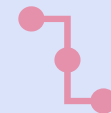


There are **three main ways that we identify residents** at greater risk of homelessness:

- 'touch and trigger' points
- working with partners
- using data



There are a **range of different statutory and non-statutory services in the city** which contribute to preventing homelessness. This includes our directly delivered and commissioned services.



Our prevention activities and services are **organised into pathways of response**, each of which are **targeted towards groups of residents known to be at greater risk of homelessness**

Where we have been unable to prevent, we aim to relieve homelessness humanely...

Crisis relief activities



We maintain a face to face Housing Advice Centre in Newcastle City Centre. Our Housing Advice Centre offers information and advice to residents who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and is where residents can present under homelessness legislation.



In 2013, we built Cherry Tree View, which contains **45 units of purpose-built and good quality statutory temporary accommodation** for households who are owed the full homelessness duty.

In addition to our statutory temporary accommodation provision, we also commission a range of accommodation services to relieve homelessness:

Between 2014 – 19, we commissioned **729 units of crisis and supported accommodation**

Between 2018 and 2019, we conducted a review of these commissioned services **as part of a re-commissioning exercise**

In October 2019, we developed **homelessness prevention and relief hubs** in the east and west of the city. In total, these hubs will provide **753 units of short term relief and supported accommodation**

We have also commissioned dedicated responses for residents who are 'multiply excluded' and who rough sleep more regularly...

Dedicated responses for residents who are 'multiply excluded'

In Newcastle, we recognise that there is a relatively small population of residents who have experienced severe and multiple disadvantage over their lives, resulting in multiple and complex needs that are not adequately met by homelessness services.

2014 - we commissioned 120 units of **citywide support for people who are multiply excluded**, including **outreach support** and a **Housing First service** for up to 60 residents. We also have also maintained a **drop in centre for residents who are rough sleeping**.

2017 – In partnership with the Borough Council of Gateshead and the Newcastle Gateshead CCG, were awarded £1.54 million outcomes funding from MHCLG to **deliver a Social Impact Bond (SIB) service to offer personalised support to individuals entrenched within the homelessness system.**

2019 - as part of the Government's Rough Sleeping Initiative, we received **funding to expand our outreach support to rough sleepers in the city**, helping them to access accommodation and support. We were also successful in gaining **funding to pilot a Housing First programme, which is being delivered by YHN's Support and Progression Service.** We appointed a **dedicated Rough Sleeping Coordinator** to coordinate our responses to rough sleeping and have begun rough sleeping quarterly reviews.

Levels, types and causes of homelessness in Newcastle (see chapter four)

This statutory homelessness review mainly looks back at a five-year period between 2013-14 and 2017-18...



Our Housing Advice Centre undertook casework with an average of **2098 households** a year

The number of **full homelessness duty acceptances** in Newcastle has increased from **165 in 2013-14** up to **217 in 2017-18**.



The **most common reasons for presentation** to our Housing Advice Centre were:

1. **being asked leave** their existing home either **by parents or other friends and relatives** (**31% of presentations in 2017-18**)
2. loss or the fear of **loss of a private rented tenancy** (**16% of presentations in 2017/18**)



The numbers of **people accessing supported accommodation** services over the period of the review has **reduced by 28%** since 2013-14

Evictions from supported accommodation fell by 52% between 2013 – 14 and 2017 -18, **but increased by 12%** between 2017-18 and 2018-19

In **70% of evictions** the primary reason given is **'unacceptable and disruptive behaviour'**



An **average of 5 people** were found to **be sleeping rough on any one night** during the period of this review

This relates to **around 250 individuals per year**

The **majority of individuals are from the 'stock' group**, meaning they have slept rough over consecutive years (an average of **45.3% a year**)

Newcastle have a good record of homelessness prevention and relief compared to other areas...

Newcastle has:



The **highest rate of homelessness preventions** of any of the core cities. This rate of prevention activity is more than **double that of the core city average**, and more than **four times the rate in England** as a whole.



The **second lowest rate of temporary accommodation use** of the core cities (only Leeds has a rate lower than that seen in Newcastle)



We have maintained a record of **zero households being placed in bed and breakfast** to fulfil our statutory homelessness duties **since 2006**. This is in contrast to a significant increase in the core cities average since 2013-14

The Homelessness Reduction Act came into force in April 2018 and created a new monitoring and reporting system for statutory homelessness data. These statistics have been defined by MHCLG as 'experimental' for the first year, but a summary can be found in section 4.9.

Our relative successes and key challenges (see chapter five)

We have a relatively good record of preventing and relieving homelessness...

Heriot-Watt University's recent study of homelessness prevention in Newcastle in the context of welfare reform and austerity (Watts et al., 2019) found that:

“The headline story in Newcastle is of a city facing an extremely challenging context, but managing to maintain extremely low and stable levels of homelessness”

Although we are encouraged by this relative success, we still see it as an absolute failure that anyone sleeps rough in Newcastle. We also know that there are a number of key areas in which we can improve our responses...

- 1. Continuing to manage the impact of austerity and welfare reform** – Preventing and relieving homelessness is made more challenging by the ongoing demands created by reductions in our budget and the government's welfare reforms. Maintaining, integrating and improving our collective responses will be vital if we are to continue maintaining low and stable levels of homelessness
- 2. Preventing homelessness from the private rented sector** - Eviction from private rented accommodation has consistently been one of the main causes of homelessness in the city. We have a relatively good range of services, but we need to do more to identify the risk of homeless at an earlier stage and to work to a shared purpose.
- 3. Move on from relief and supported accommodation to suitable and sustainable accommodation** - We have made progress in reducing evictions from crisis and supported accommodation since 2013. However, we still face challenges we face in maximising positive move on from congregate accommodation. The current funding model incentivises full occupancy in congregate accommodation and disincentivises timely and positive move on. We have sought to develop local responses to encourage positive move on
- 4. Supporting residents who are multiply excluded** - Among those residents who are already homeless, we also know that there is a significant minority who are experience severe and multiple disadvantage. These individuals face repeated exclusion from homeless accommodation and services, as well as their broader experience of other forms of deep social exclusion. We have a range of specialist provision but need to improve the coordination and personalisation of our support to provide these individuals with a foundation for recovery from the multiple needs that have been compounded over many years of exclusion
- 5. Preventing homelessness for residents who are leaving asylum accommodation** - Those in receipt of asylum support cease to be entitled to accommodation and financial support 28 days after being granted refugee status. We believe this period is insufficient and at odds Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. In the absence of a change in Government policy we seek to develop local responses to help these residents to access suitable and sustainable accommodation in a safe, inclusive and welcoming city
- 6. Supporting residents who are experiencing domestic abuse** – violent relationship breakdown has remained a prominent cause of homelessness for households for whom we have accepted the full statutory duty to accommodate. However, we have experienced limited availability of specialist domestic abuse refuge spaces in recent years, making it more difficult to provide the specialist professional support these households require