

Active Inclusion Newcastle (AIN) Spectrum of housing and homelessness advice

The Active Inclusion Newcastle (AIN) approach seeks to make the best use of the limited face to face specialist advice services in Newcastle by helping other non-specialist services to prevent and respond to financial exclusion and the risk of homelessness. This means moving from signposting to proportionate responses in which all partners can play a role. To aid us in this process we have developed spectrums of advice for benefits and for money management (which covers both debt and budgeting advice). This spectrum of advice covers housing and homelessness advice. It describes three broad tiers or levels of housing advice and acts as a tool to help us to better understand where organisations fit into our provision in Newcastle and what support they need to do this. The information on the following pages:

- provides examples of staff and services that may fit under each tier
- describes the expected knowledge and role for each tier
- states what training, information and support is available to each tier

We think that the housing and homelessness advice provision in Newcastle can be divided into the following tiers. These are described in detail below.

Tier 1: General housing and homelessness information

Tier 2: General housing and homelessness advice

Tier 3: Specialist housing and homelessness advice

Tier 1: General housing and homelessness information

Who provides this:

Frontline staff and volunteers who come into contact with people who have housing problems.

Examples: Customer Service Centre and library staff, receptionists, Housing Support Assistants (Cherry Tree View), frontline staff, care assistants, community organisations, community champions and volunteers, faith groups, Sure Start worker, health worker,

Expected knowledge:

- Know how to respond to or start conversations about housing problems
- Know the difference between a housing problem and a homelessness crisis
- Know that non-payment of rent or mortgage can lead to severe consequences, such as homelessness
- Know that getting the right advice early on can help to prevent a housing problem or homelessness crisis
- Know that housing advice can be provided online, by phone, or face to face
- Know who staff can contact for housing advice and guidance about individual cases
- Know where to signpost and / or refer residents for housing information or advice, depending on their circumstances, including the contacts for out of office hours enquiries
- Know where to refer someone who has nowhere safe to sleep that evening

Expected role:

- Be prepared to talk to residents about their housing situation to identify any housing or homelessness problems
- Signpost and / or refer residents for housing and homelessness advice
- Use consultancy telephone lines for staff to discuss individual cases and prevent imminent crises
- Some staff in this tier (e.g. trainee support workers) can also:
 - Help residents gather the information needed for tier 2 and 3 appointments
 - Accompany residents to their tier 2 and 3 appointments

Training, information and support:

- Internal arrangements (internal training, supervision, attending relevant meetings)
- AIN offer, e.g. consultancy telephone lines, tier 1 training, leaflets, [Newcastle City Council website](#) and other information resources
- Other organisations' training, information and support
- Public resources, e.g. online self-help resources provided by the [Shelter website](#) and the [Citizens Advice Bureau Advice guide website](#)

Tier 2: General housing and homelessness advice**Who provides this:**

Frontline staff whose job is to provide housing and homelessness advice to help residents to resolve their housing problems.

Examples: Crisis Skylight, Fulfilling Lives, Private Rented Service, Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) Housing Offices, YHN Young People's Service Project Workers, Housing associations support staff, Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) volunteers, supported housing support workers and floating support workers

Expected knowledge:

- All knowledge and skills identified in Tier 1
- Be able to identify where a statutory duty to homelessness may be owed
- Understand what triggers a duty from the local authority to provide temporary accommodation, what constitutes priority need and what is meant by intentionally homeless
- Understand the differences between different forms of housing tenure
- Know how to complete an application form for Tyne and Wear Homes
- Understand what assistance can be found via Tyne and Wear Homes, e.g. Pathways
- Understand how the bidding system on Tyne and Wear Homes works
- Be able to provide advice and assistance on claiming Housing Benefit and applying for a Discretionary Housing Payment
- Be able to help people make arrangements to pay their rent arrears
- Understand the reasons why someone could be made ineligible for social housing
- Know when to refer people for specialist housing or homelessness advice
- Know what information people need to take with them to a housing or homelessness advice appointment

Expected role:

- As in Tier 1 plus:
- Assist with completing housing applications via Tyne and Wear Homes

- Help people to appeal ineligible decisions from Tyne and Wear Homes
- Add and refer clients to supported accommodation and / or floating support via the Newcastle Gateway
- Negotiate with private landlords over issues such as repairs, rent issues and tenant behaviour
- Refer people for specialist housing advice and prepare them for their housing advice appointment
- Refer clients to other sources of advice and support where needs are identified, e.g. debt advice, drug and alcohol services.

Training, information and support:

- Internal arrangements (internal training, supervision, attending relevant meetings)
- AIN offer, e.g. consultancy lines, tier 2 training, leaflets, [Newcastle City Council website](#) and other information resources
- Other organisations' training, information and support
- Public resources, e.g. online self-help resources provided by [Shelter website](#) and [Citizens Advice Bureau Adviceguide website](#)

Tier 3: Specialist housing and homelessness advice

Who provides this:

Advisers who work in specialist housing and homelessness roles.

Examples: Housing Advice Centre, Shelter, Solicitors holding legal aid contract for Housing, YHN Advice and Support Workers, Private Rented Service.

Expected knowledge:

- All knowledge and skills identified in Tiers 1 and 2
- Able to advise on all types of housing and homelessness issues
- Able to identify and give advice on all available housing options
- Able to help people understand and, where necessary appeal, homelessness decisions
- Able to dispute decisions and challenge bad practice from landlords or providers by using the relevant legislation, guidance and codes of practice (social policy work)
- Able to provide legal advice to the appropriate level
- Able to manage complex housing and homelessness cases, and prioritise and manage a caseload
- Able to help other professionals to develop housing advice skills

Expected role to:

- As in tiers 1 and 2 plus:
- Identify all available options for clients to deal with their housing problem
- Advise on the implications of the different forms of housing tenure
- Complete court forms and provide legal advice. Some advisers in this tier may provide representation at court or at tribunals, e.g. on eviction warrants

Training, information and support:

- Internal arrangements (internal training, supervision, attending relevant meetings)
- Training provided by Shelter, Homeless Link, Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) and other organisations

- Citizens Advice Specialist Support consultancy and National Homelessness Advice Service
- Newcastle Homelessness Prevention Forum
- Professional magazines, e.g. Legal Action Group, Inside Housing
- Subscription / specialist web resources, e.g. [Shelter Legal](#)