Evaluating Homelessness Prevention in Newcastle

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Acronyms

ACS	Adult and Culture Services
ASB	Anti-Social Behaviour
ALMO	Arms Length Management Organisation
ASW	Advice and Support Workers
CBL	Choice Based Lettings
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
CPN	Community Psychiatric Nurse
FIP	Family Intervention Project
HAC	Housing Advice Centre
LA	Local authority
LHA	Local Housing Allowance
MAPPA	Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements
MARAC	Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference
NCC	Newcastle City Council
PEP	Preventing Evictions Protocol
PRS	Private Rented Sector
SP	Supporting People
TA	Temporary Accommodation
YCH	Your Choice Homes
YHN	Your Homes Newcastle

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key points

Newcastle City Council (NCC) and Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) invited Heriot-Watt University and Northumbria University to evaluate their work on homelessness prevention, with a view to extracting transferable lessons for other local authorities. The key points which emerged were as follows:

The homelessness prevention activities and services delivered by NCC and YHN are, taken as a whole, highly effective. This positive conclusion was supported by both statutory and voluntary sector key informants in the city, and was also consistent with the statistical trend data obtained on statutory homelessness acceptances, homelessness prevention activity, repeat homelessness, social housing evictions, and tenancy sustainment.

Factors which have contributed to the establishment of a 'culture of homelessness prevention' in Newcastle include: a strong strategic partnership between NCC and YHN; senior-level commitment to the prevention agenda; an emphasis on partnership working with voluntary sector providers and housing associations in the city; and effective deployment of a strong evidence base in developing preventative options and in service commissioning.

Specific initiatives within Newcastle that may be of interest to other local authorities include:

> a strong emphasis on managing debt and rent arrears, including rigorous implementation of a Preventing Evictions Protocol;

> the commissioning of a range of support services provided to those at risk of losing their tenancies, including Advice and Support Workers and Family Intervention Projects;

> the commissioning of a Young People's Service, offering wide-ranging support to 16-25 year olds, as well as an bespoke route through the statutory system for 16 and 17 year olds;

> a 'Gateway' system which controls access to all temporary and supported accommodation in the city, linked to a 'Pathway to Independence' protocol which promotes active and monitored move on to more independent living; and

> intensive case management of rough sleepers and others in extreme crisis, including the appointment of 'Lead Practitioners' who act as named contacts within the local authority for the most complex and chronically excluded cases.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Newcastle City Council (NCC) and the Council's arms length management organisation (ALMO) Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) invited Heriot-Watt University and Northumbria University to evaluate the ways the two organisations work together to prevent homelessness. The main purpose of the evaluation was to extract transferable lessons that may be of interest to other local authorities.

The research questions were as follows:

How effective are the homelessness prevention activities and services delivered by the City Council and YHN?

To what extent can it be said that relevant services within the City Council and YHN have established a culture of homelessness prevention?

How effectively is homelessness prevention activity led, co-ordinated and managed?

Is it possible to demonstrate the financial and social policy value of these initiatives?

The methods employed in the study included: a review of key policy documents; in-depth interviews with 20 key informants in the city; focus group discussions with front-line staff in the city (17 front-line staff participated); and secondary data analysis of official Department for Communities and Local Government homelessness statistics and unpublished additional data collected by NCC and YHN.

Evaluation Findings

The evaluation found that the homelessness prevention activities and services delivered by the City Council and YHN in Newcastle are, taken as a whole, highly effective. This positive conclusion was supported by the evidence gathered from interviewees in both the statutory and voluntary sectors. It was also consistent with the statistical trend data obtained on statutory homelessness acceptances, homelessness prevention activities, repeat homelessness, social housing evictions, and tenancy sustainment, where most of the relevant trends were positive over time and compared well with national averages.

Many factors have contributed to this success within Newcastle, but the strong strategic partnership between NCC and YHN has been critical, as has the (now) very positive relationship with key voluntary sector providers and housing associations in the city. Leadership has also been crucial: there has been longstanding senior-level commitment to the prevention agenda

within both YHN and NCC. The effective use of the available data to inform practice change, and the use of SP commissioning and contract compliance procedures to drive this evidence-based agenda forward, has likewise been critical. The strong emphasis on partnership and multi-agency working was noted from all perspectives, and the high level of 'trust' engendered between all key partners can be identified as perhaps the single most important ingredient in the positive 'story' to emerge from this evaluation.

The culture change in Newcastle that has underpinned these encouraging developments was prompted in large part by the Homelessness Act 2002 and accompanying policy pressure from central government. Within NCC, this was manifested in a post-2002 shift towards a more pro-active, flexible and problem-solving style of intervention, as well as a commitment to partnership working. The 'crisis prevention' response to those who are already homeless or in imminent danger of losing their accommodation in the city improved via the work of the council's Housing Advice Centre (which provides both the 'housing options' service and the statutory homelessness assessment function in Newcastle), as well as through enhanced services for single homeless people and rough sleepers (see below). At the same time, there has been a growing focus on 'secondary prevention' for people at risk of housing or income loss, implemented via a series of homelessness prevention protocols and processes, a strong focus on debt advice and arrears prevention, and a wide range of YHN and voluntary-sector provided support services targeting high risk groups.

On YHN's part, the cultural shift has meant a move from primarily 'enforcing tenancies' to 'supporting tenancies', with rigorous implementation of a Preventing Eviction Protocol meaning that evictions are now very much seen as the last resort, as well as the provision of a wide range of 'secondary prevention' activities to prevent vulnerable people losing their homes including Family Intervention Projects, Advice and Support Services, and a Young People's Service. The culture change has extended to the voluntary sector in the city, which was also made accountable for averting crisis and moving people out of the homelessness system and temporary accommodation as quickly as possible, with the SP commissioning framework acknowledged by all parties as a critical lever in this process of change. Housing associations in Newcastle also reported a shift in practices to comply with the Preventing Evictions Protocol (though there were some suggestions that scope remained to further improve housing association practice in this respect).

The focus on dedicated resources and structured case management with rough sleepers, and the provision of a bespoke, individualised service for those with the most complex needs, marks Newcastle out from many other cities. In this context, the role of both the council's Housing Advice Centre and the appointment of the 'Complex Needs and Chronic Exclusion Lead Practitioners' was especially important, and especially the latter's close working relationship with key voluntary and statutory sector partners. Minimising the use of temporary accommodation (and avoidance of B&B altogether) is also a core achievement in the city. The 'Supported Accommodation Gateway' (which acts as a single register for people identified as needing supported accommodation in Newcastle) and the implementation of a 'Pathways to

Independence' process have been major steps forward from the 'warehousing' of single homeless people in hostels and other homeless accommodation that preceded this.

Within this largely positive picture, there were a number of issues that had yet to be fully addressed within the city. For example, while Newcastle's approach to homelessness prevention has sometimes been called a 'whole market' approach, in fact the use made of the PRS was still considered rather modest by many interviewees who felt that there was an opportunity to do more to access private lets for those who are homeless or at risk in the city. Particular sub-groups were felt not to have benefited as much from developments in homelessness services as they should have done – particularly 'non-priority' single men – and the engagement of mental health services in homelessness prevention was broadly felt to be inadequate. The use of some quite large-scale hostel accommodation in Newcastle provoked strong differences of opinion in the city, and having both homeless families and homeless single people resident in the same local authority emergency housing block may not be considered ideal (though relocation to a new site should allow for more separation). User involvement was widely acknowledged to be a weakness within homelessness services in the city, though there were exceptions to this (e.g. the Young People's Service).

Transferable Lessons

Emerging from this evaluation of Newcastle's approach to homelessness prevention are a number of broader lessons that may be of relevance to other local authorities in the North East region.

First, at strategic level, senior-level commitment to the prevention agenda is clearly indispensable in driving forward culture change. In Newcastle's case this was prompted in part by legal and policy imperatives, but was also 'pushing at an open door' in terms of the frustration of many housing and homelessness staff about traditional approaches which resulted in repeat homelessness and 'setting people up to fail'.

Second, the importance of establishing effective partnership working between the local authority, mainstream housing providers, and key voluntary sector partners cannot be overstated. The Newcastle experience provides some indications of how this can be facilitated on a practical level, with the importance of the initial round table meetings in facilitating mutual understanding emphasised from all perspectives. The regular nature of multi-agency case management meetings focusing on individuals with the most complex needs was also a strength of the Newcastle approach.

Third, key to Newcastle's success has been the development of an effective evidence base that has been used to prioritise specific preventative interventions, to develop relationships with partners, and to inform the commissioning process. This evidence-based agenda has contributed significantly to a reduction in evictions, increased move on from temporary/supported accommodation and improved sustainability of tenancies.

Fourth, Newcastle's emphasis on managing debt and rent arrears more effectively had paid dividends, most clearly with respect to the evident success of the Preventing Evictions Protocol. Also in this regard, the YHN-provided support services for those at risk of losing their tenancies – Advice and Support Workers and Family Intervention Projects - is likely to be of interest, as is the work of the NCC Private Rented Service in supporting tenancies in the private sector.

Fifth, the wide-ranging support that the Newcastle Young People's Service offers 16-25 years olds, as well as the bespoke route through the statutory homelessness system it provides for 16 and 17 year olds, may well be of interest to other local authorities. Specialised services for young people seem a particularly worthwhile investment given their often very high rate of tenancy failure and the inappropriate nature of the standard statutory housing 'offer' for those in the youngest age groups in particular.

Sixth, another operational level innovation in Newcastle that may be worth other LAs considering is the emphasis on intensive case management of rough sleepers and others in extreme crisis. The role of the 'Lead Practitioners' as a named contacts within the LA for all complex cases was highly valued by all relevant parties.

Seventh, the 'Gateway' system in Newcastle was widely felt to be both efficient and effective, particularly as it was linked to a 'Pathway to Independence' protocol which promotes active and monitored move on out of hostels/supported accommodation into more independent living. But it was also acknowledged that the linear progression this model implies does not work for all homeless people, and there was some interest in Newcastle in the 'Housing First' model now gaining popularity across Europe (denoting immediate access to mainstream housing with tailored support packages), as an alternative or supplement to this linear model1.

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[1] For a review of the international evidence on Housing First models, and their applicability in the UK context, see Johnsen, S. & Teixeira, L. (2010) *Staircases, Elevators and Cycles of Change: 'Housing First' and other Housing Models for Homeless People with Complex Needs.* http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/chp/publications/PDF/HousingModelsReport.pdf

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Newcastle City Council (NCC) and the Council's arms length management organisation (ALMO) Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) invited Heriot-Watt University and Northumbria University to evaluate the ways the two organisations work together to prevent homelessness.

Key features of the national policy context for the research include the Ministerial stress on pro-active homelessness prevention initiated by the Homelessness Act 2002. In sheltering homelessness grant funding from forthcoming public spending cuts, the Coalition Government has indicated continuing support for approaches developed under the previous administration. These include the target of ending rough sleeping by 2012[2], with ending rough sleeping re-emphasized by the new Government as a key policy priority, albeit that they have been more reticent about setting a timescale for its achievement at national level[3].

Despite the continuation of homelessness grant funding and increased budgetary provision for discretionary housing payments, the absence of ringfencing and the reduction in Supporting People (SP) grant means that homelessness services are certain to be impacted by wider cuts in local government resources from 2011/12. NCC commissions a range of preventative services from YHN and other agencies and this research considers the impact of this investment.

Newcastle sees its approach to tackling homelessness as emphasizing the prevention of crises rather than mainly involving the provision of crisis-based services. The explicit stress on tenancy sustainment points towards the importance of YHN as the dominant social landlord in the city, where it manages approximately 80 per cent of all social rented homes. Therefore, key questions for the research include the ways that YHN supports vulnerable people to retain their tenancies and how successfully this objective is achieved. Embedding tenancy sustainment as a key corporate objective challenges traditional social landlord thinking because it balances a culture of support with a culture of policing.

YHN's role as a provider of homelessness prevention services for non-YHN tenants is another major area of interest. In 2008 YHN was commended by the Audit Commission for a number of initiatives under this heading. It is apparent here that – in contrast to some ALMOs – the organisation has embraced a role which extends well beyond the narrow social landlord functions of managing and maintaining housing. Particularly within the current policy context when many ALMOs face an uncertain future, this model may be of wider interest, not least to the 60 local authorities which have established ALMOs.

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[2] DCLG (2008) *No one left out: communities ending rough sleeping*; London: DCLG
http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/endingroughsleeping
[3] Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G. & Wilcox, S. (2011) *The Homelessness Monitor: Tracking the Impacts of Policy and Economic Change in England 2011-2013. Year 1: Establishing the Baseline.*
rhttp://www.crisis.org.uk/data/files/publications/TheHomelessnessMonitor.pdf

Newcastle now has a relatively high demand housing market with relatively stable and balanced council estates, 10 years ago there were over 3,000 empty council houses – over 8% of council stock; now less than 1% are vacant. This changed housing market context, combined with the likely impact of reductions in the Local Housing Allowance and other welfare benefit changes, provides a crucial backdrop for delivering effective homelessness prevention in Newcastle.

Research questions

The main research questions for the study were agreed as follows:

> How effective are the homelessness prevention activities and services delivered by the City Council and YHN?

> To what extent can it be said that relevant services within the City Council and YHN have established a culture of homelessness prevention?

> How effectively is homelessness prevention activity led, co-ordinated and managed?

> Is it possible to demonstrate the financial and social policy value of these initiatives?

Research methods

The research involved a number of elements.

First, we reviewed key policy documents including: Newcastle Homelessness Strategy 2008-11; Homelessness Strategy Review 2008; Audit Commission inspection report – Your Homes Newcastle 2008; Homelessness Peer Review papers, August/September 2010 and Eurocities Peer Review report 2010; and a range of NCC and YHN's housing and homelessness-related policies and service documents.

Second, we conducted in-depth interviews with a wide range of key informants in the city, attempting to cover all of the major stakeholders relevant to homelessness prevention[4]. These interviews went beyond 'self evaluation' – i.e. they also sought informed assessments of service provision by other agencies and the overall homelessness prevention framework in the city. In all, we interviewed 20 key informants who represented:

> NCC, in both its strategic guise and as a service provider;

> YHN, as both a landlord and as a prevention service provider;

> Two housing associations active in the city (Riverside and Home Group); and

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[4] A limitation of the study that should be noted is that there was no scope within the resources available to conduct interviews with service users. We did, however, interview a number of voluntary and advocacy agencies in order to gain an 'external' perspective on the experiences of service users interacting with NCC and/or YHN.

Voluntary agencies providing prevention services and/or advocating for people at risk of homelessness, including The Cyrenians, Salvation Army, Tyne Housing, Haven and Shelter.

The topic guides used in the study for key informant interviews with the statutory and voluntary sector interviewees are attached at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 respectively. These 'basic' topic guides were adapted according to the specific role of the interviewee, and also for use in the focus groups (see below).

Third, we conducted focus group discussions with front-line staff with a direct interest/involvement in homelessness prevention. The aim of these discussions was to gain a 'bottom up' perspective on how supportive housing management and homelessness prevention services were being implemented in practice and on their perceived effectiveness. Three focus groups were conducted in total with:

YHN housing officers (four housing services officers and two senior housing services officers attended)

Newcastle City Council homelessness officers (six officers attended)

Frontline staff from the Cyrenians, Salvation Army and Tyne Housing (five staff members attended)

Fourth and finally, we conducted secondary data analysis. The main aim of this part of the research was to analyse the scale and nature of homelessness prevention activity in Newcastle as compared with external benchmarks. This work drew on official DCLG homelessness statistics, including those collected on active homelessness prevention since 2008/09, and also on Newcastle's own submissions to DCLG as well as unpublished additional data collected by NCC. Given the importance attributed to tenancy sustainment, this part of the analysis also examined evictions and tenancy terminations data from YHN and compared these with the available external benchmarks.

Structure of Report

Chapter 2 provides the context for the study by outlining the national policy framework on homelessness prevention, before describing the specific context for homelessness and its prevention within Newcastle. Chapter 3 presents the main qualitative findings of the study with respect to the effectiveness of homelessness prevention and associated research questions on co-ordination of relevant activities and culture change. It also reflects on the potential impact of the current economic crisis and cutbacks in public expenditure. Chapter 4 then presents the statistical analysis undertaken for the study, comparing trends in Newcastle to those at national level, in order to test whether the perspectives offered in Chapter 3 on Newcastle's effectiveness in addressing homelessness prevention are borne out in these statistics. Chapter 5 presents the conclusions and any transferable lessons which may be of interest for other local authorities in the region.

CHAPTER 2: THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT

Introduction

This chapter begins with a brief review of the national policy context for homelessness prevention, before turning to the Newcastle context specifically.

The National Context

The most extreme form of homelessness is rough sleeping, and this has been the subject of bespoke policy interventions for over two decades. Despite some significant reductions as a result of the Rough Sleepers Initiative in the early 1990s[5], the numbers on the streets began to rise again in the late 1990s, and rough sleepers were the subject of one of the first reports of the Social Exclusion Unit set up by the Labour Government elected in 1997[6]. This report introduced a new target to reduce rough sleeping by two-thirds by 2002; a target which was reportedly met ahead of schedule in 2001. A new strategy on rough sleeping was launched by the Labour Government in November 2008, which acknowledged that it remained a significant problem in England, especially in central London, and introduced the ambitious target of ending rough sleeping 'once and for all' by 2012[7]. The 2010 Coalition Government has since affirmed its commitment to 'ending' rough sleeping but has been rather reticent as to timescale[8]. There has developed a strong focus on highly targeted and 'personalised' interventions to address the needs of the most 'entrenched' rough sleepers[9].

Considering single homelessness more broadly, a recent major review demonstrated that there have been long-term improvements in service responses in the UK[10], with a shift over the past few decades from merely 'warehousing' single homeless people in hostels and night shelters, towards an emphasis on 'resettling' them in the community[11]. The 'resettlement services' that have developed over recent years have attempted not only to address tenancy sustainment issues amongst this vulnerable group, but also broader aspects of their 'social inclusion', such as re-integrating them with social networks and engaging them in 'purposeful activity', especially employment and training-related activity[12]. A key landmark in this process was the publication in March 2002 of the government policy report More than a Roof, which conceived of homelessness in England as a form

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[5] Randall, G. & Brown, S. (1993). *The Rough Sleepers Initiative: An Evaluation.* London: HMSO.

[6] Social Exclusion Unit (1998) *Rough Sleeping - Report by the Social Exclusion Unit.* London: HMSO.

[7] Communities and Local Government (2008) *No-one Left Out – Communities Ending Rough Sleeping*, London: CLG.

[8] Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G. & Wilcox, S. (2011) *The Homelessness Monitor: Tracking the Impacts of Policy and Economic Change in England 2011-2013. Year 1: Establishing the Baseline.* rhttp://www.crisis.org.uk/data/files/publications/TheHomelessnessMonitor.pdf

[9] Hough, B., and Rice, B (2010) *Providing Personalised Support to Rough Sleepers.* York: JRF.

[10] Jones, A. & Pleace, N. (2010) *A Review of Single Homelessness in the UK 2000-2010,* London: Crisis.

[11] Pleace, N. and Quilgars, D. (2003) 'Led rather than leading? Research on homelessness in Britain '*Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology,* 13: 187-196.

[12] Fitzpatrick, S., Quilgars D. & Pleace, N. (Eds.) (2009) *Homelessness in the UK: Problems and Solutions,* Coventry: Chartered Institute for Housing.

of 'social exclusion' rather than simply a housing problem[13]. The quality of hostels, day centres and other frontline services has also improved considerably in recent years, most especially as a result of the 'Hostels Capital Improvement Programme' ('Places of Change') programme[14]. The introduction of the 'Supporting People' (SP) funding stream, in April 2003, was also central to the expansion of homelessness resettlement services across the UK. This provided 'housing-related' support for a range of vulnerable groups, with homeless people and those at risk of homelessness key amongst them. However, the 'ring fenced' status of SP funding was removed in England in April 2009, prompting concerns that services for some SP client groups, including homeless people, might lose out disproportionately in public sector funding cuts.

'Statutory homelessness' is a concept unique to the UK, first introduced by the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977. This Act provided, in brief, that local authorities (LAs) must ensure that accommodation is made available to certain categories of homeless people. The relevant legislation for England is now contained in the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002. Under this statutory framework, if a LA has 'reason to believe' that a household may be homeless or threatened with homelessness they have a duty to make inquiries to establish whether they owe them a statutory duty. These inquiries concern the following key concepts.

eligibility – many 'persons from abroad' are 'ineligible' for assistance under the homelessness legislation.

homelessness - persons without any accommodation in the UK which they have a legal right to occupy, together with their whole household, are legally 'homeless'. Those who cannot gain access to their accommodation, or cannot reasonably be expected to live in it (for example because of a risk of violence), are also homeless[15].

priority need – the priority need groups comprise: households which contain dependent children, a pregnant woman, or someone who is are 'vulnerable' because of age, disability, or for 'some other reason'; adults who are 'vulnerable' because of time spent in care, custody or the armed forces or because of having left their homes because of violence; young people aged 16 or 17 (or 18-20 years old if formerly in LA care); and those who have lost accommodation as a result of an emergency, such as fire or flood.

intentional homelessness - this refers to deliberate acts or omissions that cause a person to lose their accommodation (e.g. running up rent arrears, anti-social behaviour, giving up accommodation that was reasonable to occupy, etc.).

local connection – for the purposes of the homelessness legislation, households can have a local connection with a particular LA because of residence, employment or family associations, or because of special circumstances.

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[13] Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (2002) *More Than a Roof: A Report into Tackling Homelessness.* London: DTLR.
[14] Communities and Local Government (2006) *Places of Change: Tackling Homelessness through the Hostels Capital Improvement Programme.* London: CLG.
[15] There may also be duties owed to those 'threatened with homelessness' within the next 28 days, depending on the extent to which they fulfil the other statutory criteria.

If a household is eligible, in priority need and unintentionally homeless, then they are owed the 'main homelessness duty' and must be provided with temporary accommodation (TA) until 'settled' housing becomes available. In practice, this settled housing is almost always secured by the LA that owes a duty under the homelessness legislation, and in the great majority of cases duty is discharged via the offer of a social rented tenancy. If a household owed the main homelessness duty has no local connection with the authority to which they have applied, the duty to secure settled accommodation for them can be transferred to another UK authority with which they do have such a connection (except if they run the risk of violence in that other area).

The number of homeless households 'accepted' by English LAs as owed the main duty rose steeply in the late 1990s and early 2000s, as housing affordability deteriorated[16]. However, from 2003 onwards there was an extraordinarily sharp decline in statutory homeless acceptances in England, associated with a step-change in the priority attached to homelessness prevention by central government. This began with the Homelessness Act 2002 which gave LAs in England a new duty to develop prevention-focussed homelessness strategies for their areas. Critical was the mainstreaming of the 'housing options' approach, strongly promoted by Ministers[17], whereby households approaching a LA for assistance with housing are given a formal interview offering advice on all of the various means by which their housing problems could be resolved. While some have argued that the post-2003 collapse in acceptance rates was attributable to increased LA 'gatekeeping'[18], research has indicated that at least some of this decline was the result of 'genuine' and effective homelessness prevention[19]. More recently, there was encouragement from the last Labour Government to move towards an 'Enhanced Housing Options' model which has four key objectives: meeting housing needs with a wider range of solutions; using stock more effectively; tackling worklessness; and improving customer service[20].

Although they overlap with all of the groups already discussed to some extent, young homeless people are a distinctive group who have attracted bespoke policy responses in recent years. A major UK review reported a 'sea change' of improvement in service responses to young homeless people over the decade until 2008[21]. The strengthening of the statutory safety net in 2002, by extending automatic priority need to 16 and 17 year olds and certain categories of care leavers, together with the strong focus on young people within homelessness prevention strategies, have been the central drivers of these improvements. Also crucial was the 2009 'Southwark' ruling, in which the House of

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[16] Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G. & Wilcox, S. (2011) *The Homelessness Monitor: Tracking the Impacts of Policy and Economic Change in England 2011-2013. Year 1: Establishing the Baseline.* rhttp://www.crisis.org.uk/data/files/publications/TheHomelessnessMonitor.pdf

[17] Department for Communities and Local Government (2006) *Homelessness Prevention: A Guide to Good Practice,* London: DCLG.

[18] Pawson, H. (2007) 'Local authority homelessness prevention in England: Empowering consumers or denying rights?, *Housing Studies*, 22(6): 867-884.

[19] Pawson, H., Netto, G. Jones, C., Wager, F., Fancy, C. & Lomax, D (2007) *Evaluating Homelessness Prevention.* London: CLG http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/preventhomelessness

[20] Communities and Local Government (2008) *Expanding choice, addressing need: Addressing need through the Enhanced Housing Options approach,* London: CLG. http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/expandingchoice

[21] Quilgars, D., Johnsen, S. and Pleace, N. (2008) *Youth Homelessness in the UK: A Decade of Progress?,* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Lords[22] decided that homeless 16 and 17 year olds should be considered 'children in need' under the Children Act 1989, and should therefore have a full social services assessment of their support needs.

The Framework for Homelessness Prevention in Newcastle

Newcastle upon Tyne is the regional capital of the North East of England. It has a below average level of employment and a high level of deprivation in outlying areas. Around half of the housing stock is owner occupied (49%), and it is above the national average for the percentage of both social rented housing (29%) and private rented housing (22%). The local authority owns 30,000 homes (comprising around 80% of social housing in the city), which are managed at arm's length by YHN. In addition, there are five 'major' housing associations operating in Newcastle which provide the bulk of the remaining 20% of social housing in the city. The private rented sector (PRS) has grown rapidly in recent years as the number of students in the city has increased. Voluntary sector organisations provide over 600 bedspaces of 'emergency' and 'non-emergency' accommodation[23].

While a wide range of organizations contribute to the prevention and alleviation of homelessness in Newcastle, there are three core elements to the homelessness response in the city:

NCC

YHN

Key voluntary sector providers

We describe the main features and contribution of each of these organizations below (see Table 2.1), drawing on the documents reviewed (as noted above) and also the interviews conducted in the course of the study. Please note that many of the services and interventions described are provided on a partnership basis but are discussed under one of the other organisational headings for convenience.

Table 2.1 Homelessness service network in Newcastle

Organisation/Sector	Homelessness-Related Services/Initiatives
1. Newcastle City Council	Housing Advice Centre Hill Court (emergency homeless accommodation) The Supported Housing 'Gateway' and 'Pathway to Independence' A range of homelessness prevention protocols Dedicated rough sleepers services Private Rented Service Strategic commissioning of SP services

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[22] R (on the application of G) (FC) *v* London Borough of Southwark [2009] UKHL 26, http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200809/ldjudgmt/jd090520/appg-1.htm

[23] This includes 165 emergency access beds, and 453 beds in shared and hostel-type accommodation.

	Homelessness Prevention Network
2. Your Homes Newcastle (ALMO)	Preventing Evictions Protocol (developed and implemented jointly with NCC) Advice and Support Workers Family Intervention Project Young People's Service
3. Voluntary sector partners	Newcastle commissions services from a range of voluntary sector providers (in addition to YHN). This includes 17 organisations providing accommodation-based homelessness services accommodating and supporting over 600 people and floating support services supporting over 300 people at any one time[24].

Newcastle City Council

The Housing and Welfare Rights Service is part of the Commissioning Directorate in NCC which has three main aims with respect to homelessness:

> to reduce the demand for crisis services;

> to improve the quality of the supply of services; and

> to lead and coordinate housing, care and support services.

Its work in this area operates on three levels:

> primary prevention activities for all the community;

> secondary prevention activities for people at risk of homelessness; and

> crisis prevention activities for people at imminent risk of losing their home or their income.

As required by the Homelessness Act 2002, NCC has produced a homelessness strategy for 2008-2013. Homelessness prevention was presented as a centrepiece of the strategy, and two of the four overall strategic objectives are squarely about prevention:

> consolidating and extending the prevention of homelessness to reduce demand for crisis accommodation

> increasing the supply of housing options available to prevent homelessness

> increasing the amount and quality of accommodation available for those at risk of homelessness

> improving governance and strengthening partnerships to meet crosscutting needs

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[24] For a full list of provision in Newcastle see: http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/housing/housing-advice/accommodation-directory

SP funding is critical to homelessness alleviation and prevention in Newcastle, with the commissioning process and enforcement of contract compliance playing a major role in the changes to homelessness services in the city in recent years (see Chapter 4). In 2011/12, the total SP spend is projected at approximately £16M, and a significant proportion of that budget is spent on alleviating or preventing homelessness. Around £5.7M is spent on 'core' homelessness services (including support for people with offending history or substance misuse, refugees and domestic violence), another £1.7M on homelessness services for young people, and £1.7M on designated accommodation and support for people with mental health problems. These SP funds cover both 'crisis response' (provided by the voluntary sector via hostel and supported accommodation) and 'preventative' services such as floating support, with the latter delivered mainly through YHN (NCC allocate around £2M SP funds to YHN homelessness services annually). The SP funds available to support homelessness-related services have shrunk since 2010/11 and are likely to diminish further in the coming years.

NCC has also, as part of its Homelessness Strategy, developed a Homelessness Prevention Network[25]. This Network is an informal partnership of 62 agencies that has developed protocols, policies, information sharing and training. It aims to raise the profile of the prevention of homelessness and service improvement in the city, to develop new prevention options, and to promote the ethos that the prevention of homelessness is an objective for all community-based services. Members of the Prevention Network include social housing providers (YHN and housing associations), supported housing providers, adult social services, criminal justice agencies (probation and youth offending), drug treatment agencies, health and mental health services, NCC housing and homelessness services, and the Supporting People Team. Examples of the collaborative work undertaken through the network include the development of a Preventing Evictions Protocol; Pathways to Independence protocol; a Hospital Discharge and Homelessness Prevention Protocol; Newcastle Debt Advice - Debt Co-ordination Process; and a Drug Management Protocol. The Network is administered by the Housing Co-ordination Unit, which is part of the City Council's Housing and Welfare Rights Services

Housing Advice Centre

At the heart of homelessness services in Newcastle is the Housing Advice Centre which provides both the 'housing options' service and the statutory homelessness assessment function in Newcastle. This operates from shop front premises in central Newcastle, and people not only self refer but are also referred to HAC by a wide range of agencies e.g. Shelter, Citizens Advice, solicitors, support groups etc. HAC also do outreach work with GPs, other health services etc. Post-2002 the HAC team was expanded (from three to seven full-time staff) but recent cuts mean that they now operate a 'triage' system and take telephone applications.

A 'Complex Needs Lead Practitioner' role was created as a permanent post within HAC in 2009 as a result of the recognition of the importance of specialised work with the most vulnerable groups associated with high levels of repeat homelessness applications. Though located in the HAC, the Complex Needs Lead Practitioner is not routinely involved in statutory homelessness assessments or

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[25] http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/housing/housing-advice/prevention-network

in the formal housing options interviews. Instead, this role focuses on ensuring that the Homelessness Prevention Network's protocol and partnership arrangements remain relevant and that partner agencies have a consistent contact. This includes attending MAPPA, MARAC and social care case conferences. At the time of the study, the Temporary Accommodation Manager was also covering the remit of the 'Chronic Exclusion Lead Practitioner', as this post was vacant[26]. This chronic exclusion role focuses on rough sleepers and people excluded from hostels with no accommodation options. This includes chairing the common case management meetings and coordinating outreach and emergency accommodation services, as well as playing an integral role in the Pathway to Independence (see below).

Hill Court Emergency Homeless Accommodation

NCC emergency homeless accommodation is provided in self-contained flats in the Hill Court block (there is longer any use of B&B accommodation for homeless households in Newcastle). Hill Court accommodates both single people and families, and around 400 households are accommodated there each year. Hill Court has a staff team of around 20, and offers 24-hour concierge and emergency services, advice and support workers, a dedicated mental health social worker, dedicated children's provision (crèche, out-of-school club etc.), and health visitors who specialise in homelessness. This service is provided primarily to households to whom the council has a statutory duty. However, the management of Hill Court has been aligned with the work on the rough sleepers. Hill Court aims to run with 10-20% empty units to be able to respond to crises including some rough sleepers. The other 600+ homeless beds in the voluntary sector seek to run at 100% occupancy, because of the rent based funding model, therefore Hill Court acts as hub to accommodate those in acute need whilst waiting for a bed in the voluntary sector. The Hill Court accommodation block is being replaced by a new 45-unit development – which will continue to accommodate both single people and families. Its services are also being reviewed, with a view to promoting the homelessness prevention agenda across universal services such as health visitors, schools, children social care, adult social care.

The 'Supported Housing Gateway' and 'The Pathway to Independence'

The Gateway acts as a single register for people identified by commissioning partners as needing supported accommodation. Providers of supported housing use the Gateway to fill their vacancies and also provide information about discharges. Advantages of the Gateway are that clients only need to provide information to one agency, duplication is eliminated in efforts to find or to fill a vacancy, voluntary organizations must justify the allocation of their places according to needs, data

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[26] In fact, four lead practitioner roles were created in 2009 to focus on continuity of service and accountability in key areas: complex needs (working with clients with multiple needs probation, social care and health); chronic exclusion (working with rough sleepers and people excluded from hostels with no accommodation options); tenancy relations (more complex private sector contractual matters); and housing assessment (providing consistency in the management of statutory assessments).

is accumulated on met and unmet need, and it is possible to track the progress of homeless people over an extended time period.

A 'Pathway to Independence' protocol has been established for vulnerable adults in supported housing or receiving support from statutory agencies. The Pathway is based on a joint approach between NCC, YHN, Your Choice Homes (the CBL scheme in Newcastle) and support agencies. The emphasis is on providing a route out of supported accommodation into more independent living, with YHN 'advice and support workers' (see below) working with other support agencies to develop a tailored 'Support Plan' for each individual, including with respect to bidding for properties on YCH where appropriate.

Rough Sleepers and Chronic Exclusion

Newcastle conducts counts each weekday of the numbers sleeping rough in the city (the current enumerated level being an average of six[27]). The city has adopted the Government's target of ending rough sleeping as a habitual lifestyle by 2012. There are four key elements to the work with rough sleepers in Newcastle:

> outreach – the national Adults Facing Chronic Exclusion programme originally funded the provision of outreach services by the Cyrenians. This is now jointly commissioned by NCC and the Primary Care Trust.

> verification – assessment to distinguish between those in most severe need (e.g. rough sleeping) and those whose needs are less severe (e.g. staying with friends).

> case management – a case management approach to facilitate a better understanding of the needs of individual rough sleepers and an opportunity to plan access into housing and support.

> commissioning and contracting – using contract compliance procedures to reduce the number of evictions from supported housing and increased the quality of support provided. There is a protocol regarding eviction from supported accommodation, and on making the best use of the available supported accommodation units.

These measures were implemented following the creation of the Chronic Exclusion Lead Practitioner

Private Rented Service

The Private Rented Service in Newcastle, with a staff complement of 7.5 (reduced from a previous complement of 10), has two main strands to its work: first, gaining access to PRS accommodation for people at risk of homelessness and, second, driving up standards in the PRS in the city, with respect to both properties and management. They take referrals of people at risk of homelessness from HAC

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[27] These rough sleepers are reported to be chronically excluded people with multiple needs who have in the past had many accommodation placements. They are said to sleep rough because current services cannot cope with them or the costs of doing so are prohibitive.

and from YHN, and have advice and support workers (commissioned by NCC and managed by YHN) to undertake pre- and post-tenancy work with tenants placed in the PRS. Until April, the Private Rented Service had a landlord incentive scheme but that has been discontinued partly as a result of funding cuts, but also a sense that these incentives has come to be expected by landlords and were distorting the market (there was reported to be no reduction in PRS access since its discontinuation). The main incentive the Private Rented Service can now offer is the Newcastle Rent Deposit Scheme, together with other forms of landlord support (e.g. advertising vacant properties; free tenant vetting; arranging direct payment of LHA; landlord training and accreditation; assistance to landlords in resolving problematic cases (e.g. ASB, rent arrears.)

YHN

YHN is the dominant provider of social housing in Newcastle, and contributes to homelessness prevention in the city in a wide range of ways.

Preventing Evictions Protocol

The aim of the 'Preventing Evictions Protocol' issued in 2009 (updated from the Preventing Evictions and Repeat Homelessness Protocol launched in 2006, and initiated by NCC), is to prevent vulnerable YHN and other social housing tenants in Newcastle losing their homes. The principle behind the establishment of the Protocol is that, where somebody is receiving support, social landlords should meet with the relevant support agencies to work together to help the person to remain in their home. The PEP seeks to ensure that that vulnerable people:

are not set up to fail by being given a tenancy they cannot manage, and are offered all appropriate support from the outset;

are helped by the landlord and support agency to address any problems as soon as they are identified, in order to minimise the risk of eviction;

leave their tenancy in a planned way if they cannot cope.

The Protocol sets out what is expected as good practice, and provides guidance on what can be realistically expected from each type of agency involved to protect tenancies which might be at risk.

Advice and Support Workers

The Advice and Support Workers (ASW) within YHN offer low-level floating support. There is an ASW in every YHN neighbourhood office (15 in total). The service has expanded significantly in the past five years, based on SP funding and YHN's own resources. Most YHN tenants who have stayed in TA or been accepted as statutorily homeless will be allocated an ASW, and there is an automatic offer of ASW service in rent arrears cases. ASW are intrinsic to 'The Pathway' process for vulnerable adults, and also to the PEP. ASW provide pre-tenancy support as well as ongoing support to sustain tenancies. Benefits, budgeting and debt dominate their work, while client's future plans (e.g. training and employment) are addressed by signposting to external organisations. There is also now a

specialist Mental Health Housing Hub (2008) comprising two mental health advice and support workers and two mental health welfare rights officers.

Family Intervention Project

The Family Intervention Project is an intensive support and challenge intervention service for families who are responsible for a disproportionate amount of anti-social behavior (ASB) in Newcastle and may be at risk of eviction as a result. This original ASB FIP was established in 2007, and currently has a staff complement of four. Subsequently two additional FIPs were established: a Child Poverty FIP (with two workers) and a Youth Crime Action Plan FIP (with two workers). All of the FIPs focus on households with complex needs, and families are referred via a range of routes including YHN housing offices, the NCC emergency accommodation unit (Hill Court), and children and adult social services. An in-depth evaluation completed in 2010[28] reported that, between August 2007 and January 2010, the FIPs had worked with a total of 35 families (the majority of whom had worked with the original ASB FIP) and that the average length of time that a family spent with a FIP was ten months. FIP workers had a caseload of approximately three families per worker, and this low caseload was said to allow them to work intensively with each family, often visiting five times a week.

Young People's Service

The Young People's Service has been part of YHN since 2006, with much of the team acquired from a previous Children's Society project. The staff complement has risen from 18 to 50 since it was established, and many members of staff are social work qualified. A key impetus for the establishment of the Young People's Service was a recognition that more had to be done to prevent tenancy failure amongst this age group. It was acknowledged that simply handing the keys to a flat to a 16 or 17 year old was not only failing to address their needs effectively, but also did not represent the best use of available resources in the context of a diminishing supply of social housing in the city. The Young People's Service that resulted works with 16-25 year olds, including young parents. It provides assessments and prevention services to 16-17 year olds who approach the HAC. It also offers: a supported housing block; specialist young people hostel; floating support service to young people across the city; a 'pathways' resettlement tailored to under 18s; structured pre-tenancy support; family mediation services; support with parenting skills; youth counselling services; and 'youth voice' participation, peer education and volunteering activities.

Key voluntary sector providers

While there are a large number of voluntary sector homelessness service providers in Newcastle (see Table 2.1 above), the key providers interviewed were as follows:

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[28] Barefoot Research and Evaluation (2010) *Evaluation of the Newcastle Family Intervention Project: 2007 to 2010.*

The Cyrenians: have experienced substantial growth, and are the largest provider for single homeless people and rough sleepers in the city. Provide direct access and short-stay supported accommodation (240 beds in total); street outreach work (conduct the Newcastle count); drug and alcohol services; mental health support services; and employment schemes. The key homelessness prevention service they provide is floating support, which they offer to families as well as to single people.

The Salvation Army: provides a 66-bed male hostel (with eight new flats built on site) and 24-bed female hostel. In addition to hostel support (shelter, food, clothing), they offer drug and alcohol interventions; education, training and employment schemes; family support; and mental health services (CPN worker visits hostels each week). All accommodation is for over 18s.

Haven was originally a probation-focused organisation, run for homeless people coming out of prison, but there is now a 60/40 split between offenders and non-offenders amongst their client group. It provides a range of supported accommodation types and sizes, and also offers a drop-in centre offering help to improve service users' life skills (cooking, cleaning, communication, self esteem etc.), and engages in work to get service users integrated back into their family's lives.

Tyne Housing Association, via its subsidiary Byker Bridge Housing and Support Ltd, manages 37 supported housing projects (ranging from small developments of one and two bedroom flats with on site wardens to shared houses with residential support staff), and also provide floating support to 110 households. Under the Bridge Ltd is a charitable organisation that manages THA's homelessness services, chiefly their direct access hostel for 31 residents and their homeless people's health care centre. Under the Bridge Ltd also runs two schemes providing therapeutic occupation and employment training for homeless and vulnerable adults. THA has recently started to develop 'general needs' housing to enable better throughput into "ordinary" housing from their homelessness provision.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the national and local context for homelessness prevention in Newcastle. The next chapter moves on to the more evaluative element of the study, by exploring the range of relevant perspectives on the effectiveness of homelessness prevention in the city.

CHAPTER 3: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION IN NEWCASTLE – COMPARING PERSPECTIVES

Introduction

This chapter will interrogate all of the qualitative data collected in the course of the study with a view to answering the four of central research questions set out in Chapter 1:

> How effective are the homelessness prevention activities and services delivered by the City Council and YHN?

> To what extent can it be said that relevant services within the City Council and YHN have established a culture of homelessness prevention?

> How effectively is homelessness prevention activity led, co-ordinated and managed?

> Is it possible to demonstrate the financial and social policy value of these initiatives?

In addition, we also consider the impact of the economic downturn and the gaps in provision and priorities for service development identified by key informants and focus group participants.

How effective are the homelessness prevention activities and services delivered by the City Council and YHN?

There was a widespread view that NCC and YHN's activities and services were highly effective at preventing homelessness. This view was expressed not only within NCC and YHN, but was also backed up by third party assessments. Where key informants were in a position to compare Newcastle with other local authorities – in Tyne and Wear or in England as a whole – they generally offered a very favourable assessment *'...are best on prevention'*.

Newcastle is seen as a national leader... CLG send people to us to see how Newcastle are doing it. (Voluntary sector provider)

The relationship between NCC and YHN was viewed as a key strength within Newcastle. Strong leadership was also noted as crucial: it was said that there has been longstanding senior-level commitment to the prevention agenda within both YHN and NCC. The focus on dealing with debts and sustaining tenancies was considered a key element of Newcastle's success. Minimising the use of TA (and avoidance of B&B altogether) was also widely acknowledged as a positive development[29]. The strong emphasis on partnership and multi-agency working was noted from all perspectives. Communication was said to be very good and 'everyone understands each other's point of view

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[29] Figures for March 2011 indicate that Newcastle has the lowest absolute use of temporary accommodation, and lowest rate of use per head of population, of any of the English 'core cities'.

now'. Perhaps most tellingly, a 'can do' culture was felt to pervade most parts of the service network in the city[30].

With respect to single homelessness in particular, SP commissioning and contract compliance procedures were widely noted to have driven up standards and more closely aligned collaborating organisations' standards, approaches and values[31]: '*SP takes everyone to a good benchmark*' (Voluntary sector provider). Services for this group were said to be generally well co-ordinated, and fact that probation, drug and alcohol services are now involved in joint working was a strength (mental health was seen as more of a weakness). Key positives included the case management and 'whole person' approach said to be taken, and the provision of a bespoke, individualised service for those with the most complex needs.

There were specific points made about particular elements within Newcastle's approach to homelessness prevention, as now discussed. Most of the points made very positive, but there were also some concerns raised in specific areas.

HAC

There was very broad agreement amongst interviewees (inside and outside NCC) that HAC did an 'excellent' job for their clients. Voluntary sector frontline workers supported this – HAC were said to 'do everything they can for homeless people'.

The relationship with Shelter and other key voluntary and advice agencies was considered to be very good and to have improved considerably in recent years: '*we're working with them, rather than against them*' (NCC officer). One important indicator suggested was the sharp decline in the number of homelessness 'appeals made' (i.e. internal reviews requested) in Newcastle[32]. This interpretation was confirmed by voluntary organisations interviewed: relations with NCC were said to be much better than with councils elsewhere (by those who could make such comparisons). This meant that judicial review applications – or even the threat of such applications – was very rare, whereas it was routine in other areas.

The role of the 'Complex Needs Lead Practitioner' within HAC was frequently singled out as a particularly valuable one. She is the 'named contact' for the most complex cases and several agencies reported finding that especially helpful. It was reported by a wide range of participants that this intensive partnership working by the Lead Practitioner had helped to generate a high level of trust between key players in Newcastle concerned with the most complex cases.

There have been recent changes and staff cuts in HAC, in light of the need to make overall cost savings. We investigated whether this had had an impact on the service that HAC was able to provide. A 'triage' system has been introduced (to distinguish those in immediate crisis from those who can be seen later), and applications were also now accepted by telephone. It was felt by HAC

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[30] See also Harding, J. (2010) *Eurocities Peer Review of Newcastle City Council's Services to Homeless People*
[31] Except perhaps with respect to standards and protocols for user engagement, where rather than a universal framework, each provider undertakes user consultation independently.
[32] In contrast to many other English LAs, see http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/care/turned-away/6517948.article

staff that, while face-to-face contact was preferable, this new system was working reasonably well, and in the current financial climate (initial) telephone contact was a good solution. DCLG advice to put the most experienced staff on reception was viewed as having worked out very well.

Within this generally very positive picture on the service that HAC provides, a small number of interviews raised two specific concerns.

First, it was suggested by one external interviewee that, because homelessness prevention activity and statutory assessments were sometimes 'sequential' (i.e. statutory homelessness applications were only considered after all preventative options were exhausted), Newcastle might be at risk of conducting technically unlawful gatekeeping[33]. It was, nonetheless, acknowledged that, as soon as queried on this, Newcastle always commenced the statutory assessment process. Hence, such cases never proceeded to legal challenge. However, HAC staff did not accept this account and reported that, where relevant, a statutory homelessness assessment was always pursued in parallel with exploration of other options available to the household concerned. It was said to be explained to applicants thus: "*We will run standard statutory inquiries, and in meantime look at other options for you*."

Second, there were question marks raised (from both within and outwith NCC) about the degree of integration between the homelessness prevention work undertaken by HAC and mainstream social housing allocations functions of YHN. This was said to be a particular concern with 'non-priority' cases, where one voluntary agency said the housing options service operated mainly as a 'signposting' function rather than actively helping clients to resolve their housing issues: '*HAC doesn't get involved with YHN at all*'. Other (NCC) interviewees commented that the HAC and the allocations function through YCH were very 'separate'. Again, HAC staff indicated that these concerns were unfounded: '*We register [people] on the CBL if they are not already on it.*'[34].

Supported Housing Gateway/Pathway for Vulnerable Adults

The 'Gateway' system (made possible by the SP framework) was broadly viewed as having been very positive; projects now have more information about people who are coming in to their service (improving the safety of staff), and the strong 'Pathways' emphasis on 'monitoring journeys' and encouraging people to move on from hostels and supported accommodation was very much welcomed[35]. There is much more structured work done with the voluntary sector hostel providers to help people achieve 'milestones' in their preparations to move out of hostels. There was also a sense in which that, despite the pressures on social housing in the city, YHN have freed up stock to enable

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[33] Pawson, H. (2007) 'Local authority homelessness prevention in England: Empowering consumers or denying rights?, *Housing Studies*, 22(6): 867-884.

[34] The limited scale of this research meant that further investigation of relevant practices was not possible. It may be that NCC would wish to take further action to satisfy itself that the alleged problems reported here are unfounded or overstated.

[35] In this regard, the recent Government concession on the Shared Accommodation Rate extension to 25-34 year olds – that this would not apply to those who had spent at least 3 months in a hostel – was viewed as a step backwards, having put so much energy into minimising hostel stays.

move on from the hostels, albeit that not all interviewees felt that things had improved enough in this respect:

We need more social housing to get the throughput right...I think quite a few [service users] in hostels could live independently with floating support...it's just getting the 'move on. (Voluntary sector provider)

While there were still some in the voluntary sector who felt that more could be done and 'we hold people in the system for too long'[36], it was clear that there had been a positive culture change within the hostel sector, in line with national patterns discussed in Chapter 2:

Gone are the days of warehousing people...bed, food, clothing...now we resettle people, so they are with us all day, doing programmes.... (Voluntary sector provider)

There was, however, some criticism of Newcastle's dependency on the 'progression pathway' model towards independent living, which was said not to work for those who are unable to cope with communal settings in hostels or supported units. In this context it is worth noting the current trend in many parts of Europe towards a 'Housing First' model, which emphasises immediate access to mainstream housing (with appropriate support) for homeless people, rather than a linear model predicated on progression through supported accommodation 'steps' in order to achieve 'housing readiness'[37]. There was some (cautious) support expressed for this model in Newcastle from both the statutory and voluntary sectors:

We've looked at it [Housing First]. It's very challenging. How you would manage that individual in the community? How you would minimise the negative impact? But we know that if we want to reduce the number of people living long-term on the streets we can't rely solely on hostels and we have to generate more access to general needs accommodation. (NCC officer)

Linked with this, and as elsewhere[38], the role of hostels was a matter of some controversy in Newcastle. For some, the availability of large hostel accommodation (which delivers economies of scale) rather than just dispersed units (which are more difficult and costly to manage) was viewed as a strength in Newcastle. Others felt that '*big institutional hostels should be a thing of the past*', and favoured moving away from hostel-style provision to smaller-scale supported accommodation and floating support models. There have also been local protests - and a Local Government Ombudsman Inquiry - over the re-location of Hill court temporary accommodation hostel to Wentworth Court. Some felt that these protests were attributable to NIMBYISM, but others argued that there were 'too many hostels' in Newcastle, and sympathised with local residents' concerns. Some interviewees

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[37] For a review of the international evidence on Housing First models, and their applicability in the UK context, see Johnsen, S. & Teixeira, L. (2010) *Staircases, Elevators and Cycles of Change: 'Housing First' and other Housing Models for Homeless People with Complex Needs.*
http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/chp/publications/PDF/HousingModelsReport.pdf
[38] Busch-Geertsema, V. & Sahlin, I. (2007) 'The role of hostels and temporary accommodation', *European Journal of Homelessness*, 1: 67-93
http://eohw.horus.be/files/freshstart/European%20Journal%20of%20Homelessness/Volume%20One/EJH_Vol 1_Article3.pdf

also felt that this large supply of hostel places in itself generated demand, particularly by 'attracting' people from elsewhere in the region (see discussion of 'area connection' below).

Work with rough sleepers

This was widely viewed as a particular strength within Newcastle:

We are very proactive with rough sleepers. We have case management meetings once a week. We managed to get all relevant agencies round the table. This means that our approach is holistic and there is accountability. We have a great relationship with the outreach team. (NCC officer)

This was said to be a big change: five years ago, there was little provision for 'non-priority' rough sleepers in Newcastle. The resources dedicated to addressing this issue – via the NCC Chronic Exclusion Lead Practitioner and the Cyrenians street team, together with the more effective use of temporary accommodation via the 'Pathway' model - was reported to have enabled a more focused and systematic approach to addressing the needs of rough sleepers than elsewhere. That said, concerns remained about access to settled housing for this group, unless they were accepted as in priority need.

Preventing Evictions Protocol

The PEP, jointly developed and implemented by NCC and YHN, was generally considered to have been a great success. Certainly, YHN evictions were said to have 'tumbled' (see Chapter 4). HAC staff emphasised that any potential evictions were flagged to them at an early stage by YHN, and discussed at face-to-face meetings of YHN and HAC staff where all support options are discussed, including referral to ASW and/or FIP where appropriate. The protocol was described by YHN officers as 'practical, with clear roles and expectations' and emphatically 'not lip service', and frontline staff YHN housing officers argued that the change engendered by the PEP was 'real:

'…we do strive to give more support than before'. (YHN Housing Services Officer)

These assertions were supported by voluntary sector key informants, who said that homelessness prevention was now very much built into the 'culture' of homelessness services in the city, and that YHN and supported housing providers now treat eviction as a last resort. These findings are also consistent with the YHN Audit Commission Inspection in 2008 (see paragraphs 127 and 128).

Housing associations in Newcastle also reported a shift in practices to comply with the PEP especially in terms of offering increased support to tenants before eviction. Nevertheless, there were some suggestions that scope remained to further improve housing association practice in this respect. For both YHN and housing associations, some interviewees considered that the early part of the process for avoiding evictions was possibly too automated, and reliant on people responding to letters, which may not be realistic with respect to those who have multiple problems.

Support Services Provided by YHN: ASW, FIP and the Young People's Service

In the YHN Audit Commission Inspection 2008 the range of supported housing services provided by the ALMO was found to be 'outstanding' and the integration of these activities alongside landlord services was seen as 'indicative of the holistic approach that YHN seeks to take with its most vulnerable customers' (para 187).

Similarly, there was evidence from our study of the benefits of these YHN support services. The role of the Young People's Service, for example, was widely viewed as very valuable. The pre-tenancy work undertaken with young people and the support offered to them, including referral to HAC when a crisis seems imminent, was said to mean that there are now far fewer evictions of this age group from YHN properties. The achievements that have been made in tenancy sustainment contrast with the outcomes reported by Harding (2004), where, of 145 16-17 year olds accepted as statutorily homeless by Newcastle and subsequently re-housed, 89 (61%) left their tenancy in less than one year and in 25 cases this was because the property was abandoned[39]. However, a gap in the referral process was noted in that only half of the (now much smaller number) of failed YHN tenancies amongst 16-25 year olds are known to the Young People's Service. This issue was being actively addressed with YHN.

The support role of ASW staff was referred to by stakeholders from a wide range of perspectives. ASW staff monitored a range of outcomes of their work with individual clients: income generation (i.e. benefits take up); level of arrears (at beginning, during and at end of their intervention); number of evictions; and levels of tenancy sustainment. ASW were able to share with us a range of statistics that evidenced their achievements in these areas, showing, for example, reduced rent arrears amongst the clients they had worked with (including after they had ceased their involvement with these clients). ASW statistics also provided information relevant to tenancy sustainment: of the 1,316 clients referred to ASW in the 12 months prior to August 2011, 1,116 remained in their tenancy, and only 10 tenancies had 'failed' by the point of data extraction (e.g. clients evicted for arrears or ASB, abandoned property, etc.). In 190 cases tenancies had ended for reasons other than 'failure' (e.g. transferred to another YHN property, changed tenancy from joint to sole, etc.).

With respect to the FIP, a recent in-depth evaluation report was extremely positive[40]. It found that all of the families on the FIP reported positive impacts, including with respect to improved family behaviour and reduced police involvement, and that the 'FIP results in maintained tenancies and breaks the cycle of evictions.' It was also found that 'there has been a reduction in the number of children in the looked after system as a result of the FIP.' Importantly, the FIP was reported to bolster community confidence and relationships with other residents because YHN/NCC are seen to be 'doing something that works'. These achievements appear particularly impressive when it is taken into account that the Newcastle FIP does not have a 'core residential block' for working with

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[39] Harding, J. (2004) *Making it Work – The Keys to Success for Young People Living Independently.* Bristol: Policy Press.
[40] Barefoot Research and Evaluation (2010) *Evaluation of the Newcastle Family Intervention Project: 2007 to 2010.*

the most challenging families, a facility that previous research has indicated to be a key factor in successful FIPs such as the Dundee Families Project[41].

Nevertheless, some stakeholder agencies remain unconvinced about the value of the FIP and ASW services, seeing these as too 'fluffy', and not, in their view, 'assertive, interventionist, realistic enough'. With respect to ASW, it was acknowledged that their work in 'setting up' tenancies was well done (organising furniture, utilities, setting up a plan), but questions were raised on their effectiveness in 'problem solving'. With respect to FIP, there was an anxiety that, in some of the most difficult cases, 'they seem to stop working with families'. At the same time, these critics acknowledged that evictions had dropped (though they felt these could be driven even lower), and also that only the cases that 'go wrong' will tend to come to their attention. So it may be the case that there is a need for clearer lines of communication – both within YHN and to NCC and other external organisations – about the work undertaken by ASW and FIPs and any concerns about style of working discussed and addressed.

Housing Supply and Access: Allocations Policy, Sub-regional CBL and Enhanced Housing Options

The crucial backcloth for all of this homelessness alleviation and prevention work in Newcastle is the supply of housing, particularly social housing, and this was the subject of some considerable debate. It was recognised that Newcastle used to have a significant over-supply of social housing but demolitions and redevelopment had changed this picture significantly: stock and areas had improved, and the CBL had also stimulated demand, in a context of reduced supply. YHN housing was generally said to be preferred to the PRS, as the ALMO was viewed as a good landlord, the majority of its stock had been modernised, offered low rents and security of tenure, as well as associated support services for those who required them.

While the waiting list had not shifted much in past few years, it was anticipated that the demand for social housing would increase in the near future as a result of the mortgage 'famine', the recession and welfare reform. Some felt that there was already a shortage of social housing in the city, and the pressure on available stock (with new lettings said to be at a 2-year low) and difficulties in managing people's expectations was repeatedly noted. But most interviewees emphasised that it was more the type of social housing available, and areas where it was located, that was problematic rather than overall supply: the stock profile didn't match demand. There was a need for more family properties, and to incentivise older people to vacate such properties[42], with some new two-bed bungalows recently built by Leazes Homes – YHN's development subsidiary - precisely to free up family accommodation. There was also a need for single person accommodation that was not in high rise flats. As one interviewee put it:

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[41] Pawson, H. et al., 2009. *Evaluation of Intensive Family Support Projects in Scotland.* Edinburgh: The Scottish Government.

[42] An objective which will of be pursued via the planned Housing Benefit 'under-occupier penalty' in social housing as from April 2013, but this will affect only those of working age (see below).

Problem at the moment is that pensioners are occupying the family homes, families are stuck in flats, and that excludes single people altogether. (YHN officer)

A new Allocations and Lettings Policy has just been developed by NCC and YHN and was broadly welcomed. This is based on a four-level banding system to prioritise housing need, including with respect to statutory and non-statutory homelessness (the current policy gives priority to length of residence in current property, in an effort to reduce 'churn', but has been recognised as not in line with best practice).

In parallel, a new sub-regional (Tyne and Wear) CBL is being established, with encouragement from DCLG, and will go 'live' in February 2012. There will be one nomination agreement, but all social housing providers will retain their own allocations policies (though growing alignment is hoped for). The sub-regional CBL will incorporate an 'Enhanced Housing Options' module, covering some PRS as well as social housing opportunities, However, it will have an employment module and will enable electronic signposting to relevant voluntary and statutory sector support services in the Tyne and Wear sub-region. The system is web based and, in time, will be able to produce personalised data on how long it will take someone to get a particular type of property etc. While it was hoped that many clients would be able to use the IT system themselves, it was recognised that there will be some who will need assistance, and the idea is to target personalised support on that group.

The housing associations interviewed were very enthusiastic about the development of the sub-regional CBL and thought it 'fantastic for applicants.' Most other interviewees, who were aware of it, liked the idea of the new Enhanced Housing Options approach. Those involved in housing management and strategy (from YHN and housing associations) thought that the personalised housing plans – the objective 'real' data on your chances of getting sort of property you want – would be helpful in managing expectations and helping people to exercise realistic choices. But not everyone was convinced that more personalised feedback on the chances of getting particular house etc. would make much difference, as people 'already know this' but tend to persist in the hope that they personally will get some priority/luck.

To what extent can it be said that relevant services within the City Council and YHN have established a culture of homelessness prevention?

There was virtual unanimity across stakeholders from all sectors on the positive culture change in Newcastle towards a 'preventative' model from the early 2000s onwards:

Completely different – fundamental change… The change from sorting people into priority or non-priority, to prevention. From 2002 the prevention agenda has changed how we deliver our service, and made the job much more interesting and rewarding. (NCC officer)

Another NCC officer emphasised that this shift from a crisis to a prevention-focused approach engendered a more pro-active and flexible way of working, and a commitment to partnership working:

Our approach changed – rather than waiting for people to come here we started doing outreach; we go to Crisis, day centres, prisons. That was a massive change for us. (NCC officer)

From the YHN side, there was also widespread agreement – from senior management to frontline officers - about the profound nature of the culture change associated with the PEP in particular. It was said that the focus used to be on 'enforcing tenancies', and now it's about 'supporting tenancies'.

The culture change was also said to extend to the voluntary sector, which was also made accountable for averting crisis and moving people (through the SP commissioning framework). A NCC officer said that it used to be 'us and them' relationship with the voluntary but this had now changed and they worked together on common goals. This was confirmed by the voluntary sector interviewees, all of whom said that relations with NCC were now much better than before and generally felt that their values and focus aligned well with that of the Council.

How and why was this culture change achieved was an important question for the research. It was clear that political support from elected members, dedicated resources, and energetic commitment from the Housing and Welfare Rights Services Manager was crucial:

We had backing from senior politicians, they recognised the importance of prevention. That helped us get extra resources. Neil Munslow [Housing and Welfare Rights Services Manager] was lobbying a lot of people to get us extra resources. We started looking at the bigger picture, e.g. working a lot more closely with Welfare Rights. (NCC officer)

While some interviewees felt that the shift in culture was a 'natural' process – mounting frustration with the 'traditional' homelessness system which it was felt was 'setting people up to fail', as manifested through high levels of repeat homelessness – others identified the genesis as very much associated with the 2002 Act and a strong policy push from DCLG. A DCLG Specialist Advisor came to visit Newcastle in October 2003 and had some strong messages and 'threats' to impart, e.g. on withdrawal of funding if there was not a more determined move towards a preventative approach. Newcastle had just launched its new homelessness database at the time, but the focus was still very much on getting the 'right decision', and being able to evidence it. Under pressure from DCLG, a consensus developed that there was a need to move away from a crisis response, and take a step back towards prevention:

Once you got your head round it, prevention was the best thing. Need to do it properly. (NCC Officer)

At the start, in 2003, Newcastle had very few preventative options, so they used their existing data on the causes of statutory homelessness to identify the 'top five' triggers, which were: exclusion by parents; being asked to leave by family or friends; end of assured shorthold tenancies; relationship breakdown (violent and non-violent); and leaving institutions, including prison, hospital and NASS/UKBA accommodation[43]. Several intervention priorities were identified from the analysis of the key triggers for high levels of repeat cases which led directly, for example, to the work of the Lead Practitioner on hospital discharge, and also to the development of the YHN Young People's Service. This evidence-led approach also formed the basis of the SP commissioning and contract compliance process pursued in the city, which has been central to the development of the 'Gateway' and 'Pathway' frameworks and to the changing nature of supported and temporary accommodation

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[43] This last point is no longer as relevant as Newcastle has lost the contract with UKBA to supply accommodation to asylum seekers.

use in the city. It has also informed the commissioning and contract relationships with YHN's homelessness prevention services.

Another key ingredient in this culture change was staff turnover. Prior to the shift in focus towards prevention, not all of the existing homelessness officers were said to be in the job to help people - some were 'battle-hardened' and orientated mainly to make their own lives easier. It was very demanding and poorly paid work, and the team had been set up to deal with the homelessness legislation, with the skills required to undertake prevention and housing options work very different. Staff turnover provided the opportunity to select people with the 'right attitude' to refresh the team, i.e. '*not big hearted do-gooder, but realistic, can cope with demands and want to really help people*' (NCC officer). It also became a better paid job and the staffing complement expanded. In addition, they used the database as a management tool: '*Why are you accepting nobody/everybody, finding everyone intentional etc?*'

How effectively is homelessness prevention activity led, co-ordinated and managed?

Strategic leadership on the specific issue of homelessness prevention was generally felt to be excellent in Newcastle. The importance of the strong direction provided by the Housing and Welfare Rights Services Manager was remarked upon by interviewees from a range of organisations. His passionate endorsement of the culture that NCC are 'here to help people' was said to have permeated through relevant parts of the Council. There was an understanding that, while NCC are 'custodians of the public purse', people should also 'get the help they are entitled to'.

The strong relationship between YHN and NCC was remarked upon from all sides, as was the strong senior-level support given to homelessness prevention within YHN, up to and including the Chief Executive. Likewise, the 'excellent' nature of the working relationship between NCC and the housing associations was also commented upon. This was said to stem from a roundtable meeting around 4 years ago when the NCC Housing and Welfare Rights Services Manager challenged the housing associations to do more to fulfil nomination agreements and assist with meeting homelessness duties. Since then, these roundtable meetings have been held regularly and there was said to be a 'very high level of 'trust', which was enabling the housing associations to go into the sub-regional CBL 'with every confidence':

You would have had a completely different conversation 3 or 4 years ago, ironed out so much, now tiny niggles, things go wrong occasionally, failure of communication, but we can sort, we have the trust. (Housing association representative)

The much improved working relations between NCC and voluntary sector providers was also widely noted, and attributed in part to creation of the Complex Needs/Chronic Exclusion Lead Practitioner roles, which helps with communication:

I think Newcastle City Council are great...they've allowed us to do schemes which are a bit risky – some are risky but we know exactly what we are doing before we start – we've brought them along with us and they've brought us along with them...There's a mutual respect. (Voluntary sector provider)

There's a mutual understanding of each other's objectives, there are debates about ways to achieve them. But I think we're all on the same team. (Voluntary sector provider)

There was also said to now be much better working relationships between voluntary agencies themselves in the city, even if some felt that information sharing could be further improved:

All the homelessness services work together well...through referral or at multi-agency meetings. (Voluntary sector provider)

At the generic strategic housing level, however, question marks were raised by some interviewees about how well housing was served by NCC's current structures. There have been several reviews of strategic housing in Newcastle. The housing function was split in 2009 across several directorates so that, for example, the 'Housing Strategy Team' is now in the 'Environment and Regeneration Directorate' whereas 'Housing and Welfare Rights Services' (including homelessness) is within the 'Adult & Culture Services Directorate'. There is a 'Strategic Housing Board', but it was felt by some that this was 'still finding its feet' and there needed to be a senior figure holding the housing remit to control it. Other interviewees took a contrary view, arguing that the current strategic division worked well as Adult and Culture Services (ACS) leads on the 'people' side of housing, and there is a much stronger synergy with the ACS services - e.g. Supporting People, social care and supported employment - than there is with the building/planning side of housing.

YHN staff also commented that, while most ALMOs would have a stronger 'client' within the council, they didn't feel that this had really posed a barrier to their forging ahead with strategic development of their housing management and support services. It was notable that NCC services on homelessness have developed remarkably well without a strategic lead at Director level. In fact, the view was expressed in some quarters that the strong policy emphasis given to homelessness within Newcastle may mean that there was disproportionate attention given to the small minority of exceptionally vulnerable clients. However, that perception was not borne out by the available statistics which indicated that only around 6% of YHN allocations are made to statutorily homeless applicants.

Is it possible to demonstrate the financial and social policy value of these initiatives?

The social policy value of these initiatives on homelessness prevention is very clear from the strong endorsement they have attracted from stakeholders across the voluntary and statutory sectors (albeit that some specific concerns remain as noted). There can be little doubt about the culture change that has been achieved, or the positive nature of its effects as viewed from the perspective of most relevant stakeholders[44].

As will be seen in Chapter 4, the very substantial drop in homelessness acceptances – and the fact that prevention activity in Newcastle is unusually concentrated on enabling people to stay in their existing accommodation – makes it highly likely that there are overall cost savings to the public

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[44] Though bear in mind that we did not interview service users.

purse[45]. However, as this evaluation was not resourced to include a formal cost-benefit analysis, a precise figure cannot be put on these savings. In any case, as the Eurocities peer review indicated[46], and a number of interviewees acknowledged in the course of this study, while attempts have been made in Newcastle and other cities to quantify the benefits of preventative services to homeless people, there is often a difficulty in showing a direct saving.

For example, the FIP evaluation estimated that there were cost savings to other services in the region of £380,000 in 2009/10, with the largest proportion of this attributable to a reduction in children going into care[47]. However, it is difficult to substantiate these kinds of cost savings figures without testing the counter-factual (i.e. comparing the outcomes to a 'control group' of similar families who did not receive the intervention[48]). That said, the fact that social services apparently supported the claim that approximately 31 children had not been taken into care as a result of FIP involvement does provide some grounds for confidence in these particular figures.

There also remains the 'we spend, you save' difficulty – spending by one organisation, or one part of an organisation, may lead to savings elsewhere but this is not easily demonstrated or necessarily reciprocated. There is therefore often an upfront cost, and savings recouped elsewhere. Given these difficulties with measurement, the direct savings on bed and breakfast hotels in Newcastle - and the overall reduction in the use of TA and length of stay in TA – are particularly important measures of success[49].

Gaps and priorities

Many of the gaps and priorities for development identified by interviewees related to the pressure on social housing stock in Newcastle:

Clients have high expectations about council housing and we constantly need to tell them that they may not get their dream home with the Council so they need to look into PRS if they want something matching their expectations. We give them a realistic picture. (NCC officer)

The need to try harder to maximise pathways into the PRS, especially given the competing demands from students for shared accommodation, was a repeated theme. It was felt by a number of interviewees that there were opportunities for more progress, given that the scale of the PRS is almost as large as the social rented sector in Newcastle. There was also felt to be more work that could be done around stabilising PRS tenancies. Discharge to the PRS planned under the Localism Bill was viewed as formalising the work pursued by services such as the Private Rented Service in Newcastle, but would be a culture change for their client group, many of whom would never consider the PRS.

[45] Pawson, H., Netto, G., Jones, C., Wager, F., Fancy, C. & Lomax, D. (2007) *Evaluating Homelessness Prevention* (London: Communities and Local Government).
[46] Harding, J. (2010) *Eurocities Peer Review of Newcastle City Council's Services to Homeless People*
[47] Barefoot Research and Evaluation (2010) *Evaluation of the Newcastle Family Intervention Project: 2007 to 2010.*
48 Busch-Geertsema, V. & Fitzpatrick, S. (2008) 'Effective homelessness prevention? Explaining reductions in homelessness in Germany and England', European Journal of Homelessness, 2: 69-95.
49 See also Harding, J. (2010) Eurocities Peer Review of Newcastle City Council's Services to Homeless People

The 'area connection' issue was also a recurrent theme, given Newcastle's status as the regional capital. There were complaints about neighbouring areas lacking provision, and a concern about the 'large migration' of vulnerable and homeless people from across the region into Newcastle. There was a sense from some statutory interviewees that Newcastle services could be taken advantage of by neighbouring authorities, and there was said to be a time when 70-80% of people in Newcastle hostels came from outside the city, with a 'dump and run' attitude by other LA in the region. But since the introduction of SP almost all of those in Newcastle hostels have a local connection with the city, with a rigorous local connection process implemented through the Gateway. Some voluntary organisations were unhappy with this change at first, but did concede that they understood the need for it:

I'm not a fan of area connection but I understand why they do it and why it's there…I can see the effect [of migration] on public services but it's not their fault that they were born where they were. (Voluntary sector provider)

Newcastle can't accommodate homeless individuals from across the region. (Voluntary sector provider)

A number of interviewees pointed to gaps in services for particular subgroups. The concern most commonly articulated was a lack of housing options for single people without priority status (particularly single men aged 20-40 years old). There was perceived to be a shortage of general needs housing for this group: few lettings available for them in SRS, and even then only in extremely low demand areas, with students often displacing them in the PRS. Others felt that under 25s were a particular problem, as often they did not want to share accommodation (as required to in the PRS if dependent on LHA). This issue was anticipated to worsen with the forthcoming extension of the 'shared accommodation rate' to 25-34 year olds.

The need for more focused work with those leaving custody was an issue raised by a number of interviewees. Mental health provision in general felt to be a weakness, and people with dual diagnosis were said to rarely get to see a CPN. While it was not a central focus of this research, a number of interviewees commented that asylum seekers was a sub-group that was not particularly well-served within Newcastle's homelessness prevention work.

User involvement and feedback was self-identified as a weakness within some homelessness services in Newcastle, and also as absent at a more strategic level with respect to shaping and reviewing service delivery in the city. ASW pointed to their quarterly focus groups with current and ex-service users and customer satisfaction survey, Hill Court staff had tried to engage with residents via feedback forms and an annual focus group, and client satisfaction forms are used at HAC. However, these attempts at user involvement were generally acknowledged as not particularly systematic. The Young People's Service laid the greatest emphasis on user involvement, with a wide range of youth participation activities, including a Young People's Forum which provides an opportunity for young people to meet with decision-makers in the city.

Impact of the recession and reduced public expenditure

Most of those interviewed from the voluntary sector reported no significant change in the demand for their services, or in the profile of their clients, as a result of the recession thus far, though some increase in requests for debt advice and family support were noted, and one interviewee perceived an increase in rough sleeping.

Looking to the future, there were a number of recurrent concerns about the impact of the Government's welfare reform agenda[50], and the pace of change in particular. The specific changes that aroused the most concern were as follows:

Under-occupancy penalty in social rented sector[51] – the point was made that, in a context where there has traditionally been less pressure on social housing stock, providers had often 'deliberately under-occupied' stock, e.g. low demand, sensitive lets, etc. Often there are no small properties available in the locality to move people into, so tenants will be penalised and rent arrears will rise.

Extension of the 'shared accommodation rate'[52] – landlords were said to be unused to properties being shared at the lower end of the market, as until now only students and young professionals tended to share in Newcastle. It was also suggested that most 25-34 year olds did not expect to share.

Universal Credit[53] – the payment of the 'housing credit' (rent element) to the tenant. It was argued that, if this amount goes straight into claimants' bank accounts, and they are on a very low income, the temptation to spend on something else is (understandably) high. It will therefore be much more difficult to keep rent arrears down.

There was also much discussion about the impact of public sector funding cuts on the prospects for homelessness prevention in Newcastle. From 2011/12 onwards, the tailored distribution formula which calculates the distribution of the national SP pot means that Newcastle has been allocated £6.5M less SP funding from Government (a reduction of 39% on the 10/11 allocation of £16.3M).

However, Newcastle's actual on SP services has not yet reflected this level of reduction – with projected spend in 11/12 at £16M. Where reductions have been applied, YHN has thus far 'filled the hole' from its own resources with respect to its own SP-funded support services, but that situation may not be sustainable in the longer-term if the SP cuts grow ever larger. With respect to the voluntary sector providers, too, so far the impact of SP cuts on service provision in Newcastle has been minimal. This is because many of these organisations have managed to attract funding from

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[50] See also: Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G. & Wilcox, S. (2011) *The Homelessness Monitor. Tracking the Impacts of Policy and Economic Change in England 2011-2013. Year 1: Establishing the Baseline.* London: Crisis*.*

[51] From April 2013, social tenants of working age who are 'under-occupying' their properties will be subject to cuts in Housing Benefit, as the amount of benefit payable to that applicable for a dwelling of an 'appropriate size'.

[52] From January 2012, the 'shared accommodation rate' of Local Housing Allowance (formerly known as the 'single room rate') will be extended to single claimants aged 25-34, as well as to those under 25.

[53] The Welfare Reform Bill which is currently passing through the UK Parliament would replace Working Tax Credits, Child Tax Credits, Housing Benefit, Income Support, and the income-related Jobseeker's Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance, with the Universal Credit. It does not at present cover Council Tax Benefit.

other sources (including other government funding and via fund raising activities) which has helped them to sustain the level of services. Several made a business decision not to rely on SP funding, recognising that this was a 'risky strategy'. But there was a sense that major changes and innovations may be needed as cuts become deeper, and could significantly impact on service users in the longer-term.

Public sector funding cuts had also impacted on statutory services. While HAC had already been streamlined, and felt they had absorbed the changes quite well, there were concerns about future cuts and whether will be able to sustain the current system and see the same volume of people. This was particularly a concern as it was thought that homelessness 'demand' is likely to go up rather than down over the next few years, particularly as welfare benefit cuts are implemented.

The financial climate was certainly seen as a risk to all that has been achieved in Newcastle on homelessness prevention, and there was perceived to be a danger that the focus will switch back to crisis and away from prevention. Not only were cuts in funding thought by key informants to carry a substantial danger of a rise in homelessness, but also – as one key informant stated – de-commissioning poses the risk of (re-)introducing tensions between voluntary sector partner organisations.

Conclusion

This chapter evidences a very encouraging picture of homelessness prevention activity in Newcastle, with a consistent 'story' emerging of sustained cultural, strategic and operational change which has substantially improved the effectiveness of responses to those at risk of homelessness in the city. It is important to note that the positive perspectives reported here were supported and reinforced by interviewees from a range of sectors and agencies. Some areas were nonetheless highlighted where further improvements could be made, and we return to these issues in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4: HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION IN NEWCASTLE – THE STATISTICAL EVIDENCE

Introduction

This chapter interrogates the available statistical evidence to establish whether the positive picture of homelessness prevention in Newcastle presented in Chapter 3 is borne out in the enumerated trends.

Homelessness demand

As shown in Table 4.1, households subject to a statutory homelessness assessment account for only a relatively small component of those seeking help with housing in Newcastle. However, after peaking in 2008/09, the combined total of homelessness and advice applications has subsequently fallen by 25%. It is possible that part of this change might result from stepped up homelessness prevention activity, or from more effective prevention. Alternatively, the trend might mainly reflect modifications in recording practices.

Table 4.1 – Newcastle recorded homelessness demand

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Advice enquires	836	926	1,300	1,016
Statutory homelessness applications	746	559	429	959
Duty cases	1,708	2,859	2,183	1,282
Total	**3,290**	**4,344**	**3,912**	**3,257**

Source: Newcastle City Council (unpublished)

Statutory homelessness applications, as shown in Table 4.1, tally closely with homelessness decisions as enumerated in Table 4.2. It is assumed that the slight discrepancy between these two figures may result from the numbers being drawn from different record systems. Of the 948 formal decisions recorded in 2010/11, just 25% resulted in an applicant being 'accepted' as 'unintentionally homeless and in priority need'. At 2.0 per thousand households the 2010/11 statutory homelessness rate was identical to that for England as a whole. A falling trend in statutory homeless acceptances, established in 2005/06, continued in evidence until bottoming out in 2009/10 (see Table4.2). As shown here, the sharp rise in formal assessment decisions in 2010/11 reflected much larger numbers of 'non-priority homeless' and 'not homeless' applicants being processed through the system compared with earlier years[54].

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[54] We understand that this is the result of a recent change in recording procedures.
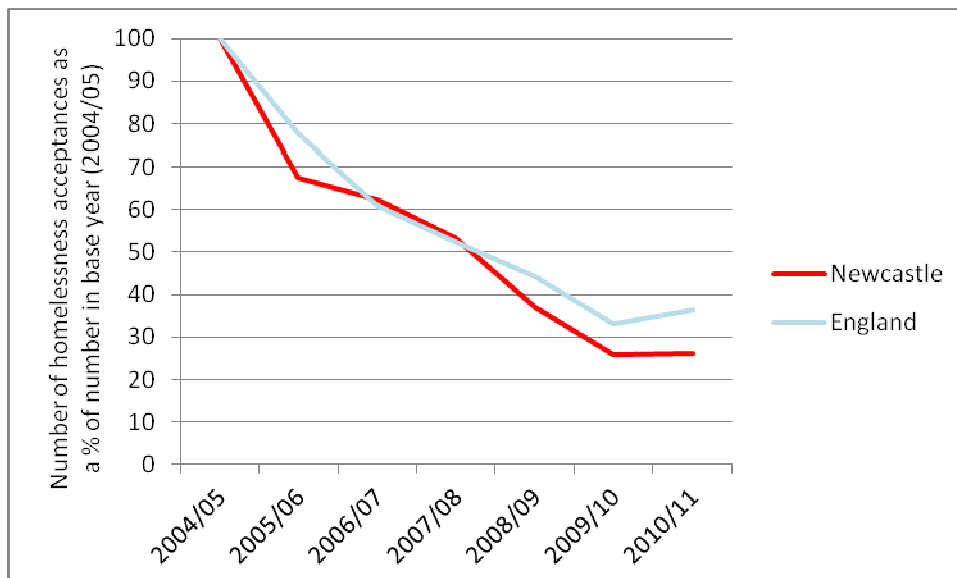
Table 4.2 – Newcastle statutory homelessness decisions, 2004-2011

	Unintentionally homeless and in priority need	Intentionally homeless	Homeless non-priority	Not homeless	Total
2004/05	906	73	849	626	2,454
2005/06	610	68	79	179	936
2006/07	564	75	25	140	804
2007/08	484	35	12	213	744
2008/09	336	27	11	142	516
2009/10	233	13	6	160	412
2010/11	236	8	289	415	948

Source: Newcastle City Council quarterly homelessness returns (unpublished)

As shown in Figure 4.1, the post-2004 reduction in statutory homeless acceptances in Newcastle has closely paralleled the national trend. In Newcastle, however, the numbers have fallen somewhat further than across England as a whole, with the 2010/11 total being only 26% of that recorded in 2004/05. The equivalent national figure was 37%. Also, in contrast to the England-wide upturn, statutory homeless acceptances in Newcastle remained almost static in 2010/11.

Figure4. 1 – Indexed trend in statutory homeless acceptances, 2004-2011 (2004/05=100)

Source: DCLG quarterly homelessness statistics

In 2010/11 about a third (31%) of statutory homeless households in Newcastle lost their accommodation due to family/friend exclusions (see Table 4.3). As a proportion of all homelessness acceptances, the size of this group has declined somewhat over the period covered by Table 4.2. This

means that the reduction in the numbers of people being classed as statutory homeless for this reason has fallen even more substantially than the overall statutory homeless total (see Table 4.1). Other than this, however, there are no particularly marked or ongoing trends over time evident from Table 4.3.

As shown in Table 4.4, the profile of reasons for statutory homelessness in Newcastle is similar to that nationally.

Table 4.3 – Households assessed as statutorily homeless in Newcastle: immediate reason for homelessness (%)

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate	30	29	30	31	29	26	21
Other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	13	16	15	10	12	8	10
Non-violent breakdown of relationship with partner:	6	5	4	7	6	4	6
Violent breakdown of relationship, involving partner	11	8	9	13	12	16	13
Violent breakdown of relationship involving associated persons	5	4	4	6	3	3	4
Racially motivated violence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other forms of violence	1	0	0	1	0	1	2
Racially motivated harassment	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Other forms of harassment	2	4	2	1	1	1	3
Mortgage arrears (repossession or other loss of home)	1	2	3	2	2	3	3
Rent arrears – LA	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Rent arrears – HA	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Rent arrears – PRS	0	0	1	0	1	1	0
Termination of assured shorthold tenancy	12	12	21	17	18	15	14
Reasons other than termination of assured shorthold tenancy	2	3	2	2	6	6	8
Required to leave National Asylum Support Service accommodation	8	9	3	3	5	12	9
Left prison/remand	2	0	1	0	0	0	0
Left hospital	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Left other institution or LA care	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Other - left HM-Forces	5	0	0	1	1	0	0
Other - other reason	0	5	4	5	3	3	5
Total applicant households	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Newcastle City Council quarterly homelessness returns (unpublished)

Table 4.4 – Statutory homelessness reasons – comparison between Newcastle and England

(a) Newcastle (row %)

	Parental eviction	Other family/friend eviction	Relationship breakdown violent	Relationship breakdown other	Mortgage arrears	Rent arrears	End of AST	Loss of rented or tied hsg	Other	All
2004/05	30	13	16	6	1	1	12	2	18	100
2005/06	29	16	12	5	2	1	12	3	20	100
2006/07	30	15	13	4	3	1	21	2	10	100
2007/08	31	10	19	7	2	1	17	2	12	100
2008/09	29	12	15	6	2	1	18	6	10	100
2009/10	26	8	20	4	3	1	15	6	17	100
2010/11	21	10	16	6	3	0	14	8	21	100

(b) England (row %)

	Parental exclusion	Other family/ friend exclusion	Relationship breakdown violent	Relationship breakdown other	Mortgage arrears	Rent arrears	End of AST	Loss of rented or tied hsg	Other	All
2004/05	23	15	13	7	2	2	13	5	20	100
2005/06	23	15	13	6	3	2	13	5	19	100
2006/07	23	14	13	7	4	2	14	5	18	100
2007/08	23	13	12	6	4	2	15	5	19	100
2008/09	23	13	13	6	4	3	13	5	20	100
2009/10	22	12	14	6	3	3	11	6	22	100
2010/11	20	13	13	6	3	3	15	6	21	100

Sources: Newcastle City Council quarterly homelessness returns and DCLG quarterly homelessness statistics

Homelessness prevention

In 2010/11 instances of homelessness prevented or relieved by Newcastle City Council totalled some 3,600 – nearly four times the number of formal homelessness decisions recorded in the year – see Table 4.5. Scaled according to statutory homelessness decisions, prevention activity appears to be more substantial in Newcastle than nationally across England. In Newcastle, 2010/11 preventions were almost four times the number of decisions whereas for England the comparable ratio was less than two. This is true to an even greater extent as regards prevention rates; whereas households helped to avoid homelessness in Newcastle in 2010 equated to 30.3 per 1,000 households resident in the city, the comparable national figure was only 8.7.

Table 4.5 – Homelessness prevention activity in context

	Newcastle			England (000s)		
	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Instances of homelessness prevented	2,193	3,943	3,603	130	165	189
Formal homelessness assessment decisions	521	416	963	113	89	102
Statutory homelessness acceptances	336	233	236	53	40	44
Prevention per 000 households	18.4	33.1	30.3	6.0	7.6	8.7

Newcastle City Council quarterly homelessness returns and DCLG quarterly homelessness statistics

As shown in Table 4.6, the pattern of homelessness prevention activity in Newcastle appears to differ considerably from the national norm. By comparison with England, as a whole, a substantially greater proportion of 2010/11 activity in Newcastle involved assisting households to retain accommodation rather than helping potentially homeless people access alternative accommodation – 63% compared with 43%.

At a more detailed level, cases involving debt/benefits assistance or help to retain an existing private or social tenancy were, in relative terms, far more numerous in Newcastle. Conversely, as it would appear, a far smaller proportion of activity in Newcastle involved helping potentially homeless households to access private tenancies. It should, nevertheless, be recognised that classifying and recording 'prevention' activity calls for a certain amount of judgement and that comparisons of this kind therefore need to be treated with caution.

Table 4.6 – Profile of homelessness prevention activity in 2010/11

Form of prevention	Newcastle	England
Assisted to retain existing accommodation		
Debt advice or financial assistance (incl. help on HB claim)	27	12
Family mediation or conciliation	2	6
Sanctuary scheme	0	3
Crisis intervention - emergency support	0	2
Mortgage rescue	0	3
Other assistance to help retain private or social tenancy	21	13
Other actions to assist in retaining accommodation	13	4
Assisted to obtain alternative accommodation		
Help to find private tenancy	7	31
Mainstream social tenancy arranged	10	13
Supported tenancy or lodging arranged	13	7
Accommodation arranged with friends or relatives	1	4
Other actions to assist in obtaining new accommodation	7	2
Overall total	100	100

Sources: Newcastle City Council quarterly homelessness returns and DCLG quarterly homelessness statistics

Repeat homelessness, social housing evictions and tenancy sustainment

This section focuses on statistics with a bearing on the management of social housing as a cause of, and a solution to, homelessness.

Repeat homelessness

Repeat homelessness refers to instances where a person is classed as homeless more than once within a given period. High rates of repeat homelessness could imply that assistance provided to homeless people often fails to effectively address applicants' accommodation and other problems. NCC records have yielded the statistics set out in Table 4.6. These relate to RH defined as an applicant accepted for a duty for a second time within a two year period – possibly

implying a failure to sustain a social tenancy which could, in turn, infer an inappropriate allocation and/or the absence of adequate tenancy support.

Unfortunately, because repeat homelessness is not included within official monitoring frameworks in England, there is no convenient national benchmark against which the Newcastle figures can be compared. In Scotland, however, figures derived on a roughly similar basis showed repeat homelessness in 2010/11 running at 5.5% of local authority assessments involving applicants classed as 'homeless or threatened with homelessness' and where a similar judgement had been reached in respect of an application closed within the previous 12 months[55]. Especially judged against this standard, the Newcastle figures for recent years appear encouraging.

Table 4.7 – Repeat homelessness in Newcastle

Year	Homelessness acceptances	Repeat homelessness cases	
		Number	% of total
2005/06	610	34	5.6
2006/07	584	33	5.7
2007/08	484	15	3.1
2008/09	336	12	3.6
2009/10	233	2	0.9
2010/11	231	2	0.9

Source: Newcastle City Council (unpublished)

Social housing evictions

In the period 2006/07-2010/11 Your Homes Newcastle cut evictions by over 50%, to under 100 per year – see Table 4.7. While eviction rates recorded elsewhere in social housing also fell, the YHN reduction was more dramatic. It should be noted that use of the housing association sector as a benchmark here reflects the fact that comparable data are not collected for local authorities, collectively. This start of this falling trend coincides with the introduction of the PEP (in July 2006).

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[55] Scottish Government (2011) *Operation of the Homeless Persons Legislation in Scotland, 2010/11*; Edinburgh: Scottish Government http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/356601/0120522.pdf

Table 4.7 – YHN evictions, 2006-11

	Your Homes Newcastle			All housing associations in England		
	Evictions	Housing stock	Eviction rate (%)	Evictions	Housing stock	Eviction rate (%)
2006/07	203	30,852	0.7	11,384	1,620,476	0.7
2007/08	183	30,475	0.6	11,354	1,713,124	0.7
2008/09	101	29,702	0.3	11,230	1,776,095	0.6
2009/10	106	29,508	0.4	9,905	1,825,510	0.5
2010/11	95	29,393	0.3	9,735	1,896,253	0.5

Sources: Your Homes Newcastle (unpublished data) and TSA – Statistical Release August 2011 – RSR 2010/11

Tenancy sustainment

Another measure of the role played by social housing in relation to homelessness is the rate of tenancy sustainment; that is, the proportion of tenants failing to sustain tenancies for some threshold period. It is, of course, recognised that by no means all tenancies terminated within 12 months indicate a 'negative' outcome. Nevertheless, minimising 'early tenancy terminations' is seen by many social landlords as an important housing management objective. While there is no generally recognised measure of tenancy sustainment in England, official monitoring systems in Scotland incorporate a 12 month threshold for such monitoring.

Table 4.8 – YHN tenancy non-sustainment rates, 2006/07-2010/11

Rehousing group	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Homeless	12.4	8.7	7.3	9.5
Housing Register	15.1	14.7	15.0	13.6
Transfer	10.3	8.4	9.4	NA

Source: Your Homes Newcastle (unpublished data)

At YHN, as shown in Table 4.8, some 9.5% of tenancies issued on the grounds of homelessness in 2009/10 were ended within a year, as compared with 13.6% of tenancies granted through the Housing Register (these figures discount 'technical terminations' associated with a change in furnished/unfurnished status or between sole and joint tenancy). Again, an external reference

point for the YHN figures is available in the form of Scottish statistics which showed that 17.8% of lettings to homeless households in 2009/10 were terminated within 12 months[56]. YHN performance therefore appears creditable here. However, while the YHN figures for 2006/07 were higher than for subsequent years, Table 4.8 reveals no clear trends over time here.

Conclusion

As with the qualitative perspectives outlined in Chapter 3, the statistical data presented in this chapter indicates a largely positive picture with respect to homelessness prevention in Newcastle. While caveats are noted above with respect to the subjective judgments implied in the generation of many of these statistics, most of the relevant trends are positive over time and also compare well with national averages. In the next chapter we derive from this analysis the main lessons that may be relevant to other local authorities in the North-East region.

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[56] Audit Scotland (2010) *Local authority housing performance indicators 2009/10* http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/performance/service/

CHAPTER 5: HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION IN NEWCASTLE – CONCLUSIONS AND BROADER LESSONS

This evaluation has found that the homelessness prevention activities and services delivered by the City Council and YHN in Newcastle are, taken as a whole, highly effective. This conclusion is supported by the evidence gathered from interviewees in both the statutory and voluntary sectors, and is also consistent with the statistical trend data obtained on statutory homelessness, homelessness prevention activity (particularly with respect to debt/benefits advice and assisting households to retain existing accommodation), repeat homelessness, social housing evictions, and tenancy sustainment. Where key informants were in a position to compare Newcastle with other local authorities in the region or England as a whole, they almost invariably offered a very favourable assessment, and Newcastle also compared well with national averages in the statistical data examined.

Many factors have contributed to this success within Newcastle, but the strong strategic partnership between NCC and YHN has been critical, as has the (now) very positive relationship with key voluntary sector providers and housing associations in the city. Leadership was also crucial: there has been longstanding senior-level commitment to the prevention agenda within both YHN and NCC, which had enabled homelessness strategy and services to progress in a strongly positive direction. The effective use of the available data to inform practice change, and the use of SP commissioning and contract compliance procedures to drive this evidence-based agenda forward, has likewise been critical. A related factor which is perhaps less tangible, but nonetheless important, has been the development of a 'can do' attitude amongst most of the key players in the city. This has enabled innovative approaches to be tried, and risks to be taken, in a context of 'trust'. The strong emphasis on partnership and multi-agency working was noted from all perspectives, and can be identified as perhaps the single most important ingredient in the positive 'story' to emerge from this evaluation.

There can be little doubt regarding the significant nature of the culture change that has underpinned these encouraging developments in Newcastle, prompted in large part by the Homelessness Act 2002 and accompanying policy pressure from central government. Within NCC, this was manifested in a post-2002 shift towards a more pro-active, flexible and problem-solving style of intervention, as well as a commitment to partnership working. Notably, while there have been improvements in the 'crisis prevention' response to those who are already homeless or in imminent danger of losing their accommodation (via the HAC, Gateway, Pathway to Independence, rough sleepers services, etc), there has also been a growing focus on

'secondary prevention' for people at risk of housing or income loss (via the PEP and other homelessness prevention protocols, debt advice, and YHN-provided support services)[57].

On YHN's part, the cultural shift has meant a move from primarily 'enforcing tenancies' to 'supporting tenancies', with evictions now very much seen as the last resort, as well as the provision of a wide range of 'secondary prevention' activities to prevent vulnerable people losing their homes (including FIPs, ASW and the Young People's Service). The culture change has extended to the voluntary sector in the city, which was also made accountable for averting crises and moving people out of the homelessness system and temporary accommodation as quickly as possible, with the commissioning and contract compliance process under SP providing a crucial lever for change.

At operational level, a number of factors stand out as having contributed to positive outcomes in the city. The role of YHN as a supportive landlord – and as the principal provider of a range of preventative services that extend beyond its own tenants – has been critical. The focus on dealing with debts and sustaining tenancies is a key element of Newcastle's success, and is evidenced in the available statistics. In this regard, the contribution that the Young People's Service, ASW and FIPs have made in helping to drive down tenancy 'failure' should be noted, as well as the profound impact that the PEP has evidently had throughout YHN.

The focus on dedicated resources and structured case management with rough sleepers, and the provision of a bespoke, individualised service for those with the most complex needs, marks Newcastle out from many other cities. In this context, the role of both the HAC and Complex Needs and Chronic Exclusion Lead Practitioners were especially important, and especially the latter's close working relationship with key voluntary and statutory sector partners. Minimising the use of TA (and avoidance of B&B altogether) is also a core achievement in the city. The Gateway system and Pathways framework a major step forward from the 'warehousing' of single homeless people in hostels and other homeless accommodation that preceded this, as was acknowledged by voluntary sector providers as by statutory sector interviewees.

However, within this largely positive picture, there were a number of issues that had yet to be fully addressed within the city. For example, while Newcastle's approach to homelessness prevention has sometimes been called a 'whole market' approach, in fact the use made of the PRS was still considered rather modest by many interviewees who felt that there was an opportunity to do more to access private lets for those who are homeless or at risk in the city. Several interviewees felt that there was room for housing associations in the city to make better use of NCC-YHN protocols (though all housing associations have signed up to the PEP and levels

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[57] In addition to these 'crisis' and ' secondary' homelessness prevention activities focused on particular high risk groups, there was also said to be a strong focus in the city on 'primary' prevention activities with all of the community, e.g. the provision of benefits and housing advice at key transitional moments in people's lives. However, the limits of our study resources did not allow us to examine these 'primary' prevention activities in detail.

of eviction were reportedly low). Particular sub-groups were felt not to have benefited as much from developments in homelessness services as they should have done – particularly 'non-priority' single men – and engagement of mental health services in homelessness prevention was broadly felt to be inadequate. While significant progress had been made in facilitating move on from TA for homeless people, the linear 'progression pathway' model employed does not work for all of those with complex needs and chaotic lifestyles. Linked with this, the use of some quite large-scale hostel accommodation in Newcastle provoked strong differences of opinion in the city, and having both families and single people resident in the same emergency housing block may not be considered ideal (though the new building should allow for more separation). User involvement was widely acknowledged to be a weakness within homelessness services in the city, though there were exceptions to this (e.g. the Young People's Service).

Transferable Lessons for Other Local Authorities

Emerging from this evaluation of Newcastle's approach to homelessness prevention, there are a number of broader lessons that may be of relevance to other local authorities in the North East region. In the main these relate to strengths in Newcastle's approach, but there are also potential lessons to be learned in some of the weaknesses and limitations.

First, at a strategic level, senior-level commitment to the prevention agenda is clearly indispensable in driving forward culture change. In Newcastle's case this was prompted in part by legal and policy imperatives, but was also 'pushing at an open door' in terms of the frustration many housing and homelessness officers felt about traditional approaches which resulted in repeat homelessness and 'setting people up to fail'. That said, creative use of the opportunity that staff turnover provides may in some contexts be helpful in pushing through fundamentally new ways of working.

Second, the importance of establishing effective partnership working between the local authority, mainstream housing providers, and key voluntary sector partners cannot be overstated. The Newcastle experience provides some indications of how this can be facilitated on a practical level, with the importance of the initial round tables meetings in building trust and mutual understanding between all of the key players emphasised from a range of perspectives, as was the fact that, once established, these relationships can withstand differences of opinion and less regular meetings at strategic level. The regular nature of multi-agency case management meetings focusing on individuals with the most complex needs was also a clear strength of the Newcastle approach.

Third, Newcastle had clearly benefited from an evidence-based approach to targeting the key causes of homelessness, particularly repeat homelessness, and tailoring preventative responses to address those specific triggers. This was effectively achieved in the city by interrogating data on the 'five main causes' of statutory homelessness, monitoring these over time, and developing preventative options in the light of this analysis. Also key to Newcastle's effectiveness has been

the deployment of the evidence base in developing relationships with partners and in informing the commissioning process. This has contributed significantly to reduced evictions, increased move on from temporary/supported accommodation, and improved sustainability of tenancies.

Fourth, Newcastle's emphasis on managing debt and rent arrears more effectively had clearly paid dividends. Emulating this requires engagement of all of the main social housing providers in an effort to minimise evictions via a clearly articulated and effectively monitored protocol to promote best practice in supporting tenancies, and also by providing appropriate support to both tenants and landlords so that problems can be dealt with as they arise. In this regard, the work of YHN's ASW and the FIPs is likely to be of particular interest in addressing rent arrears and ASB. Wherever possible, this work in supporting tenancies should also extend to private landlords and tenants, an approach pursued by the Private Rented Service in Newcastle. This extension of support work in tenancies to the PRS is especially important in contexts such as Newcastle where the social rented sector has shrunk, and the PRS is accommodating increasing numbers of vulnerable tenants.

Fifth, the wide-ranging support that the Newcastle Young People's Service offers 16-25 years olds, as well as the bespoke route through the statutory homelessness system it provides for 16 and 17 year olds, may well be of interest to other local authorities. Specialised services for young people seem a particularly worthwhile investment given their often very high rate of tenancy failure and the inappropriate nature of the standard statutory housing 'offer' for those in the youngest age groups in particular.

Sixth, another operational level innovation in Newcastle that may be worth other LAs considering is the emphasis on intensive case management of rough sleepers and others in extreme crisis. The role of a 'Lead Practitioners' as named contacts within the LA for all complex cases was highly valued by all relevant parties, as was the focus on building up relationships with health, social services, criminal justice and voluntary sector partners.

Seventh, the Gateway system for accessing TA and supported accommodation in Newcastle was widely felt to be both efficient and effective, particularly as it was linked to the Pathway model with its focus on active and monitored move on out of hostels/supported accommodation and making best use of TA stock. But the linear progression this model implies does not work for all homeless people, and in particular the most chronically excluded rough sleepers who are not able or willing to live in communal settings. In Newcastle several interviewees expressed interest in the Housing First model now gaining popularity across Europe, as an alternative or supplement to the linear model. There is robust evidence from the US of the success of Housing First models as compared with more traditional 'continuum of care' or 'staircase' approaches[58],

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[58] For a review of the international evidence on Housing First models, and their applicability in the UK context, see Johnsen, S. & Teixeira, L. (2010) *Staircases, Elevators and Cycles of Change: 'Housing First' and other Housing Models for Homeless People with Complex Needs.* http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/chp/publications/PDF/HousingModelsReport.pdf

and a recently launched 'Housing First in Europe' project is assessing their applicability in the European context[59]. Several pilot studies of Housing First – targeted on those with active drug problems or other complex needs – are now underway in the UK (e.g. in Glasgow and London), and have been suggested as a possible way forward for the most entrenched rough sleepers in the capital in the context of its target to end rough sleeping by 2012. It may then be worthwhile for Newcastle and other areas concerned to eradicate rough sleeping to consider Housing First as a potential solution.

[59]http://www.housingfirsteurope.eu/

APPENDIX 1

Evaluating the 'Whole Housing Market Approach' to Homelessness Prevention in Newcastle

Topic Guide for Key Informant Interviews (Statutory)

1. Introduction

Explain nature and purpose of research

Their job title/role; how long they have been in that position/organisation

2. Prevention service (if a service provider)

Who provides the service and how did it come into being?

Who is the service for? a) Referral arrangements b) Eligibility/prioritising rules

What does the service involve? a) Service objectives; b) Service procedures; c) Service limitations; d) Service outcome/activity targets; e) Service performance – measured in relation to targets

What evidence is collected to determine whether the service is effective and/or provides value for money?

(To your knowledge) How does the service compare with similar prevention service provision in other local authorities? Do you benchmark at all?

How often is the effectiveness of the service reviewed and by who?

To what extent are service users involved in the planning and/or evaluation of services?

To what extent, and in what ways, is the service integrated with other advice or welfare services and with mainstream housing providers? Or is it quite stand alone?

How is the service funded and what does it cost? Are there any ways in which the service generate savings to the public purse? Can you evidence that for us?

What are the principal/most important ways that your organisation contributes to homelessness prevention? Are there any ways in which it contributes to the generation of homelessness?

Has there been an impact of the post 2007 recession and housing market downturn on your client group/demand for your services? Anticipate any impacts of public sector cuts/welfare and housing reform? (Probe changes in: nature, size, profile, needs of client group; triggers for homelessness/crisis situation, etc.)

How would you ideally like services to homeless people to develop over the next few years? Why do you think these developments would be beneficial?

What do you see as the biggest opportunities and threats to the provision of services to homeless people over the next few years?

3. Views on the Newcastle Approach

What do you see as the key strengths and weaknesses of the Newcastle approach to homelessness prevention? – e.g. specific services particularly effective or not effective; overall strategic co-ordination; 'culture' of agencies/interventions; particular 'at risk' groups which are more/less effectively helped; contextual factors (e.g. constrained social housing supply)?

Have you seen a change in the approach/culture within Newcastle in recent years on homelessness prevention? If so, positive or negative? In what ways? Can any positive changes be sustained in current economic climate/with cuts in public spending?

Do social landlords and others reduce the risk of homelessness occurring, or still tend to focus on crisis response? What are the other key services that contribute to homelessness prevention (or its generation) in Newcastle? How effectively do different stakeholders work together in preventing homelessness and responding to crises in Newcastle?

To what extent do you have contact with voluntary sector agencies working with homeless people in Newcastle? To what extent does the local authority's values and objectives in the area of homelessness prevention mesh with those of these voluntary agencies, in your view?

(To your knowledge) How does Newcastle compare to other similar cities on the effectiveness of its approach to homelessness prevention?

Are there any ways you would change the Newcastle approach?

(If not already mentioned) Have you heard of the 'Whole Housing Market Approach' in Newcastle? What does it mean to you?

4. Thanks and follow-up

Interviewees will also be asked to provide relevant policy/procedure/performance/financial reports.

APPENDIX 2

Evaluating the 'Whole Housing Market Approach' to Homelessness Prevention in Newcastle

Topic Guide for Key Informant Interviews (Voluntary Sector)

1. Introduction

Explain nature and purpose of research

Their job title/role; how long they have been in that position/organisation

2. Prevention service (if a service provider)

Who provides the service and how did it come into being?

Who is the service for? a) Referral arrangements b) Eligibility/prioritising rules

What does the service involve? a) Service objectives; b) Service procedures; c) Service limitations; d) Service outcome/activity targets; e) Service performance – measured in relation to targets

What evidence is collected to determine whether the service is effective and/or provides value for money?

(To your knowledge) How does the service compare with similar prevention service provision in other local authorities? Do you benchmark at all?

How often is the effectiveness of the service reviewed and by who?

To what extent are service users involved in the planning and/or evaluation of services?

To what extent, and in what ways, is the service integrated with other advice or welfare services and with mainstream housing providers? Or is it quite stand alone?

How is the service funded and what does it cost? Are there any ways in which the service generate savings to the public purse? Can you evidence that for us?

What are the principal/most important ways that your organisation contributes to homelessness prevention? Are there any ways in which it contributes to the generation of homelessness?

Has there been an impact of the post 2007 recession and housing market downturn on your client group/demand for your services? Anticipate any impacts of public sector cuts/welfare and housing reform?(Probe changes in: nature, size, profile, needs of client group; triggers for homelessness/crisis situation, etc.)

How would you ideally like services to homeless people to develop over the next few years? Why do you think these developments would be beneficial?

What do you see as the biggest opportunities and threats to the provision of services to homeless people over the next few years?

3. Views on the Newcastle Approach

What do you see as the key strengths and weaknesses of the Newcastle approach to homelessness prevention? – e.g. specific services particularly effective or not effective; overall strategic co-ordination; 'culture' of agencies/interventions; particular 'at risk' groups which are more/less effectively helped; contextual factors (e.g. constrained social housing supply)?

Have you seen a change in the approach/culture within Newcastle in recent years on homelessness prevention? If so, positive or negative? In what ways? Can any positive changes be sustained in current economic climate/with cuts in public spending?

Do social landlords and others reduce the risk of homelessness occurring, or still tend to focus on crisis response? What are the other key services that contribute to homelessness prevention (or its generation) in Newcastle? How effectively do different stakeholders work together in preventing homelessness and responding to crises in Newcastle?

How far are the local authority's values and objectives consistent with those of your organisation in the area of homelessness prevention?

(To your knowledge) How does Newcastle compare to other similar cities on the effectiveness of its approach to homelessness prevention?

Are there any ways you would change the Newcastle approach?

(If not already mentioned) Have you heard of the 'Whole Housing Market Approach' in Newcastle? What does it mean to you?

4. Thanks and follow-up

Interviewees will also be asked to provide relevant policy/procedure/performance/financial reports.