

Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2021

Brief overview of achievements since the strategy was published in 2019

Priority 1 Develop services for rough sleepers

Key issues

- Very limited 24 hours emergency access accommodation
- Insufficient data on number of rough sleepers

To prevent people from sleeping rough the Council has:

<p>Collaborate with other services to tackle the root causes of homelessness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have commissioned the following services using our Homelessness Prevention Grant and grant funding from the Rough Sleeper Initiatives programme bid for from the MHCLG • The Homeless Response Service where every report of a rough sleeper is attended by outreach workers who carry out health and safety checks and secure emergency accommodation • We have commissioned services with Changing Lives to provide emergency assessment beds which are accessible 24/7 • Some Where Safe to Stay service where rough sleepers can be taken off the street and have an assessment of their needs carried out and then the most appropriate accommodation within the pathway developed with Changing lives • Dispersed accommodation to commissioned from NCC housing management to accommodate chaotic clients who cannot live in a communal setting
<p>Understand the reasons for non-engagement and develop policies for prevention, intervention and recovery for rough sleepers</p>	<p>This is ongoing, there are many reasons for non-engagement from people who sleep rough, mostly related to mental health issues and the lack of facilities in their local area where they feel most secure</p>
<p>Work across the region to establish reconnection policies and develop cross boundary services</p>	<p>Part of the Regional Homelessness Group where all 12 north east local authorities come together to share best practice, carry out research, joint working development of policy and procedures and apply for joint funding to tackle the causes and look for solutions to rough sleeping.</p>

Priority 2 Prevent homelessness by improving support to vulnerable client groups

Key issues

- No consistent way of identifying vulnerable households that may be a risk of homelessness before they reach crisis point
- Limited support services that can be delivered on a countywide basis

To improve support to vulnerable client groups, the Council has:

<p>Work in partnership with other organisations such as health services (including mental health and drug and alcohol services); advice agencies; money advice; voluntary and community sector groups; the Police and other emergency services; and domestic abuse services to set up an early warning system to identify those at risk of homelessness</p>	<p>Improved connections established with a range of services to support people going through homelessness, which include mental health services, Safeguarding, NRP. We have been awarded accreditation from the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance for delivering training to the departments in housing and setting up procedures for the whole housing work force including tradesmen when entering tenants' home, to recognise signs of DA and how to report it through our 'Something's not right' initiative which is a dedicated email address to report any signs of DA to the relevant people.</p>
<p>Review support services throughout the county and understand how to access these services</p>	
<p>Understand the client groups that services work with and how they can work more closely with the Council</p>	

Priority 3

Increase options for, and ensure access to, suitable temporary accommodation

Key issues

- Limited accommodation for clients with severe mental health issues and complex needs
- Difficulties in ensuring consistent countywide service delivery Insufficient number of emergency direct access beds for those who may have to sleep rough

To make better use of all temporary accommodation to ensure that all household types are provided for, the Council has:

Review the provision and range of temporary accommodation options; especially for those with complex needs, to minimise spending on Bed and Breakfast	The use of B&B was reducing due to the introduction of alternative accommodation options, however due to Covid 19 the use of B&B increased significantly during 2020
Increase the amount flexible temporary accommodation options for single homeless people	Dispersed temporary accommodation was introduced to accommodate single homeless people who are not suitable for general needs accommodation. We are steadily increasing the number of these dispersed flats to accommodate growing numbers of chaotic clients. Currently we have 6 houses and flats covering Bedlington, Ashington, and Alnwick

Priority 4 Support people through Welfare Reform, particularly the impact of Universal Credit

- Measures relating to Welfare Reform could mean that many households' incomes will be reduced. Financial pressures can result in homelessness, particularly where these lead to rent or mortgage payment arrears; and
- The cumulative effects of a number of benefit cuts on households' ability to pay housing costs

To support people through Welfare Reform, the Council has:

Work with partners to effectively support those affected by Welfare Reform	Referrals made to CAB and NETTS to assist clients affected by the reforms
Raise awareness of Discretionary Housing Payments to assist people who are affected by cuts to remain in their home	This is now done on a regular basis. DHPs were also used for deposits on private rents where people had to move for affordability issues
Monitor the impacts of Universal Credit, respond with actions if possible and keep under review	This was carried out when UC was first rolled out in Northumberland
Investigate different ways of communicating to tenants and landlords about the potential impacts of Welfare Reform	We ensured that welfare reform was a regular item on the private sector landlords forum to keep landlords informed
Improve early information and advice making sure that it is available through appropriate and accessible channels	Advice and information on welfare reform was a council wide initiative

Priority 5 Remove barriers to permanent accommodation

- Landlords in both private and social are not willing to take some clients without a package of support in place before rehousing
- Affordability in the private rented sector is an issue for single people under the age of 35 due to low Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates

To remove barriers to permanent accommodation and support, the Council has:

Review the current Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme, currently available to private landlords where the Council	Completed by the Private Sector Housing Team. Changes made to make
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underwrites the deposit to enable homeless person or applicant to access accommodation, and other incentives offered to landlords to encourage take up of support available	the service accessible to a wider cohort of homeless clients. A new role has been created to ensure that support is offered to clients who have had past difficulties managing a tenancy. The officer helps to set up utilities and payment methods and offers advice and support for up to 6 weeks to new tenants in the private sector
Investigate the practicalities of negotiating longer term tenancies for households placed into the private rented sector	This has not been achieved
Work with Registered Providers to ensure that vulnerable clients are linked into their tenancy support schemes when rehoused	All providers are aware of new tenants who are vulnerable and may need extra support
Continue to promote quality property and management standards through the Council's Private Rented Sector Accreditation Scheme	This is ongoing and remains a central part of the scheme
Work with local private registered providers to find solutions to excluded households	Negotiations carried out with RPs to give some clients another chance
With partners develop an accredited 'tenancy ready' scheme that will be accepted by registered providers	Changing Lives and Stop Gap offer this type of scheme whilst the clients are staying in their services. Extra priority for housing can be given when a client can show they have completed all relevant courses whilst in the longer-term type of accommodation

Priority 6 Prevent youth homelessness

- Limited availability of supported and permanent accommodation for young people aged 18-25 years
- Lack of shared accommodation prohibits many young people accessing permanent accommodation
- 19% of all homelessness acceptances are aged 18-25 years.
- Main reason (42%) for homelessness within this group is exclusion from the family home

To prevent youth homelessness, the Council has:

Review the joint protocols between Strategic Housing Service and Children's Services and implement changes or develop new procedures	Protocol revised and improved working relationship made with Children's Services. Homelessness team represented on Joint Housing Panel for young people
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Develop a range of information aimed specifically at young people with regard to their housing options and the implications of Welfare Reform	Information updated as and when new housing options aimed at young people are developed.
Review permanent housing options for young people including move-on from temporary accommodation or supported housing	Still ongoing. Spot purchasing agreement with RP to provide placements in supported housing for young people with support needs
Identify opportunities to work with young people at an earlier age i.e. schools	Not achieved
Identify mediation training courses for staff to work between the family and the young person	Need for refresher course to be undertaken