

Newcastle's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment – Homelessness

November 2008

The legal definition of homelessness for England and Wales can be found in the 1996 Housing Act (Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI), 1996). A person is homeless if:

- There is no accommodation that they are entitled to occupy; or
- They have accommodation but it is not reasonable for them to continue to occupy this accommodation e.g. they cannot secure entry to it, it is a caravan but they have nowhere they are entitled to place and live in it, overcrowding, there is a risk of violence or '*it is not reasonable for them to continue to occupy the accommodation*'.

Statutorily homeless are households which meet specific criteria of priority need set out in legislation – acutely ill, people fleeing violence, harassment or an emergency, dependent children and young and elderly, and to whom a homelessness duty has been accepted by a local authority. Such households are rarely homeless in the literal sense of being without a roof over their heads, but are more likely to be threatened with the loss of, or are unable to continue with, their current accommodation. Collating data on statutory homelessness alone does not give the complete picture as other vulnerable groups exist who may be at risk of homelessness but for whom there is no statutory duty. Newcastle's homeless service also collects information about people not owed a statutory duty. The legislative split between those homeless people who are owed a statutory duty and those who are not has an impact on the quality of data recorded and there tends to be inferior data about non-statutory cases. There is however a range of data collected by Supporting People for people accessing supported housing services.

For most people who become homeless their lack of accommodation is a symptom rather than a cause of their social exclusion and their acute housing need presents an opportunity to intervene to counter social exclusion.

This needs assessment has been drawn largely from:

- **Newcastle upon Tyne's Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013**
- **Newcastle upon Tyne's Homelessness Review Summary 2008**
- **Newcastle upon Tyne's Supporting People 5 year strategy 2008/09-2012/13 (comprising operational document and individual sector briefings)**

Facts and Figures

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

- The main reasons for homelessness inquiries (not only statutory) are: leaving parents and friends, violence, loss of private rented accommodation, non-violent relationship breakdown, rent arrears
- House prices in Newcastle upon Tyne have risen significantly: in the period 2003-2005, with entry level house prices nearly doubling.
- Incomes in Newcastle upon Tyne have not kept pace with house price inflation: with half of the city's households being below £20,000 per year. Socio-economic disadvantage can be both a cause and a consequence of homelessness.
- The need for affordable housing has increased: the latest housing needs survey estimated that additional 500 affordable houses are needed per year for the next 5 years.
- The supply of social housing has reduced by 5,000 units since 2003: A net loss of 800 units per year. This trend looks set to continue with a further reduction of 1,000 units anticipated by 2010.
- Increased repossessions at Newcastle County Court: from 217 in 1997 to 730 in 2007
- Increased risk of home loss: A significant number of households in Newcastle upon Tyne are likely to be at risk from the economic downturn.
- Deprivation remains a significant issue in the city: one third of the city's people live in an area amongst the 10% most deprived in the country. 40% of people in Newcastle upon Tyne live in 20% most deprived area of England. However, deprivation in Newcastle upon Tyne is decreasing. Newcastle upon Tyne has moved from the UK's 20th most deprived city to 37th, the most deprived areas of the City are no longer characterised by desolate estates blighted by hundreds of empty houses and crime and the quality of much of the socially rented and supported housing in the City has improved
- There have been significant numbers of people coming to Newcastle upon Tyne putting pressure on housing: this is mainly students, refugees and workers from Eastern Europe.
- The population of Newcastle upon Tyne has increased to 271,600 in 2007 from a low of 267,100 in 2004 (ONS, 2008). This should be viewed against a population of 284,200 in 1981. There has been an overall trend of decreasing population from 1981 to 2001. Population declined by around 15% from 1971 to 2001. The decline was particularly acute in areas of the Inner West and Outer East of the city.
- Newcastle upon Tyne has a high number of students, refugees and migrant workers that impacts on the availability of housing, for example, the number of students is expected to rise by at least 3,000: students tend to push low income households out of the private rented sector as they can be let to by the room rather than by the property and therefore attract higher levels of rent

Trends

The [Social Exclusion Task Force](#), part of the Cabinet Office defines social exclusion as *'what can happen when people or areas have a combination of linked problems, such as unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime and family breakdown. These problems are linked and mutually reinforcing'* (CO, 2008). Homelessness is recognised as one of the most profound symptoms of chronic social exclusion. We know that there are strong correlations between homelessness and drug abuse, crime and mental ill health, all of which have adverse impacts on the wider community. It is estimated that there are around 6,000 people in Newcastle upon Tyne who require supported housing or who are at risk of homelessness including:

1. Chronically excluded rough sleepers – this affects a small number of people – up to 10 people on any one night and around 100 per year
2. People living in supported accommodation – at any one time 750 people live in supported accommodation beds and 860 living in general needs accommodation with floating support this covers around 3,000 people per year
3. People living in general needs rented and owner occupied accommodation who are at risk of losing their accommodation. There are a range of estimates of the impact of the economic downturn and at present it is too early to precise as to the effect upon homeowners in Newcastle. However given that Newcastle has relatively high accommodation costs and low wages the impact is likely to be considerable. At present around 3,000 households a year receive advice aimed at preventing homelessness the level of need is indicated by the 30,000+ phone calls a year to HAC.

Statutorily homeless

The number of households applying and being accepted as homeless by the Newcastle upon Tyne local authority is decreasing (shown in Figure 1 under **PERFORMANCE**). The majority of statutorily homeless are families with children (79% in 2006-07). However, there has been a decrease from 486 households in 2003-04 to 379 in 2007-08 in line with the decrease in acceptances.

Rough sleepers

There are low levels of rough sleeping in Newcastle upon Tyne – estimated to be less than ten people per night. However, a high proportion of those presenting as rough sleeping have an offending background (42% last year), alcohol problems (39%), and/or drug problems (29%). A formal count required to be conducted by local authorities and homeless agencies in April 2008 found 2 people were sleeping rough.

Homeless from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds

People of ethnic minority background are around three times more likely to become statutory homeless than are the majority white population (ODPM, [Causes of Homelessness Amongst Ethnic Minority Populations](#), September 2005), and there is consensus that ethnic minority communities often find it difficult to approach statutory

services. National research highlights differences in the rates of homelessness between various ethnic minority groups. People of black African and African Caribbean origins are twice as likely to be accepted as homeless as people of Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi origins. However, research into these differences is limited.

In Newcastle, Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) households account for around 20% of homeless applications from families with children, and a quarter of applications from those have 3 or more children.

Supporting People client record data shows that of people who accessed housing-related support during 2006/7 due to a primary need of single homeless, a drug or alcohol problem, or offending history, 10% (184 people) defined their ethnic origin as different from white British.

Homeless young people

There was a high level of homelessness among 16-17 year olds in 2003/04 - 209, which reduced to 75 in 2006/07. However, young people remain a group of concern as they are likely *'to have a range of other problems, including offending, experience of violence or other abuse, problems relating to teenage pregnancy, drug use, a history of care'*¹

People with an offending history

There has been a steady increase in the number of offenders seeking accommodation via Newcastle Homelessness Liaison Project (NHLP); many also have mental health needs or problems with drugs or alcohol. One third of offenders in 2006-07 came from outside Newcastle upon Tyne (in 2006/7, just under 400 offenders seeking accommodation came from Newcastle, with 124 people coming from other areas of Tyne & Wear, 50 from elsewhere in the North East region, and 32 from outside the region).

Other data from NHLP shows that in 2006/7, 43.6% of all referrals for temporary and supported accommodation were from people with a history of offending. NHLP data also reveals that during 2006/7, 53% of all evictions from temporary and supported accommodation were for people with an offending history.

The Probation Service's analysis of Multi-Agency Public Protection (MAPPA) cases shows that Newcastle accommodates twice as many cases as any other authority in the region.

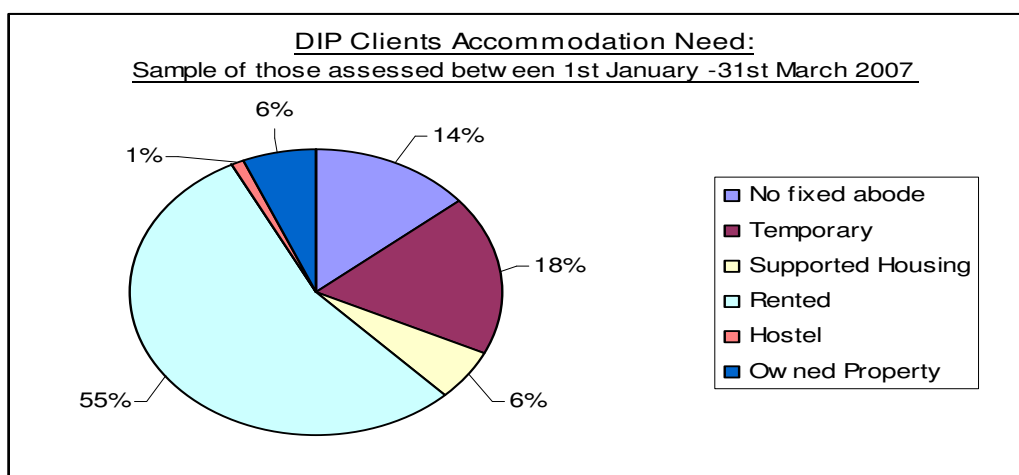
¹ Newcastle's Homelessness Review Summary 2008, Newcastle City Council, 2008

Invariably for this group there are multiple correlations of need and one of the longer term aims of the Homelessness Strategy is to develop a better understanding of cross cutting needs.

People with drugs and/or alcohol problems

In 2006/7, 1,488 people received drug treatment services in Newcastle upon Tyne. Between 1 January 07-31 March 07, Newcastle’s Drug Intervention Project (DIP) assessed the accommodation needs of 164 DIP clients. The snap shot in Figure 1 revealed that 14% of the clients assessed had no fixed abode, whilst 18% were living in temporary accommodation. However more needs to be done to establish a common verification framework of need.

Figure 1 – Accommodation need of DIP clients in Newcastle upon Tyne – Jan-Mar 07



Supporting People Client Record Form data indicates that the number of people with a primary need relating to drug problems has reduced year on year since 2004/5 (2004/5 - 115; 2005/6 - 92; 2006/7 - 66), and now represents 2% of the total number of people who accessed a service in 2006/7. In the context of this decrease, however, the number of people coming to Newcastle upon Tyne from other authorities has increased from 17 (18.48% of the overall figure in 2005/6) to 22 (33.33% of the overall figure in 2006/7).

The data reveals that the number of people with a primary need relating to alcohol problems has reduced from 71 in 2005/6 to 52 in 2006/7, although since 2003 these figures have shown a tendency to fluctuate. The 2006/7 figure is 40% of the 2003 baseline (77), in real terms this is 2.3% of the total number of people accessing services in 2006/7. In addition to this, the number of people coming into Newcastle upon Tyne from other authorities has also dropped, previously this figure has remained stable and 2006/7 is the first year to have seen a decrease.

The incidence of alcohol and drug problems being cited as a secondary need for accessing a service is 27.6.7% (440) and 21.5% (343) respectively; of all secondary reasons cited.

Targets

National indicators

1. NI 141 - Number of vulnerable people achieving independent living

This indicator measures the number of people making a planned move to independence from an accommodation-based supported housing that is intended to provide short term support (i.e.: up to two years).

2. NI 142 - Number of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living

This indicator measures the number of people sustaining independence as a result of Supporting People funded long-term services or floating support. These services may facilitate move on from services relevant to indicator 141.

The [Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement \(2008-11\)](#)² for Newcastle upon Tyne highlights the performance measure and targets for NI141 and 142 in Figure 2:

Figure 2 – Local Area Agreement targets

| LAA Priority objectives | Measured by | Baseline | 2008/09 target | 2009/10 target | 2010/11 target | Lead partnership |
|---|---|------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| 19. Providing homes for older people, people with disabilities, vulnerable people and people with support needs | NI 141 The number of vulnerable people achieving independent living (*35 target LAA) | 67.2% (2007/08) ³ | 68% | 69% | 70% | Housing and Its Environment |
| | NI 142 Number of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living (additional local indicator) | 97.5% (2006/07) | 97.7 | 98 | 98.3 | Housing and Its Environment |

Source: Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement (2008-11)

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) provided Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPs) and as part of Newcastle’s Homelessness Strategy, it is recommended that Newcastle upon Tyne retains BV213 as a local cross cutting indicator. This has been included in the SCS & LAA 2008-2011 as shown in Figure 3:

³ Baseline based on quarter 4 of 2006/07 and quarters 1,2,3 of 2007/08

3. **BV213** - Number (%) of households who considered themselves as homeless, who approached the authority's housing advice service(s), and for whom housing advice casework intervention resolved their situation.

Figure 3 – Local Area Agreement targets

| LAA Priority objectives | Measured by | Baseline | 2008/09 target | 2009/10 target | 2010/11 target | Lead partnership |
|--|--|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| 35. All children and young people live in families that are free from financial poverty and material deprivation | Local indicator – prevention of homelessness – number of households who consider themselves as homeless, who approached the local housing authority's housing advice service(s) and for whom housing advice casework intervention resolved their situation (additional local indicator) | 1,758 (2007/08) | 1,800 | 2,000 | 2,050 | Housing and Its Environment |

Source: Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement (2008-11)

Performance

1. Independent living

| Figure 4: NI 141 - Number of vulnerable people achieving independent living in Newcastle upon Tyne | |
|---|------------------|
| Year | Actual Outturn % |
| 2006/7 | 60.08 |
| 2007/8 | 69.1 |

Source: Supporting People

| Figure 5: NI 142 - Number of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living in Newcastle upon Tyne | |
|---|------------------|
| Year | Actual Outturn % |
| 2006/7 | 97.5 |
| 2007/8 | 97.5 |

Source: Supporting People

2. Statutory homelessness

The number of households applying and being accepted as homeless by the Newcastle upon Tyne local authority is decreasing (Figure 6).

Figure 6 - Trend in enquiries, applications, duty cases and acceptances of statutorily homeless families, applications and reasons for refusal

| | 2003-4 | 2004-5 | 2005-6 | 2006-7 | 2007-8 |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Advice enquiries | N/A | 72 | 1,511 | 812 | 836 |
| Homeless applications | 2,424 | 2,595 | 984 | 829 | 746 |
| Duty cases | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 1,708 |
| Total demand | 2,424 | 2,667 | 2,495 | 1,641 | 3,290 |
| Homeless acceptances | 1,038 | 906 | 610 | 5,84 | 484 |
| Duty cases were not recorded separately until partway through 2006-7 | | | | | |
| Source: Newcastle's Homelessness Review Summary 2008 | | | | | |

3. Temporary accommodation

Newcastle Homeless Liaison Project (NHLP) collects data which relates to activity within temporary and supported accommodation for homeless people, and referrals from agencies for clients seeking accommodation (Figures 6 and 7).

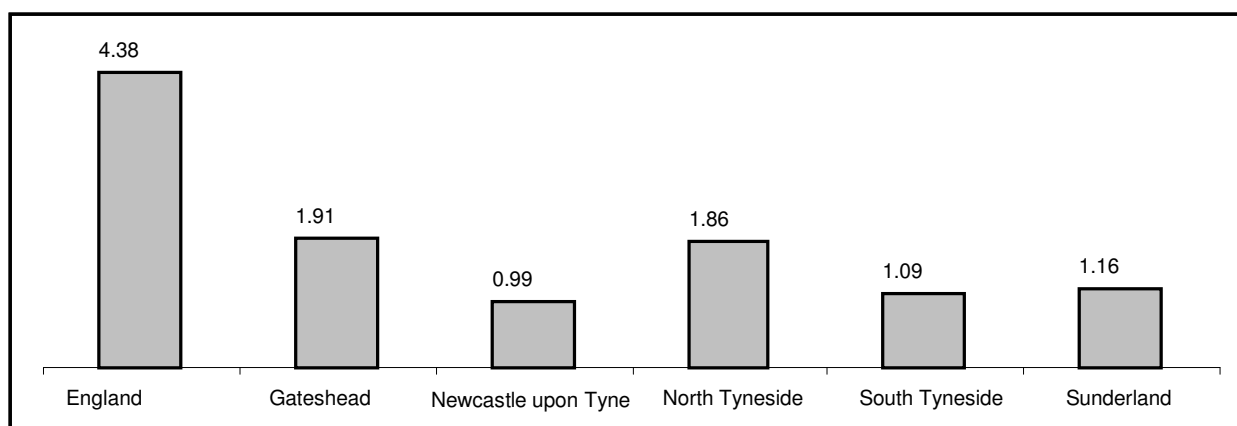
| Figure 7 - Temporary/supported accommodation use in Newcastle upon Tyne | | | | | |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | 2003-4 | 2004-5 | 2005-6 | 2006-7 | 2007-8 |
| Admits | 2,418 | 2,056 | 2,083 | 2,114 | 2,085 |
| Discharges | 2,089 | 2,006 | 1,996 | 2,120 | 2,132 |
| Referrals | 3,313 | 3,872 | 4,872 | 4,894 | 3,750 |
| Source: Newcastle's Homelessness Review Summary 2008 | | | | | |

Until 2007, over 90% of applicants who the Council owed a statutory duty to were accommodated in its own temporary accommodation. The Homelessness Review Summary demonstrates a decrease in 2007-08 because of an *'increase in access to the voluntary sector and the success of prevention initiatives particularly via YHN reducing the number of tenants presenting as homeless'*.⁴

Newcastle upon Tyne has the lowest level of temporary accommodation (56 units) of all the core cities and the Council continues to strive to meet the Communities and Local Government's (CLG) target to reduce the amount by 50% in 2010 (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Temporary accommodation use per 1,000 population 2007

⁴ Newcastle's Homelessness Review Summary, Newcastle City Council, 2008



Source: Newcastle's Homelessness Review Summary 2008

Figure 9 shows an increase in other supported accommodation which is taken up by households referred by Housing Advice Centre (HAC), again in line with the 2003 strategy:

| Figure 9 – Percentage of emergency beds offered to HAC | | | | | |
|--|--------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Emergency beds offered to HAC | 2006 average | Jan – Mar 2007 | Apr – June 2007 | July – Sept 2007 | Oct – Dec 2007 |
| HAC 1 st option | 66% | 86% | 82% | 84% | 85% |
| HAC admits | 41% | 60% | 62% | 69% | 73% |

Source: NHLP

4. Use of beds by people from outside Newcastle upon Tyne

As regional capital, Newcastle often attracts vulnerable and excluded people from outside of the area. Figure 10 from NHLP shows that the proportion of beds being taken by non-Newcastle upon Tyne residents fell from 40% to 23% for all supported housing, and from 54% to 29% for direct access (DA) accommodation. This was in line with the aims of the 2003 Strategy.

| Figure 10 – Bed use by non-Newcastle upon Tyne residents | | | | |
|--|-------------------|-----|---------------|-----|
| Year | Supported housing | | Direct access | |
| | Number | % | Number | % |
| 2003 | 786 | 40% | 454 | 54% |
| 2004 | 713 | 35% | 360 | 45% |
| 2005 | 688 | 35% | 356 | 47% |
| 2006 | 655 | 31% | 314 | 40% |
| 2007 | 482 | 23% | 213 | 29% |

Source: NHLP

5. Other outcomes

- **No B&B accommodation used since December 2006**
[In 2006/7, 1,232 days were used, with an average spend of £50,000 per annum between 2002 and 2006]
- **Increase in prevention**
[Homeless acceptances down 38% from 939 in 2004/5, to 584 in 2006/7]
- **Number of homeless 16-17 year olds decreased**
[Down 65% from 209 in 2003/4 to 75 in 2006/7]
- **Increase in BVPI 213 prevention cases**
[Increased from 405 in 2005/6, to 1,758 in 2007/8]
- **Low levels of rough sleeping**
[2008 formal count found 2 people sleeping rough]
- **Housing Association nominations on target for the first time in 2007/8**
- **Increased bed spaces in temporary accommodation**
[From 689 in 2004, to 750 in 2008]
- **Increased floating support**
[From 529 units of support in 2004, to 860 in 2008]
- **Increased number of people moving to settled accommodation**
[From 284 in 2005/6, increased to 340 in 2007/8]
- **Improved facilities**
[e.g. YHN's Stepping Stones hostel, Crisis Skylight Centre, BBHA new hostel, Cyrenians' self build hostel]
- **Over £5m of capital funds attracted since 2003 for temporary / supported housing and other building projects**

Local Views

Engagement with other agencies

There are a number of means of consultation attended by representatives from the voluntary sector (supported housing, advice, education and learning, counselling, and others), housing associations and private landlords, employment link agencies, and other statutory agencies including the local authority, health, police, probation, YOT, and Safe Newcastle. The following list is an example of the existing consultation forums, although this list is not exhaustive:

- Newcastle Homelessness Forum – quarterly meetings with all agencies with an interest in preventing homelessness;
- Homelessness Prevention Network – an alliance of more than 62 agencies that has developed protocols, policies, information sharing and training;
- Housing Associations/Housing Corporation Liaison group – a monthly meeting with city's major associations and a quarterly review meeting with the Corporation;
- Housing Strategy Review Groups (HSRGs) – two/three-monthly meetings involving agencies including service providers, staff from other commissioning agencies, service user representatives, which discuss service provision for groups including offenders, drug and alcohol users, young people, children and families, and people

with learning disabilities or mental health problems. These groups are the primary forums to which officers involved in developing the City's Housing and Supporting People strategies will refer to gain a voluntary and community sector perspective on proposed and existing provision;

- Supporting People Provider-led forum – 6 monthly meeting for supported housing providers;
- Youth Homelessness Forum – user-led forum involved in the quality review of supported housing services, delivery of service-user led training; involved in developing and influencing strategic developments and aims around young people's issues;
- YHN protocol meeting – a quarterly meeting between the City and Your Homes Newcastle (the City's Arms Length Management Organisation)

The Supporting People sector briefings which underpin the Supporting People Strategy 2008/09 -2012/13 set out a number of other groups and forums through which direct and indirect service users and stakeholders can be involved in the Supporting People programme. A comprehensive list of these engagement forums are also available at www.newcastle.gov.uk/supportingpeople. The Supporting People Involvement and Communication Strategy sets out how the City will continue to work to improve opportunities for service users, providers, partners and stakeholders to participate in planning, developing and reviewing supported housing services at a range of levels.

Consultation events

The review of homelessness, and the development of Newcastle's Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 and Supporting People Strategy 2008/09-12/13, were carried out through the following activities:

- An analysis of issues raised about homelessness in the Housing Strategy Review Groups (HSRGs)
- Consultation with the HSRGs, other strategic groups, staff in the homelessness service, and partners in the Homelessness Prevention Network and Newcastle Homelessness Forum. This was done through a questionnaire which asked for comments on the priorities drawn from the analysis of issues raised by the HSRGs, and for feedback on particular problems, gaps, and what more we could do to prevent homelessness and help homelessness people to move successfully into settled accommodation.
- Discussion at two Homelessness Prevention Network events
- Consultation with service users and service user forums through focus groups and an exit survey of people using services at the City's Housing Advice Centre. Circulation of the draft Homelessness Review and Strategy to key partner agencies, for comment
- Consultation through the Supporting People Core Strategy Development Group

National and local strategies

National policy

The **Homelessness Act** (2002) requires Councils to act strategically to prevent homelessness. Specifically local authorities are required to develop a strategy every five years based on a thorough review, and for that strategy to plan to address and prevent homelessness across all client groups.

The **Supporting People** (SP) programme replaced the Housing Benefit-based funding regime for supported housing. SP contracts with accommodation and floating support providers are based on strategic planning, and have been critical in helping to achieve the aims of the Newcastle City Council Homelessness Review and Strategy 2003. Homelessness services are the second largest group of services funded by Supporting People

Local policy

The **Newcastle Homelessness Review 2008 and subsequent Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013** recognises that addressing poverty and deprivation are key to reducing homelessness, specifically by:

- consolidating and extending the prevention of homelessness
- 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 cross cutting needs

Newcastle's Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 sets local targets through its Action Plan to address these key objectives

The **Sustainable Community Strategy** (SCS) (2008) recognises that sustainable housing is a pre-requisite of sustainable communities. The prevention of homelessness is included as a local indicator in the 2008 Local Area Agreement (LAA) in addition to the two indicators which cover people moving on to and sustaining independence.

Newcastle's **Supporting People Strategy 2008/09-2012/13** recognises that having or being on a path towards achieving a stable housing situation underpins everybody's ability to play a positive part in our community, to address problems such as isolation, addiction and anti-social behaviour and to manage physical and learning disabilities and mental health problems effectively. When someone does not have a secure place to live, his or her efforts to deal with these issues – as well as the resources invested by statutory and voluntary agencies – are less likely to result in successful outcomes. In addition, not providing housing-related support services ultimately costs the City more – in residential and nursing care costs, the costs of evictions and dealing with homelessness, providing health services which could have been avoided and dealing with crime, both for the victim and for the perpetrator. Maintaining and further improving the stability and viability of

housing-related support services is therefore a critical part of the City's overall plans for creating sustainable communities.

Supporting People currently fund⁵:

- 199 emergency access beds for homeless people (including 33 units for women and women and children and 47 units for all household types);
- 332 non emergency access beds for homeless people (including 12 beds specifically for people with drug and/or alcohol problems and 6 units for women at risk of domestic violence);
- Advice services supporting up to 478 people at any one time;
- Floating support for up to 108 units at any one time, including 6 units specifically for offenders, 37 units specifically for people with drug and/or alcohol problems; 10 units for women at risk of domestic violence
- 10 refuge beds for women at risk of domestic violence

In addition Supporting People also fund a number services specifically for vulnerable young people aged 16-25:

- 10 emergency access beds:
- 125 non emergency access beds (including 10 LGBT specialist units and 63 Foyer units), plus 10 supported lodging units
- 555 hours of floating support specifically for young people, including young people with more challenging needs

NB: Due to some clients needs falling into more than one group some Supporting People services maybe described as "homeless" by the NHLP but by another category by Supporting People e.g. if the primary need is a learning disability. Hence the discrepancy between the Supporting People and NHLP figures.

Council homelessness and homelessness prevention services

The main homelessness services provided by the City Council are based at the **Housing Advice Centre** (HAC). Details of the services provided are in Appendix 1. Services are provided to respond to enquiries from people who are homeless, may become homeless, or have other housing problems.

Homelessness Prevention Officers (HPOs): a team of 8 HPOs responds to all enquiries including out of hours and from people in prison, hospital, care, or in the forces. The initial aim is to give advice to resolve a problem if possible, or making an appointment or a referral to another service if needed. The Prevention options on offer are described later. A homelessness application is taken where it is clear that homelessness cannot be prevented or where the applicant wishes to make a homeless application. For people not

in priority need, help is given to identify suitable other supported housing, and to take steps towards accessing settled accommodation.

In 2006-7, HPOs saw a total of **1,641** households, gave housing advice to **812** households, and accepted **584** households as homeless. Homelessness was prevented in **252** cases.

Tenancy Relations Service (TRS): In 2007, TRS saw **580** tenants and **111** owner occupiers and tenants threatened with repossession. The two Tenancy Relations Officers offer:

- advice
- help to mediate or negotiate with landlords on rents and repairs
- court representation in possession proceedings
- action to prevent illegal evictions

The TRS is also part of a court duty representation system which is coordinated by the Newcastle Law Centre. **1,102** households were represented by the Newcastle Scheme in the 2007/8. This is an increase of **300** on the previous year. During the last six months, the TRS has successfully represented people in **22** mortgage repossession cases.

[Newcastle Homelessness Liaison Project \(NHLP\)](#) is a clearing house for accommodation vacancies available to agencies dealing with homeless people in Newcastle. In 2006-7, NHLP received **4,892** referrals, and noted **2,119** people leaving temporary accommodation in Newcastle (70.5% from Newcastle). NHLP data is collated into regular reports about trends in homelessness within the city. NHLP supports the Newcastle Homelessness Forum, which meets quarterly and provides a website with regularly updated information,

NHLP also facilitates a monthly nomination meeting, which looks at individual cases for example of people moving out of hospital, prison, Young Offender Institutes, or emergency accommodation). The aim is to enable a planned approach to securing accommodation, so reducing the occurrence of crisis homelessness.

Newcastle Homelessness Prevention Project (NHPP) aims to prevent homelessness by developing partnerships, policies, protocols and practices, which promote joint working and long term change. The list of initiatives developed by NHPP can be found below.

Newcastle Homelessness Prevention Network (NHPP) was established in 2006 and currently has 34 signed-up members and a total of 82 organisations involved. The Network develops, promotes and consults on prevention initiatives.

Voluntary sector housing advice

The following agencies provide housing advice, some as specialists and others providing general advice which covers housing:

Specialist housing advice agencies

- Shelter North East Housing Aid Centre

General advice agencies which cover housing advice

- Citizens' Advice Bureaux
- Newcastle Law Centre
- University of Northumbria Student Law Office
- Gateshead Community Legal Advice Centre
- Solicitors (3 registered with CLS for housing)

Our work with partners has enabled the City to lever in considerable resources e.g. Cyrenians: £300,000 for the ACE project, helping to address social exclusion but more needs to be done.

Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) is the Council's Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO) set up on 1 April 2004 with responsibility for the management of 31,000 council homes in Newcastle upon Tyne. The **Strategic Housing Service** (SHS) takes a city-wide strategic lead. The Newcastle-wide partnership approach is supported by a framework - the Housing Toolkit. The Toolkit incorporates the Newcastle Gateway, to be implemented in the next 12 months and the Capital and Revenue Alignment Register (CRAR) and brings together commissioners' and the voluntary sector. Further information is available on the [Supporting People](#) website.

What is this telling us ?

What are the key inequalities?

Young people

Young people aged 16-17 were a particular concern in Newcastle (209 homeless 6-17 years olds 2003/4). There has been a 65% reduction in the number of statutorily homeless 16-17 year olds between 2003/4 and 2006/07 (75 in 2006/07), however, they remain a group of concern as they are likely *'to have a range of other problems, including offending, experience of violence or other abuse, problems relating to teenage pregnancy, drug use, a history of care'* (Homelessness Review 2008). The 2008 Serious Case Review following the death of a young person who was under the care of the YOT and had lived in hostels for homeless people highlighted the need for a better response to young people who have care needs beyond the capacity of support services

House prices

The sharp increase in house prices has had an impact on the numbers needing or wanting social housing in a city with substantial areas of high deprivation (40% of Newcastle's population live in 20% of the UK's most deprived areas). A particular concern in the current economic climate is the increase in repossessions from 217 in 1997 to 730

in 2007. Business commentators predict increases between 25% and 50% in the number of repossessions in 2008-09. These will hit poorer home owners harder and may reverse the recent decrease in the number of eligible households applying to be accepted as statutorily homeless.

Health

There is an increased risk of poorer physical and mental health including drug and alcohol problems among the homeless resulting in a lower life expectancy. Being homeless, or threatened with homelessness, and the uncertainty of being inappropriately housed, also contribute to poor health.

People in the criminal justice system or leaving other institutions

There is an increased risk of homelessness for most groups leaving institutions such as prison, care, hospital, and the forces.

What are the key gaps in knowledge/services?

The following issues around move on were identified through **Newcastle's Homelessness Review Summary 2008:**

- **The high rates of eviction from temporary accommodation:** the most common last address for homeless people is a homeless hostel (307 people evicted in 2007). However, during 2007 the proportion decreased, from 34% at the beginning of the year to 21% by the end of year.
- **Low rates of positive move-ons:** relatively high numbers of people who leave temporary housing go on to no known address (618 in 2006 37% of all discharges (source: NHLP).
- **Exclusions:** a small number of people are barred from all temporary and supported accommodation.
- **Long stay residents:** the length of time people stay in temporary and supported accommodation
- **Consolidating and expanding our prevention initiatives:** particularly the Pathways to Independence and Prevention from Eviction and Repeat Homelessness Protocols.
- **Increasing access to private rented accommodation:** this will be difficult without increased resources but is the most cost effective way to secure accommodation
- **Continuing to improve the quality of accommodation:** the better the physical environment the better the persons chances for change.
- **It is likely that mortgage arrears and debt will increase:** we need to ensure that our advice services can respond to increased demand

Data collection

Newcastle's Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 refers to the lack of a definitive baseline of **the numbers of people within the region whom services cannot accommodate**. It is estimated that there are around 10 households a year who are excluded from all accommodation.

CRISIS estimate that there are in the region of 400,000 **hidden homeless** in the UK. Government statistics do not include people who satisfy the legal definition of homelessness but have not applied to be classified as such, nor people who were officially recognised as homeless in previous years but were deemed 'not in priority need' (thus not entitled to accommodation).

The **legislative split between statutorily and non-statutorily homeless** people skews the data on homelessness. The housing charity CRISIS point out that there is considerable ambiguity about the interpretation of these categories.

Vast numbers of **single homeless people** can be found in both groups - in England and Wales a person is not entitled to any accommodation unless deemed to be 'vulnerable', so single homeless people have less incentive to apply. CRISIS estimate that there are in the region of 400,000 hidden homeless in the UK.

What are the risk of not delivering our targets?

- Increased homelessness, compounded by current credit and mortgage issues and particularly for those in deprived areas already '*on the cusp of homelessness*' (Newcastle's Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013).

- A stable housing situation has a key role to play in improving **physical, emotional and particularly mental wellbeing**. The Social Exclusion Unit report Mental Health and Social Exclusion (2004) identifies that 'increasing number of adults with mental health problems are homeless or have housing difficulties' and highlights through their new Public Service Agreements delivery agreement the importance of ensuring appropriate housing, care and support for people with mental health problems as a key part of enabling them to live independently.

- **Enabling people to get and keep a home** is the first step towards helping them address other issues which may affect their own health and wellbeing and that of the wider community, and which by extension also affect the economic prosperity, safety and cohesiveness of their neighbourhood and the City as a whole. 'A home is a human right, and a necessary precondition for the delivery of all the aims of the ... Strategy.' (NCC, 2007a, p38).

Is what we are doing working?

The Homelessness Strategy, in reducing homelessness, appears to have achieved a number of goals based on the better management of demand through prevention initiatives. In terms of the homelessness services themselves, the improvements which have been made include:

- Changing the culture and refocusing the work of the Housing Advice Centre and homelessness staff, so that prevention is a key element of all our work, and homeless officers have become Homelessness Prevention Officers
- Establishing the NHPP to develop prevention initiatives
- Setting up the Homelessness Prevention Network
- Increasing the number of beds for homeless people in temporary and support accommodation in the city
- Improving the quality and design of hostel provision
- Increasing the number of floating support units which help previously homeless people to maintain their homes
- Developing facilities and initiatives which help homeless people to gain skills for independence, employment, and access to mainstream services
- Ensuring that the sector works in a far more co-ordinated way
- Developing a more joined-up approach to commissioning particularly in partnership with Supporting People and the Drugs Support Unit

However, a number of the initiatives are projects and do not have assured further mainstream funding.

Partnership working appears strong and effective.

What is coming on the horizon?

There may be increasing pressure on housing from the current economic situation.

Homes for a sustainable future: Newcastle's Housing Strategy 2006-2021 has resource implications to achieve the planned programme.

What should we be doing next?

Newcastle's Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 evidences the need to continue with the preventative approach with the emphasis on reducing demand and improving the quality of the supply of services rather than the quantity. The Strategy identifies the following core actions for the ongoing successful prevention of homelessness (in no priority order):

- 1) Consolidate and extend the prevention of homelessness to reduce demand for crisis accommodation**
- 2) Increase the supply of housing options available to prevent homelessness**

3) Increase the amount and quality of accommodation available for those at risk of homelessness

4) Improve governance and strengthen partnerships to meet crosscutting needs

In delivering the above four key themes, the city aims to:

Increase the number of people:

- for whom we prevent homelessness and repeat homelessness
- who live in improved buildings that services are provided from
- who receive support to address the causes of their homelessness
- who move from homelessness to independence
- sustaining their independence
- benefit from the range of options available to prevent homelessness
- involved in meaningful activities and entering employment
- who use homeless services and we engage with to seek their views

Reduce the number of people that are:

- accepted as homeless, by offering appropriate options
- evicted from all forms of housing
- in temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010
- who have to sleep rough

and ensure that:

- families with children are not placed in bed and breakfast accommodation
- no 16/17 year olds are placed in bed and breakfast accommodation
- the allocations policy continues to facilitate the prevention of homelessness
- we provide services that meet the needs of Newcastle upon Tyne's residents, including those with complex needs and are at risk of repeat homelessness

References

Newcastle's Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013

Newcastle's Homelessness Review Summary 2008)

[Newcastle City Council Homelessness Review and Strategy 2003](#)

Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) (1996) Housing Act. Retrieved from:

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1996/ukpga_19960052_en_1

Supporting People 5 year strategy 2008/09-12/13 and accompanying sector briefings (www.newcastle.gov.uk/supportingpeople)

[Homes for a sustainable future: Newcastle's Housing Strategy 2006-2021](#), Newcastle City Council

[Evidence base for Housing Strategy 2006-2021](#), Newcastle City Council

Appendix 1: Current provision in Newcastle upon Tyne

