

Kirklees Council

PREVENTING
HOMELESSNESS
STRATEGY
2013- 2016

Reviewed September 2014
(Action Plan updated September 2015)

KIRKLEES PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

2013 – 2016 (Reviewed September 2014)

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1. Executive Summary

In Kirklees, we are seeing a rising need for affordable housing, a higher than average number of people who are on low wages and unable to access market housing and an increasing number of people who are accepted as homeless.

This position is being fuelled by pressures on our local economy, and other pressures such as the impacts of the welfare reforms. These include people affected by the housing benefit under occupation charge, and the introduction of people in Kirklees having to pay some Council Tax for the first time.

Locally, and in line with the national picture, the biggest cause of people presenting as homeless is where parents are no longer willing, or able to accommodate non dependent children, with the greatest pressures falling on younger people under the age of 35.

This strategy is about maintaining our focus on preventing and relieving homelessness. It is underpinned by our commitment, initially for 2014 / 15, to achieving a 10% reduction in the use of temporary accommodation and the number of homelessness acceptances.

Our services include a broader housing solutions approach, provision of supported accommodation and support to maintain tenancies and working with partners to better understand and respond to the causes of homelessness.

We will target our resources where they are most needed – for example households who are affected by benefit changes and who need support to manage the impact – and use a “light touch” where this is more appropriate.

We have involved service users, listened to what they have told us and used this information to inform the strategy moving forward. With our key partners in Kirklees, particularly those agencies represented at the Homelessness Forum and the Supported Housing group, we have identified three priority outcomes for Kirklees which this strategy aims to achieve. These are:

1. All agencies have a focus on preventing homelessness for **any** household at risk of losing their home, in line with *Making Every Contact Count* principles.
2. People in Kirklees know how to, and can, access clear, timely, appropriate advice and support to meet their housing need and prevent homelessness.
3. Opportunities to make the best use of existing accommodation across all tenures, including the private rented sector are maximised and clear pathways are agreed with partners.

Kirklees Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2013 – 2016

2. Joint Foreword

We are pleased to introduce the 2013 – 2016 Kirklees Preventing Homelessness strategy. This strategy underpins and supports our wider commitment to meeting local housing need, as set out in the Council's Housing Commissioning Strategy 2013 – 2016. It has been produced in partnership with key agenciesⁱ and sets out how together we will tackle the challenges of homelessness in Kirklees.

We recognise the crucial and positive impact that settled, secure and appropriate housing has on peoples' lives, on their emotional and physical well-being, their families and on our wider communities. And, we know that the effects of homelessness and its costs to the public purse span the spectrum of health, the criminal justice system, social care and the economy. We are committed to an early intervention approach to preventing people from losing their home that involves a wide range of partners who work together to ensure that collectively, we tackle both the root causes of homelessness, and deal with its effects as quickly and efficiently as possible.

This strategy, which is the result of collaborative working between a number of services and agencies in Kirklees sets out the actions we will take to address the needs of the most vulnerable households in Kirklees who are affected by, or threatened with, homelessness. The strategy focusses on enabling and supporting people to achieve and maintain a stable and settled home.

The strategy and its action plans will be kept under review and driven forward by the Kirklees Homelessness Forum. The Forum, which includes representatives from the voluntary sector, statutory agencies and registered housing providers will ensure that the strategy remains a live document in line with the changing and challenging landscape that affects local housing need.



Cllr Cathy Scott
Portfolio Holder;
Place – Streetscene and Housing



Ryan Dunne
Chair;
Kirklees Homelessness Forum

3. Introduction

3.1 Our Aim

The aim of this strategy is to set out how the Council and its partners will continue working towards the prevention of homelessness in Kirklees and increasing the effectiveness of services for anyone who is at risk of losing their home. The strategy has been developed using the 10 principles for local authorities, as set out by the Government in providing services which prevent homelessnessⁱⁱ.

This strategy deals with the needs of **all** households who are facing homelessness, including those groups for whom the Council has a statutory duty. Homelessness can affect anyone - but its impact is likely to be more severe and more difficult to deal with, for people who are vulnerable.

A detailed action plan which sets out the key actions we will take to prevent and tackle homelessness is included as part of the strategy.

3.2 Our Vision

Our vision is that all Kirklees citizens will have access to a home that is warm, safe, secure, appropriate and affordable. People who are vulnerable to losing their home will know about and be able to access support. All services and organisations will work together, focussing on the needs of the individual in ways that are flexible, creative, empowering and innovative to prevent people from becoming homeless and to encourage increased independence and self-sufficiency. The root causes of homelessness will be identified and tackled, the benefits of its prevention appreciated and understood and where homelessness does exist, seamless support and early intervention will be available as quickly as possible.

To turn the vision into reality, we have identified the priorities we need to address and have developed three outcomes that we want this strategy to achieve. Our action plans say how we will achieve these outcomes, and who will take lead responsibility for achieving the key tasks and activities.

3.3 Our Outcomes

We reviewed the current level of housing need in Kirklees and considered the impact of changes including the welfare reforms, the Localism Act 2011, the down turn in the local economy and the housing market in Kirklees. We also considered the good practice guidance from the National Homeless Practitioner Support Service.

Through the work we have undertaken to develop this strategy, and in recognition that we can't do everything, for everybody, we have prioritised three outcomes to address homelessness in Kirklees.

Action plans and timescales for achieving each outcome have been developed with our partners and will be kept under review.

With partners, we have agreed the following outcomes;

1. All agencies have a focus on preventing homelessness for **any** household at risk of losing their home, in line with *Making Every Contact Countⁱⁱⁱ* principles.
2. People in Kirklees know how to, and can, access clear, timely, appropriate advice and support to meet their housing need and prevent homelessness.
3. Opportunities to make the best use of existing accommodation across all tenures, including the private rented sector, are maximised and clear pathways are agreed with partners.

These outcomes reflect and support the Kirklees Housing Commissioning Strategy's overarching outcome for meeting the housing needs of people who are vulnerable, of:

“Improved life chances for people by supporting them to find and keep an affordable, good quality home “

And in turn, contribute to Kirklees Council's objectives of tackling poverty, better places to live and improving the health and wellbeing of residents in Kirklees.

4. Why have a Preventing Homelessness Strategy?

“Homelessness has a detrimental effect on individuals, families and communities and can undermine social cohesion. Homelessness is linked to alcohol and drug abuse, poor physical and mental health, crime and anti- social behaviour, poor educational attainment, debt, unemployment and the breakdown of support networks. Tackling the effects of homelessness can be costly to the public purse when compared to the costs associated with proactively seeking to prevent homelessness in the first place” (Specialist advisors Housing Options Toolkit, December 2012)

Homelessness is everyone's business. Preventing homelessness, and ensuring that vulnerable people have access to a settled home - for example, care leavers or people leaving an institutional setting such as prison - is a key action in contributing to the wider vision for Kirklees.

Under the Homelessness Act 2002, local housing authorities must have a strategy for preventing homelessness in their district. The strategy must apply to everybody at risk of homelessness, including cases where somebody is found to be homeless but not in priority need and cases where someone is found to be intentionally homeless.

(DCLG, Homelessness Prevention and relief, August 2013).

The Council has a duty to provide a “safety net” for certain homeless households who have a priority need and are not intentionally homeless. (*Part 7, 1996 Housing Act as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002*). This safety net extends to the provision of temporary accommodation where required. The DCLG’s homelessness code of guidance (July, 2006) identifies certain groups of people who are more at risk of homelessness. More recently, “An Evidence Review of the costs of homelessness” (DCLG, August 2012) describes both the characteristics and circumstances that both lead to, and are perpetuated by, homelessness.

Risk factors (of homelessness) include;

- People experiencing alcohol or drug problems
- People with a poor educational attainment
- People with mental ill health

Triggers that may lead to homelessness include;

- Bereavement
- Job loss
- Crime
- Leaving an institution (including the armed forces) or similar setting, such as local authority care
- Sudden worsening of mental health
- Relationship or family breakdown can be both a risk factor, *and* a trigger

5. Setting the Context

5.1 Strategic

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on all local authorities to undertake a review of homelessness in their area and based on the findings of this review, develop and publish a strategy to show how homelessness is to be tackled and prevented. There is a further duty on local authorities to keep the strategy under review and we set out In section 12 how we intend to do this.

The life of the strategy must not exceed 5 years, and must be reviewed and modified on a periodic basis. Authorities may, if they wish, incorporate their homelessness strategy into another strategy, such as the Housing Strategy, as long as this is clearly identifiable, and published.

The Council commissioned its homelessness review in September 2008, and reviewed this data as part of the refreshed Housing Commissioning Strategy 2013 – 2016, which sets out the overall intentions for housing and housing related activity in Kirklees. This Preventing Homelessness strategy builds on the issues and objectives as identified in that strategy, and is a sub strategy of it.

The Preventing Homelessness strategy sets out how we will increase access to a wider range of housing options for people, including the private rented sector, in line with the increased flexibilities as set out in the Localism Act 2011. These legislative changes mean that, in discharging its homelessness duty, the Council may do so by way of a 'private rented sector offer' (PRSO). The Council's Housing Allocations policy sets out how a private rented sector offer is made, under the discharge of duty.

This strategy also has links to the Council's Strategic Tenancy Policy, which gives detail as to the expectations that the Council has of local registered housing providers. It links to locally operating registered housing providers' strategies for preventing and addressing homelessness, and supports wider Kirklees partnership priorities of improved health and wellbeing, increased independence and greater resilience for our local communities.

5.2 National

Since the coalition government came into power in May 2010, there have been a number of legislative and policy changes which have a direct impact on homelessness services, and how we work together to prevent people from losing their home.

The Council's Housing Commissioning Strategy 2013 – 2016 gives the detail around these changes. Those changes which are most relevant for homelessness – particularly, welfare reforms and the Localism Act 2011 – have been taken account of in the development of this strategy. They are summarised in appendix (i)

Figures issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on 12 June 2013 show the seriousness of the current housing situation. The number of applicants accepted as homeless by councils increased by 6 per cent in 2012, and those placed in bed and breakfast by 14 per cent. The department's data shows there were 53,540 homelessness acceptances in England in the financial year 2012 / 13 compared to 50,290 in 2011 / 12.

Between April and June this year 3,580 households became homeless due to their private tenancy coming to an end, an increase of a third over the same period in 2012.

34,080 households with children were accepted as homeless by local authorities in 2012, an increase of 12% on the previous year, and almost 77,000 children are living in temporary accommodation^{iv}.

Homelessness prevention is a key role for local housing authorities, their partners in other statutory services like Social Care, Health and Probation and also in the voluntary sector. It is not just a "housing" problem; the current Government acknowledged this when it set up a cross departmental ministerial working group on homelessness. It has set out directions to local authorities on what it expects to see within its approach to tackling homelessness.

In its paper published in 2012, "Evidence review of the costs of homelessness", the DCLG points to the costs of homelessness for health and support services, the police, and the justice system. There are also costs to the department of work and pensions (DWP) and the department of education, as homelessness has been shown to impact negatively on educational attainment, particularly in secondary schools.

The DCLG has a clear focus on, and commitment to, preventing homelessness. It recently published *“Making every Contact Count: A joint approach to preventing homelessness”* in which it sets out 10 objectives or challenges for all local authorities to consider as they review their homelessness strategies. We reflect the Kirklees commitment to developing services that meet these challenges in this strategy.

A recent report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (July 2013) notes that the government is looking to end temporary support measures for homebuyers. These measures include low interest rates, the funding for lending scheme and extensions to support for mortgage interest. The report warns arrears will rise substantially as the economic downturn continues, to 50,000 repossessions in 2015.

The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) Statistics for mortgage and landlord possessions for the period January to March 2013 notes that, although there is still a decrease in the number of mortgage possessions since the figures peaked in 2008, Yorkshire and Humberside is amongst those areas with;

“a relatively high number of mortgage repossession claims per household”.

The highest region is the North West, with 80% more claims per household than the lowest region, the South West. Nationally, the number of landlord possession claims has increased in number by 26% since 2008, to 42,520 in the first quarter of 2013.

Age UK report that nearly a quarter of people in their early 50s are worried about becoming homeless; a poll of 971 people, conducted by Ipsos Mori in March 2013 for the charity, found around 240 people did not believe they would be able to keep up with their mortgage or rent payments. It also discovered 46 per cent of people aged between 50 and 64 have been out of work for more than a year, with reducing prospects of finding a job.

5.3 Local

Over 430,000 people live in Kirklees, rising to around 483,000 by 2030 (Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Kirklees, 2013 – 2020) and there is a need for 1,457 affordable homes every year, over the next 5 years, to meet present and future arising housing need. Kirklees is shown to have a higher than average number of households on low incomes, which means that 35% of households cannot access housing on the open market. However, we are pleased that there is a council commitment to ensure every family has a safe and secure place to live, and to increase the number of good quality, safe and affordable homes (Kirklees Council Corporate Plan 2014/2015)

Demand for social housing continues to outstrip supply; this sector represents only 17% of total housing stock in Kirklees, the rest being made up of private sector or market housing – and so a significant number of people are unable to access a home of their own.

In 2013/14, statutory homeless acceptances reduced by 26% to 294 for the year, with a similar reduction in decisions. The majority of homeless households are aged between 16 and 44, one person households and lone parent households with dependants.

6. Key Issues

In line with the focus on preventing homelessness through early intervention, we work to avoid homelessness wherever possible. Over a typical quarter, the Council has between 4,000 to 5,000 customer contacts – face to face interactions – with people in Kirklees who are seeking support and advice with a range of housing issues.

The following table shows;

- The number of cases where homelessness has been **prevented, or relieved** – for example, where a household is assisted to remain in their existing accommodation, or helped to move.
- The numbers of **decisions** (where following a homelessness assessment, the council decides whether someone is homeless, threatened with homelessness or not homeless).
- The number of **acceptances** (where the council accepts the homeless applicant is eligible for assistance).
- The **main reasons, or causes** of homelessness in Kirklees

Please see figure 1 for the local data which informs this section.

Figure 1 Homelessness Decisions and Main Causes

	2011/12					2012/13					2013/14				
Decisions	130	149	130	142	551	138	159	189	163	649	128	149	113	85	475
Acceptances	87	89	69	73	318	87	105	108	101	401	92	84	67	57	300
Reason for homelessness:															
Parents no longer willing to accommodate	18	15	17	11	61	15	17	19	21	72	19	19	12	7	57
Friends / Family no longer willing to accommodate	4	21	9	8	42	9	15	17	13	54	17	10	13	5	45
Loss of assured shorthold tenancy	9	5	5	6	25	8	5	6	6	25	14	6	2	6	28
Dom Violence - partner	15	13	12	10	50	16	12	10	17	55	10	6	16	9	41
Dom Violence - Associated pers	5	1	1	1	8	5	3	4	7	19	2	2	0	1	5

Figure 2 Total Homelessness Prevented or Relieved

	2011/12					2012/13					2013/14				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Prevention	236	287	290	341	1154	351	338	253	246	1188	280	307	358	320	1265
Relieved	55	49	65	45	214	27	46	45	55	173	45	46	34	18	143
Total Prevented / Relieved	291	336	355	386	1368	378	384	298	301	1361	325	353	392	338	1408

A positive trend is the number of homelessness prevention and relief cases which have risen from a figure of 1,060 cases in 2009 / 10 to 1,361 at the end of 2012/13.

Homeless acceptances increased by nearly 30% during 12/13, from 318 to 401. These have since dropped significantly and are back to similar levels to previous years, due to our focus on new and more effective service delivery models.

Key issues which affect levels of homelessness in Kirklees include;

- Lack of affordable housing,
- A down turn in the local economy,
- Budget cuts within local authority and voluntary sector services,
- Welfare benefit changes, and the pressures this brings to families and other relationships,
- Barriers to accessing the private rented sector, such as an increase in demand, a reduction in the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and the loss of direct payment to landlords, under Universal Credit.

The impact of these factors on relationships within families is seen in overcrowding, as people are forced to move back into the family home, relationship break down and people struggling to cope. Where families may previously had a “buffer zone” to protect them against rising prices and a drop in income, economic changes mean people are more likely to be tipped into mortgage and rent arrears.

As figure 1 show, the three main causes of homelessness in Kirklees are;

- Parents no longer willing to accommodate
- Friends or family no longer willing to accommodate
- Relationship breakdown involving domestic violence

6.1 Temporary Accommodation

The 2012 / 13 year end snapshot figure for numbers in temporary accommodation was 79, up 16% on the previous year. This figure is for those households for whom the local authority has a statutory duty, and does not include people who are sleeping rough. This increase was anticipated, as we see the cumulative and ongoing effects of the recession and welfare reforms having an impact. We are committed to minimising costly use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation and, generally, reducing both the numbers of people in temporary accommodation, and the length of stays – quarterly target figures have been agreed for 2014/15, based on a 10% reduction on the previous year end figures.

6.2 Mortgage arrears, repossessions and affordability

The Housing Commissioning Strategy refers to the increasing number of approaches to the Housing Solutions Service (formerly the Housing Options and Support Service) from households who are, or at risk of, becoming homeless, and that many of these are from people who are approaching for advice for the first time, for example people who have been made redundant and are facing repossession. There has been a small increase in the number o

homelessness acceptances for mortgage arrears; in 2012, this figure was 11, rising to 14 in 2013.

As referred to earlier in this strategy, as the housing market starts to pick up and lenders are more inclined to pursue action, we may well see further increases in households losing their home through repossession.

We know that the challenging economic situation is putting more people at risk of losing their home; Advice agencies such as Fusion report they are dealing with large numbers of enquiries from people seeking housing advice, and are working with families who are facing the loss of their home due to mortgage or rental possession action. Our action plan details the approach we are taking to tackle these pressures.

The Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) picks up the affordability issues that face younger person households in particular. The SHMA refers to;

"a significant proportion of households essentially unable to exercise genuine choice within the market as a result of their financial capacity".

Nearly 70% of the Kirklees Council housing register is made up of applicants who are under 45 years of age.

Focus group research and engagement with local agents highlight the obstacles facing younger households to purchase a property; the SHMA concludes that this has led to many young people either not forming a household (and continuing to live with family or friends) or moving into private rented stock, leading to increasing pressure on this tenure. An overview of existing research which focuses on particularly vulnerable groups of younger people highlights the housing pressures faced by this sector of the community, the need for homelessness prevention and support services, and access to suitable, affordable accommodation.

Vulnerable Groups

The Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Kirklees identifies vulnerable groups of people who are at risk of one or more health and wellbeing issues, as set out in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for 2013. These same vulnerable groups – people with mental health issues, with disabilities, people experiencing domestic abuse, looked after children, ex service personnel, people with a substance mis use problem and offenders – are also more likely to be at risk of, or experience, homelessness.

To give some indication of the numbers of such vulnerable groups, the JSNA refers to;

An estimated 7,500 to 8,200 adults with a learning disability, living in Kirklees;
Over 6,000 incidences of domestic abuse reported to the Police in Kirklees;
Around 2,000 adults from Kirklees are supervised by the Probation Service, or are in prison
– the JSNA notes that offenders are far more likely than the general population to have a mental illness, learning disability, substance misuse, poor educational achievement and be unemployed – all factors which increase the likelihood of being homeless.

In Kirklees, 1 in 12 (8%) of people aged over 18 have served in the Armed Forces at some time, and more than 9 out of 10 (94%) were men. National research^v shows that homelessness affects service leavers, levels of alcohol misuse in ex service personnel are double those of the general population, and up to 7% of the UK prison population (over 6,000 prisoners) are ex service personnel.

Vulnerable groups of people may have a range of complex needs. We recognise the need for clear, appropriate pathways which support people into a settled and secure home and our action plan sets out what we will do to put these arrangements in place.

Safeguarding

There is a statutory requirement for local authorities to have a local Safeguarding Children Board, and under the new Care Act this requirement will be extended to Safeguarding Adults Boards. In Kirklees, Housing Services and Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing (KNH^{vi}) are represented on both Boards.

The Housing Act 1996, section 167 says that local authorities must prioritise vulnerable people, including those with medical and welfare (care and support) needs, for housing allocations. Vulnerable is taken to mean people who are less able to cope with the effects of being in housing need, including being homeless, and for whom such effects could be harmful or detrimental to them^{vii}

It is recognised that front line workers in homelessness services, and housing management staff, have a key role to play in contributing to a multi-agency partnership approach to the safeguarding of children, young people and adults at risk.

Rough sleeping

With our partners, we are working hard to reduce the numbers of people sleeping rough and we aim to meet the principles of “No Second Night Out”. These principles are;

No one new on the street should spend a second night out.
No one should make their home on the street.
No one should return to the streets, once they have been helped off them.
Ultimately, no one should arrive on the streets.

Agencies work well together, both in terms of working collaboratively to identify how many people are sleeping rough, and tackling rough sleeping by coming together with a focus of getting people off the streets as quickly as possible. An independent evaluation of the CRI West Yorkshire Homelessness Transition Fund Round 3 project, which introduced a No Second Night Out (NSNO) approach to reduce rough sleeping in West Yorkshire, reported the success of the project, which was delivered by CRI^{viii} in partnership with Leeds, Wakefield and Kirklees local authorities. The report refers to;

“Improvements in focused partnership working and a greater focus on coordinating interventions to prevent and end rough sleeping in ...Kirklees” and notes that the NSNO model has helped many vulnerable people *“not just end their rough sleeping but rebuild their lives”*
(www.sharedenterprise.org.uk)

The newly formed West Yorkshire Finding Independence (WYFI) Multi Agency Review Board, to be jointly chaired with the Council’s Housing Solutions Service aims to ensure that local services provide flexible responses for people facing multiple needs and exclusions. Additionally, it will focus on overcoming barriers to the provision of those services which are needed by the client

Every year the council is required to submit a figure to central government of the number of rough sleepers in the local area on a typical night. For 2013/14 that figure is 4, which is a reduction of 7 on the previous year.

We recognise that by intervening at an early stage, people have improved chances of re settling and are at far less risk of becoming an entrenched rough sleeper, which is often accompanied by a multitude of complex problems.

In response to tackling rough sleeping, we may provide temporary accommodation, and the support to identify and keep appropriate move on accommodation. This approach works well for example, with arrangements for severe weather provision, where our focus is not just on getting people off the streets, but making the links into the support that prevents people going back to rough sleeping. Since April 2013, over 50 people have been helped off the streets of Kirklees.

We aim to find innovative solutions to meeting peoples housing need, and develop creative and flexible solutions. Some examples of this include:

Funding a debt worker from the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) to work within the Housing Solutions Service, to provide specialist advice on complex money matters. In 2012/13 this service helped over 200 customers, preventing many from becoming homeless.
Providing additional support to help someone maintain their tenancy.
Support to enable the continuation of Resettlement in the Community (RIC) scheme, a successful partnership working with ex-offenders to secure settled accommodation.
Enabling essential repairs to a property which prevented the resident from having to leave their home.
Focussing on worklessness and in partnership with Connexions to assist 130 young people into employment, education or training

Demand Trends

We anticipate that the demand for social housing, and the number of people applying to the register, will increase further as the welfare reforms start to impact coupled with rising interest payments and job losses.

The Housing Solutions Service has over 20,000 face to face customer contacts a year and receives around 6,000 applications to the housing register. .

Choose n Move^{ix} reports an increase of 0.7% in the numbers of face to face customer contact. Most of this is from customers age 60 and older.

Over the 6 month period June to December 2014, the Housing Solutions Private Lettings Service worked with 112 households, looking at assisting people into the private rented sector. This service continues to develop and is proactively working with private landlords and partners to minimise the barriers in accessing the private rental sector and sustaining successful tenancies.

Analysis of the Kirklees housing register as at July 2013 has shown that the highest number of applicants with the greatest priority for housing are existing tenants who are under occupying their home by 2 bedrooms or more; of the 135 applicants in Band A, 105 fell into this category, with a further 9 applicants also under occupying by the same number of bedrooms, *and* with some medical need for re housing.

KNH's Home Fit scheme, which supports social housing (including housing association) tenants to down size, is working with increasing numbers of people who need to move to a smaller home. In the period December 2012 to March 2013, 98 households were registered with Home Fit. By the second quarter of 2013, this increased to 120, due to the loss of spare room subsidy (under occupation charge or so called "bedroom tax") which was implemented in April 2013.

A more recent snapshot of the housing register, in December 2014 showed that there were 218 applications registered with a band "B"; of this figure, 55 (121) applicants had a medical need to move, meaning that their current home is not suitable for them to live in because of a long term illness or disability and it cannot be adapted. This picture of who needs housing is reflected within the Council's Older Peoples Accommodation Strategy, which says;

"As the population grows older, the supply of future mainstream housing needs to expand substantially, with the equivalent of half of all new provision needing to reflect the widely varying needs of an ageing population... the supply and range of specialist accommodation, such as extra care and sheltered housing will need to increase."

Prevention and early intervention

The Council and its partners have a clear focus on prevention and early intervention and there is recognition of the social, health and wellbeing and economic benefits of avoiding homelessness happening, rather than dealing with its effects.

Homelessness prevention is achieved through a range of focused partnership work - with local high schools, young people and their parents, by targeting private and social housing tenants to prevent home loss through debt, by helping households affected by violence to stay safely in their homes wherever possible, and by providing adaptations and rehousing to people with a disability or ill health who need help to remain safe and independent at home.

As referred to earlier, the results of this focus on prevention can be seen by the increase in numbers of cases where homelessness is prevented or relieved.

A joined up inter agency approach to our action planning which uses a “whole person” focus is more likely to be effective in achieving a range of positive outcomes for people affected by homelessness. We have greatly minimised the use of Bed & Breakfast (B&B) accommodation. Our intention is that the use of B&B should be an emergency option only. Where it is used, our focus will be on managing the household into more appropriate accommodation promptly. This will be supported through the provision of new supported accommodation provision for young people, which opened in Huddersfield in 2013, and increasing our supply of temporary accommodation from Council stock.

Also coming on stream in 2015 is a supported housing scheme for single people over the age of 21 who are at risk of sleeping rough or already on the streets. The scheme is being funded through HCA grant, in partnership with a registered provider and is being designed jointly between Housing Solutions Service, and Adult Social Care (Supporting People). The Council has committed to the transfer of freehold lease and using its Performance Reward Grant to facilitate the scheme. The Council recognises that provision of supported accommodation is likely to result in year on year revenue savings, by using specialist provision rather than dispersed bed and breakfast accommodation.

Our actions in preventing and responding quickly to homelessness will help support the Kirklees Vision for a strong economy, a successful community and improved health and well-being for all our residents. That’s why preventing homelessness is an integral part of the Council’s core priorities and the wider outcomes that locally, we want to achieve for Kirklees

Working in Partnership

A key theme which runs throughout this strategy is the importance of partnership working, and the need for a corporate commitment to preventing homelessness. Homelessness is not just a housing issue. In order to tackle the root causes, achieve better levels of prevention, and avoid the “revolving door” of people losing their homes, we need to effectively engage and work with, a range of partners. These partners include other statutory services – for example, the Police, Children’s and Adults social care, and Health – housing providers, and third sector organisations such as housing support providers. Our case studies illustrate the effectiveness of good partnership working. We will continue this approach by ensuring that the objectives within this strategy are aligned to and supportive of, other key priorities and that our actions help the Council to deliver on its corporate commitments to tackling poverty, developing skills and supporting the local economy.

We recognise that we will work more closely with some partners; for others, there is a need for us to help increase awareness and understanding of the issues that can trigger homelessness and what customer facing staff can do. Our action plan will identify core

partners we will work with or support and others who will contribute their resources to achieving our objectives.

There is already much preventative work going on in Kirklees, with excellent partnerships developed. The role of the Kirklees Homeless Forum, which includes representation from the statutory sector, service providers, voluntary organisations and service user representatives has strengthened, with membership being reviewed and a more proactive and participative approach to how we prevent and tackle homelessness. The Forum has played a crucial role in the development and shaping of this strategy.

Housing Related Support (Supporting People)

The Supporting People (SP) Programme was a national programme which began on 6 April 2003, bringing together seven housing-related funding streams from across Central Government to deliver accommodation and housing related support services for vulnerable people. Investment in services which prevent homelessness, enable people to move onto independent living and which avoid escalation into costly, crisis situations has been shown to prevent future revenue demand on an “invest to save” principle. Research by Cap Gemini (Cap Gemini, July 2009, *Research into the financial benefits of the Supporting People Programme*, CLG) evidenced that £1.00 spent on housing related support services saves £2.29 in near or immediate (i.e. within 1 year) additional costs, in the next best alternatives for vulnerable people.

Services are largely delivered by voluntary and community sector service providers and housing associations under contract to the Council. In 2012/13, these services supported over 13,000 vulnerable people in Kirklees (approximately 7,500 at any one time).

Around 81% of people are supported to maintain their home; this work includes learning how to budget, addressing debt issues, housing benefits advice and information, and support to access training and employment - and 72% are assisted into settled accommodation, for example applying for a tenancy through the council, private landlord or registered housing provider. The majority of services work with people from disadvantaged groups, who may have multiple needs, face discrimination or need to re-engage with society and those who are homeless, or at risk of losing their accommodation or threatened by domestic abuse. Support is offered to vulnerable people who are at a greater risk of losing their home or tenancy failure.

We have agreed a Supported Accommodation Pathway Protocol in conjunction with some housing providers operating in Kirklees, for those people living in supported accommodation who are “tenancy ready” and prepared to move on and into more independent living. This is recognised and reflected in the Council’s Housing Allocations Policy.

Support has become much more targeted and short term. Demand is increasing with the impact of the welfare reforms hitting vulnerable people particularly hard, and we need to be in a position to respond to a rising need, coupled with the challenge of significant budget cuts.

Other Partnership approaches

In response to the welfare benefit changes, joint staff teams comprising the Council's Customer and Exchequer and Housing Solutions Services, along with KNH and DWP staff identified and made direct contact with households in Kirklees currently affected by welfare reforms, offering advice, assistance and support. In 2013/14, 2,988 financial assessments were carried out and 1,920 discretionary housing payments (DHP) were made. The Council's DHP policy (revised and amended in August 2013) includes specific provision for time limited measures that help prevent homelessness. These include assisting tenants to move to more affordable accommodation, for example by covering costs such as removal charges.

Given the growth of the private rented sector in Kirklees, and the rent shortfalls that we see, it is not surprising to note that a higher than average spend of DHP is appropriately targeted at households affected by changes to the local housing allowance rate.

The Council is continuing to support the RIC project (Resettlement in the Community) which is run by Fusion Housing and which aims to help people that have been released from prison or due to be released from prison, to access private rented accommodation.

The Lets Help You website is a good example of inter-authority working. A number of local authorities in the region jointly developed an internet based private rented sector agency, in response to the changes in local housing allowance (LHA). Let's Help You brings together West Yorkshire tenants and landlords and provides a free service for landlords and anyone searching for rental property - whether in receipt of LHA or not.

Good Practice 1

A customer approached the Council's Housing Options Service (now Housing Solutions) on a Thursday, having been discharged from hospital that day. Before being admitted to hospital she was homeless and had been sleeping on the sofa at various friends for a number of months.

She had a serious health condition, was assessed as vulnerable and placed in bed and breakfast accommodation over the weekend. The housing options team found a suitable property for her via the "Lets Help You" website, contacted the landlord and arranged a viewing. Additionally, colleagues in the Private Lettings Team (now part of the Council's Housing Solutions) identified a possible alternative property. The customer viewed both of them the following day.

A short notice inspection of the preferred property was arranged, immediately followed up with a bond guarantee being put into place. Successful negotiations between the housing options staff, the Council's Customer and Exchequer Services and the land lord meant that the usual admin fee and advance rent was waived. The property was secured for the customer, and so her homelessness was avoided.

From approaching the housing options team, to moving in to a new tenancy took only 4 working days.

What this real life example shows us is that working in partnership achieved a successful outcome for the customer. The flexibility, commitment and willingness of all staff involved to work together helped a vulnerable customer to settle in to a home of her own.

There is much better cross sector working, with agencies signed up to coming together at an early stage to agree jointly, how best to deal with situations where homelessness is threatened or happening. An example of where this is working effectively is the panel meetings looking at the needs of young people leaving care, at which our young people and support team within the Housing Solutions Service is represented.

This approach has shown the value of partnership working and having a cross agency coordinated approach to dealing with an issue which is about so much more than homelessness. Additionally, we see the value of taking a person centred approach to dealing with rough sleeping, in both individual organisations and across organisations.

Joint working is also happening between Health and the Housing Solutions Service to improve the overall “offer” made to families in temporary accommodation, and improve outcomes for children’s health and well-being.

Registered housing providers (RP’s) have come together as a forum, and meet on a regular basis to share information, best practice and put in place real solutions to meet housing need. For example, there is an agreement for informal “pooling” of some properties, to help those tenants who need to move to a smaller home because of the benefit changes, have improved access to properties across the region.

Good Practice 2

We looked at how we could work more closely with the Connexions Service (Calderdale and Kirklees Careers) to ensure young people are receiving support to access education, employment and training. We reached agreement to fund 2 Connexions Personal Advisers to link to the Young People’s team for 10 hours a week, negotiating a Service Level Agreement and setting objectives

Over a 12 month period the team referred 94 young people to our link workers. Of these referrals only 9 people were already in education, employment or training. The joint working resulted in 44 young people engaging with support and accessing a placement. This approach offers a more integrated and cohesive service by locating it within the young people’s team overall structure. It has proved successful in supporting a greater number of young people to engage in further education and training.

Staff in the young people’s team also offered advice to families where young people were threatened with homelessness due to low income.

We learnt that communication, flexibility and creativity were all key components of a successful joint working relationship. The positive outcomes from this working arrangement have ensured that funding has now been extended for a further year.

Developing the strategy

Views of our service users

A research study^x was commissioned by the Council, as part of the preparation of this strategy, into the experience and views of service users who have accessed services relating to their homelessness.

The main findings from this research were;

There appears to be a strong link between people experiencing homelessness, and the processes associated with it, and emotional /mental health such as stress and depression.

Service users who have not had previous experience or knowledge of the homelessness processes are less aware of what services are available, or which services to approach for help.

Support such as mental health services, access to furniture and referral to housing agencies is valuable.

People need to be kept informed as to the status of their housing application, and progress being made with securing settled accommodation.

Service users have also told us...

Services need to be better co-ordinated, with more joined up working - and agencies need to talk to each other.

Help and support is needed *before* a crisis happens.

For people with alcohol and drug addictions, better and more specialist staff training is needed.

“Official” buildings and office based services can be intimidating. Neutral territory – even out on the streets – is more accessible for some groups of people needing support. (Focus Group with service users and DISC, August 2013)

The strategy sets out how preventing people from losing their homes links to wider objectives such as improved health and wellbeing, economic activity, successful and empowered communities, and we have ensured, through consultation, that we have buy in to the strategy from senior managers across the Partnership, and at a political level.

Our approach

Preventing homelessness contributes to a range of agency agendas and is not something that can be achieved by the Council alone. In developing this strategy, a partnership approach was taken by a core group of the Kirklees Housing Forum and in consultation with a wider group of stakeholders. It has taken account of the Government's approach to preventing homelessness, "Making Every Contact Count" and reflects the ten local challenges as set out in that document. As previously referred to, the Kirklees Preventing Homelessness strategy sits underneath, and is aligned to, the Council's Housing Commissioning Strategy and supports a number of other key strategies.

In developing the strategy with partners we have identified:

Locally, what are the **key causes of homelessness**? It's important we recognise these so we can intervene early, before crises arise.

The **key barriers and challenges** we face, in tackling and preventing people from becoming homeless.

What's happening already and where are the gaps, so we focus on what's needed and don't duplicate activity.

.Our key actions - what do we need to do? This information has helped develop our action plans.

Who we need to engage and work with and how we get those partners on board? Are some partners missing – for example, should we try and engage more closely with private sector landlords?

How do we tackle and prevent homelessness of the future - can we take a long term view and start laying the foundations for future activity

Challenges, gaps and barriers

Key homelessness challenges

We have considered the issues that we need to address and our action plans will show how we will tackle them. Looking ahead, we know our key challenges include:

A shortage of accommodation of all types for people in Kirklees, and a need for 1,457 **affordable** homes every year, for the next 5 years.

Increased awareness of the “right to buy”, resulting in more people exercising this right and so reducing the numbers of council owned housing stock.

Benefit changes particularly the introduction of universal credit and the ending of direct payment to landlords.

Current arrangements with lenders to defer repossession, coming to an end.

Reduction of services in response to budget cuts.

A higher threshold for access to some services.

Increasing numbers of people who are or become vulnerable and need support to secure housing and to maintain their homes and tenancies especially in light of the changes set out above.

More people at risk of losing their home; regionally in 2011/12, there were 1,300 mortgage and landlord possession claims, or 1 in 136 homes (Shelter, 2012)

The need to work more with private sector landlords to develop and sustain the private rented sector offer.

For access to the private rented sector, the challenge of paying a bond or providing a guarantor.

Rising levels of unemployment; the unemployment rate for people aged 16-64 in 2011/12 was 9.6%, and has increased overall by 2.1 per cent over the last 3 years.

Breakdown in family relationships - the source of most presentations to the Housing Solutions Service Young Peoples Team.

Continuing and cumulative effects of welfare reform on our use of temporary accommodation.

More people sleeping rough.

Increasing number of people seeking housing advice

What are the gaps in provision?

Consultation with our partners and with service users has shown the following areas where together, our approach to preventing homelessness needs to be strengthened...

A sufficient supply of (private rented) accommodation that is suitable and affordable.
Hostel accommodation for single people, at risk of sleeping rough
Increased support for single homeless people who are “none priority”.
Targeted assistance for people under 35 years old, to support their access into affordable private rented sector accommodation, and
Accessible self-help opportunities that enable those customers that are able to do so, to find their own solutions to their housing needs.
A more flexible range of ways in which people can access housing and homelessness prevention advice.
We are seeing a “new” group of customers who may not have come into contact with our services previously and we need to tailor our access arrangements in line with their requirements.

What are the barriers to preventing homelessness?

The Kirklees Homelessness Forum identified the following barriers that we need to be mindful of and address as part of our action planning;

Changes to the benefits system including universal credit and the loss of direct payment to landlords, alongside a reduced opportunity for the council to influence landlords’ willingness to rent to people in receipt of benefit
Peoples’ ability to pay a bond or find a guarantor in order to access private rented accommodation (Tenants and Landlords Satisfaction Survey^{xi}, 2013)
Reducing resources – budgets and staff
Pathways and access to information that isn’t user friendly - this was also highlighted by service users during consultation.
Lack of service flexibility and restrictive referral processes that prevent people from getting the right type of support at a time that’s right for them.
Unrealistic and unmanaged expectations - we need to be clear with people what can and can’t be done.
A lack of understanding and awareness about how homelessness can be prevented, what help and support is available and the role that others can play – for example, schools, health services, and other agencies – especially front line, customer facing staff.
Preventing homelessness isn’t high enough on the corporate agenda. We need to improve collaborative working, making the links between homelessness prevention and achieving wider priorities such as better health and well-being, a stronger local economy and reducing demand on services.

Good Practice 3

A persistent offender referred to the scheme was housed through the Resettlement in the Community (RIC) scheme in November 2012; he has spent a total of 24 years of his life in prison. With the help of the RIC scheme he has settled in his new home and is currently engaging with social services to obtain custody of his two boys beginning with a shared care agreement. The accommodation provided has enabled him to build on his broken relationships with his sons by having somewhere stable to see them.

"I feel that I was housed at a crucial time; your assistance has enabled help for me. Without this help, I would have had a very fractured lifestyle"

Our Outcomes - what we will do:

Outcome 1

All agencies have a focus on preventing homelessness for any household at risk of losing their home, in line with Making Every Contact Count principles

Our approach:

We will continue to work together, with a wide range of partners, to maintain our focus on preventative activity that supports people who are at risk of homelessness to remain in their existing home wherever this is possible and appropriate; and avoids crisis situations where people lose their home. We will continue to raise the profile of preventing and tackling homelessness by providing evidence and case studies of how an early intervention approach achieves positive outcomes for individuals, reduces the demand on the “public purse” for more costly services and contributes to the Council’s vision of communities that are safe, healthy, supportive and successful.

We will meet these **key objectives**:

A reduced number of households being accepted as homeless.

Resources are targeted at the most vulnerable groups, that meet their needs in ways that are tailored, flexible and appropriate

More people are supported to find and keep an affordable, good quality homes.

Outcome 2

People in Kirklees know how to and can access clear, timely, appropriate advice and support to meet their housing and prevent homelessness

Our approach:

We will have a person centred approach to how advice and support services are available and delivered, ensuring this is done effectively and efficiently to meet our customers’ needs. We will use an outcome focussed approach when developing and commissioning services, that make a real difference to peoples’ lives.

We will meet these **key objectives**:

Those people most affected by the welfare reforms are supported through the change.

Effective referral pathways into specialist support and appropriate accommodation are agreed with partners, in operation and readily accessible for service users.

Improved information and awareness raising activity around homelessness prevention aimed at a range of front line workers.

Self-help mechanisms are available and accessible to people at risk of homelessness, where a “light touch” approach helps people find their own solutions to their housing need and which prevent the need for more intensive or crisis intervention.

Outcome 3

Opportunities to make the best use of existing accommodation across all tenures, including private rented sector, are maximised and clear pathways are agreed with partners

Our approach:

We will continue to work with private landlords in Kirklees, to build relationships, increase the availability of affordable and suitable homes, and drive up the standards of the sector by ensuring landlords are accredited. The Council’s Housing Allocations Policy refers to the private rented sector offer (PRSO) and the measures we will take to ensure that a decision to discharge homelessness duty into the private rented sector is appropriate. We will explore opportunities to bring empty homes back into use; for example, by providing advice and support to home owners, and development of partnership schemes which extend access to the private rented sector. We will work with colleagues and other partners to develop proposals for shared living arrangements, and to facilitate better use of homes that are under occupied, or better suited to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

We will meet these **key objectives**:

Improved access to good quality affordable private rented accommodation

Develop new and innovative models of meeting peoples housing needs

Bring empty homes back into use

Extend the use of adapted homes throughout the district

Delivery, monitoring and review

We will monitor the delivery of this strategy through regular reviews of action plan progress, via the Kirklees Homelessness Forum. We recognise the importance of maintaining an up to date focus on changes in demand and pressures, given the challenges of homelessness prevention. A more detailed annual review of the overall strategy will be carried out in partnership with the Forum and other key stakeholders, to ensure it remains relevant, timely and appropriate.

This strategy has been amended in 2014 and a full refresh will be carried out, as part of the update to the Housing Commissioning Strategy in 2016.

Preventing Homelessness Strategy – Action Plan

Updated September 2015

*New activity or key task

Outcome 1

All agencies have a focus on preventing homelessness for any household at risk of losing their home, in line with Making Every Contact Count principles

Key Task / Timescale	Activity	Lead / Resource	Target	Progress (as at September 2015)
1.1 Identify our key partners and work with them to ensure an increasing awareness, understanding and strategic “fit” of the preventing homelessness agenda and causes of homelessness M/L	Map existing partnership arrangements and identify gaps.	KHF	Clear, effective and inclusive partnership	Some gaps now identified, e.g. Supported Accommodation Pathway protocol with some providers and HSS. Plans in place to address.
	Review current membership of the Kirklees Homelessness Forum and amend / extend as appropriate	KHF (Sub Group)	The forum has appropriate representation	
	Extend scope of working to include children from the age of 15.5 years, to resolve conflict within the family and avoid estrangement and negative outcomes Completed	HSS –YPST, D & A	More preventative work is happening with young people	Protocol agreed and implemented, seeing positive outcomes for some young people
	Explore opportunities for increased/additional wider focus on preventing homelessness e.g. Health and Wellbeing Board Completed and ongoing	S & C	Focus is on preventing homelessness at a strategic level	Picked up within Council’s key strategic drivers of improving peoples’ health and wellbeing and economic resilience and reflected in the corporate themes of Early Intervention and Prevention (EI&P)

		Collect and record information (qualitative and quantitative) which demonstrates the cost effectiveness of prevention activity Completed and ongoing	S & C, HSS	Corporate understanding and support of the benefits of prevention	and Economic Resilience. Housing focus is at Assistant Director level e.g. via the Housing Integrated Commissioning Group and Integrated Commissioning Executive Integrated into the Council's focus on Early Intervention and Prevention
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Outcome 1						
All agencies have a focus on preventing homelessness for any household at risk of losing their home, in line with Making Every Contact Count principles						
Key Task / Timescale	Activity	Lead / Resource	Target	Progress (as at September 2015)		
1.2 S/M	Facilitate realistic and sustainable housing options for people, including those affected by benefit changes and economic downturn	Development of the Housing Access officer role to ensure frontline staff are skilled to effectively and efficiently triage customers Completed and ongoing	HSS	Reduce numbers of homeless acceptances	Partner agencies have extended drop in sessions (community based) to better enable support. Front line staff eg floating support workers have been trained on benefit changes such as Universal Credit	
		Survey under occupiers in KNH/RP managed properties to target interventions that assist tenants affected by welfare reform Promote and resource the use of the Home Fit scheme and options for mutual exchange and down sizing Completed and ongoing	KNH, RP's KNH/HSS	More people living in affordable "right sized" homes	To date, 318 applicants have been re-housed in to a sustainable home with the assistance of the Homefit scheme.	

		Work with partner agencies and benchmark other LA's to share and promote best practice for welfare reform mitigation	C & E	Vulnerable people have increased financial resilience	Peer review actioned with Leeds and Bradford LA's. "Better Off Kirklees" an online portal for benefits and employment advice launched Autumn 2015 Ex-service users offered training and some have gone onto gain employment (with service providers)
		Maximise opportunities for people to increase their financial resilience, skills and self-confidence through routes into volunteering, training and paid work, debt advice (including specialist advice for people with mortgage or rent arrears) and welfare provision	KFIG		

Outcome 1				
All agencies have a focus on preventing homelessness for any household at risk of losing their home, in line with Making Every Contact Count principles				
Key Task / Timescale	Activity	Lead / Resource	Target	Progress (as at September 2015)

		<p>Ensure the effective use of Discretionary Housing Payments and the Repossession Prevention Fund to prevent homelessness, by increasing staff understanding, encouraging applications and reviewing cases previously refused</p> <p>Completed and ongoing</p>	C & E, SA, KNH, RP's, HSS	Homelessness due to rent arrears is reduced	<p>BRASS training workshops rolled out.</p> <p>Briefings held for KHF to promote use of DHP's. RP's accessing DHP's through dedicated resource. HSS successful in DHP applications</p> <p>Repossession Prevention Fund loans no longer available as the Credit Union is no longer active, not currently looking at an alternative partner as the take up was low due to criteria and eligibility due to nature and complexity of debts.</p>
1.3	<p>Consider new and alternative approaches to meeting peoples' housing need</p> <p>M</p>	<p>Explore feasibility of developing a shared accommodation model, Rent A Room type scheme and other "matching" type arrangements</p> <p>Completed</p>	HSS, Fusion	Increased availability of affordable housing solutions to meet housing need of vulnerable groups	<p>Rent a Room successfully launched</p> <p>21 units of supported accommodation for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness due to open late November 2015</p> <p>As above</p> <p>Incorporated into new supported accommodation provision, will be delivered new Clare House</p>
		<p>Establish supported accommodation for rough sleepers / people at risk of rough sleeping.</p> <p>Completed</p>	C & C HSS, I & R		
		<p>Incorporate and maintain the NSNO "offer" into support services contract for supported accommodation for single homeless people.</p> <p>Completed</p>			
		<p>Develop new methods of delivering severe weather provision (SWEP) building on and learning from the pilot with Methodist Mission</p> <p>Completed</p>	HSS		

Outcome 1 All agencies have a focus on preventing homelessness for any household at risk of losing their home, in line with Making Every Contact Count principles					
Key Task / Timescale		Activity	Lead / Resource	Target	Progress (as at September 2015)
1.4	<p>Maximise the effectiveness of support offered through housing related support, and other support arrangements which help people maintain settled accommodation</p> <p>M</p>	<p>Link into commissioning reviews / new commissioning of services for example via the new integrated commissioning groups.</p> <p>Developing appropriate and efficient systems for access to support.</p>	C & C	Reduced numbers of homelessness acceptances and more people supported more efficiently	Alliance model of contracting with housing related support providers being developed, where focus is on having a multi skilled generic service with access to more specialist provision as needed
1.5	<p>Extend current move on protocols which support people to progress to more permanent accommodation.</p> <p>S/M</p>	Monitor and review existing arrangements with support providers	HSS, SAP	Increasing number of people moving to more independent living, more quickly	<p>Still to be reviewed but some new properties added and appear to be working</p> <p>Pilot and additional resource to support people to move from the Councils TA in a timely manner</p>
1.6	<p>Effective support in place to meet housing needs of vulnerable groups to prevent homelessness wherever possible</p> <p>M</p>	Ensure housing pathways are agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support	C & C, HSS	Homelessness amongst vulnerable groups is reduced	<p>Probation working "through the gate" with prisoners aiming to ensure they are released with accommodation and appointments in place for signing on for benefits where necessary</p> <p>HSS and SWYFT looking at improving links for better partnership work for people being discharged from hospital. Recruitment to specialist</p>

					<p>worker posts to be undertaken by SWYFT.</p> <p>*New pathways to be developed for people affected by domestic abuse</p>
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Outcome 1 All agencies have a focus on preventing homelessness for any household at risk of losing their home, in line with Making Every Contact Count principles						
Key Task / Timescale	Activity	Lead / Resource	Target	Progress (as at September 2015)		
1.7 S/M	Enable self-help options for customers seeking housing advice which appropriately addresses housing need	Establish an online self help "wizard" to take people through their housing options and provide a personalised housing action plan Complete.	HSS	Customers receive more appropriate, realistic advice in a more efficient and consistent way	Housing Action Plan in place	
1.8 M	Ensure appropriate advice and assistance in place for home owners threatened with homelessness through repossession	Review the tools to ensure homeowners understand the range of options available to them and provide training for front line staff in these options	HSS, CAB, Fusion	Homelessness due to repossession is minimised.	Breathing Space scheme successfully being used in Kirklees. Extension of the scheme being considered to include a product for those with endowment policies that have a shortfall. Numbers being repossessed remain low, in part due to improved housing market and continuing low interest rates	

Outcome 2**People in Kirklees know how to and can access clear, timely, appropriate advice and support to meet their housing need and prevent homelessness**

Key Task / Timescale	Activity	Lead / Resource	Target	Progress (as at September 2015)
2.1 At the first point of contact ensure that people's housing needs are addressed and appropriate onward referral/signposting is effective and focussed on preventing homelessness wherever possible. * Include holistic assessment at first point of contact M	Develop and embed clear and effective referral arrangements with partner agencies *sign posting to Simon on the Street surgeries	KHF	People feel they receive timely and effective support. Partner agencies have increased confidence in knowing how, and where, to refer onto.	Online tools developed, including Choose n Move+ and the Kirklees Advice Partnership. Joint workshop held with Adult Social Care and Housing to explore opportunities for better integrated working and increase understanding of roles and prevention opportunities. Further follow on event scheduled.

2.2	Work with those people most affected by welfare reforms to support them through the changes and minimise the impact *and people newly affected by upcoming changes to benefits M/L	Ongoing review of reforms is maintained by KHF and KISHG and other support services to enable front line workers to identify people most affected by key issues and refer into appropriate support.	C & E , Financial Inclusion Group (FISG)	Vulnerable people have increased financial resilience and the impact of welfare reform changes is mitigated.	Universal Credit now in place on a phased basis. Support providers working with targeted groups e.g. young people in light of the benefit changes and referring on as necessary. Also see reference to Better Off Kirklees
2.3	Work with partners to increase and enhance people's access to education, training and into sustainable employment M	Use a partnership approach to maximise funding opportunities to enable pathways into education, training and employment for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness	KHF	Vulnerable people have increased financial resilience and the impact of welfare reform changes is mitigated.	From the Fair Chance cohort (currently 135 clients) - 11 Kirklees young people into employment , 25 into education and 15 have taken up volunteering opportunities, all since 5th January 2015.

Outcome 2

People in Kirklees know how to and can access clear, timely, appropriate advice and support to meet their housing need and prevent homelessness

Key Task / Timescale	Activity	Lead / Resource	Target	Progress (as at September 2015)	
2.4 S/M	Ensure that information and advice is specific, understandable, user friendly and easily accessible to meet people's needs, at the time they need it and in a way that is meaningful for them	Develop the Kirklees Advice Partnership and improve the telephone / on line "offer". Maintain existing face to face provision for those people who most need this service. Completed	KAP-	People are better informed and so better able to make realistic choices (see Outcome 1, key task 7)	Kirklees Advice Partnership online support introduced. See Better Off Kirklees above

2.5	<p>Develop a Homelessness prevention “toolkit” for all client groups and develop a training programme to roll it out.</p> <p>S/M</p>	<p>Implement Choose n Move + (the enhanced housing options module)</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Develop a script / set of core information needed / questions to ask which enables first point of contact to action or refer onto specialist support as appropriate</p>	<p>HSS</p> <p>HSS, KHF</p>	<p>Reduced numbers of homelessness acceptances</p>	<p>Choose n Move + now implemented</p> <p>Housing Action Plans operational and feedback actively being sought to further refine</p> <p>Toolkit for HSS staff in final draft</p>
2.6	<p>Clear pathways in place which support the most vulnerable people, in line with their housing need and current provision</p> <p>M</p>	<p>Identify and agree who our key partners and client groups are. Work with partners to develop a policy and protocols that ensure people at risk of homelessness access appropriate accommodation and support, based on analysis of need</p> <p>Roll out the use of the Housing Solutions needs and risk assessment tool to help staff identify issues and take appropriate action to mitigate risks to vulnerable people.</p> <p>This is now widely used for those going into TA and the most vulnerable – outcome improved information sharing with KNH/Pinnacle who can put support in place where appropriate</p>	<p>KHF</p> <p>HSS</p>	<p>Reduced numbers of homeless acceptances</p> <p>Better safeguards in place which protect vulnerable people from abuse /self harm</p>	<p>Use learning from successful existing pathways as models to develop new ones eg Swan Lane, Supported Accommodation Pathway Protocol and WYFI</p> <p>Partners have good relationships in place which support the most vulnerable people including with YOT, Leaving Care team, The Base and HSS</p>

Outcome 2

People in Kirklees know how to and can access clear, timely, appropriate advice and support to meet their housing need and prevent homelessness

Key Task / Timescale	Activity	Lead / Resource	Target	Progress (as at September 2015)
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		Promote access to appropriate training for staff, such as mental health awareness Completed	KHF / KISHG		Implemented as part of Choose n Move+ Training has been promoted and undertaken and is happening on an ongoing basis
2.7	Council / Registered Providers (RP's) / other landlords recognise the early warning sign and triggers of things going wrong for tenants and support them to prevent homelessness through eviction M	Work with KNH, RP's and private landlords to prevent homelessness wherever possible Promote access to early intervention tools and measures. Further consolidate private landlord relationships through Housing Solutions' Private Lettings Service. Use of Landlord Forum sessions to provide Rented Sector "best practice" training Develop and build on good relationships with RP's for example by strengthening the RP Forum	HSS, Fusion, RP's, C & E	Homelessness due to eviction is reduced	Focus is increasingly on prevention. Practical measures in place include provision of furniture packages to help support vulnerable households. Provision of intervention and support when required ASB specialists work to combat ASB and prevent loss of accommodation.
2.8	Work with RP's to reduce barriers to accommodation and improve access for homeless people M	Working with new tenants to facilitate their understanding of their responsibilities and support community organisations eg KFTRA to help them integrate into their communities	HSS, C & E	Effective partnership arrangements with KNH and RPs and improved access and sustainability of tenancies	Majority of RP's now use Choose n Move to produce own shortlists and hopefully improve lettings to those in most need, to be monitored over the medium term

Outcome 2**People in Kirklees know how to and can access clear, timely, appropriate advice and support to meet their housing need and prevent homelessness**

Key Task / Timescale	Activity	Lead / Resource	Target	Progress (as at September 2015)	
<p>2.9</p>	<p>Improve access to primary healthcare to help improve physical and mental health and prevent homelessness due to poor health * Research the gaps and barriers to accessing NHS Dentists and accommodation for people discharged from hospital</p> <p>M/L</p>	<p>Promote referral / signposting of the most vulnerable people and those with more complex health needs (including mental health and substance /alcohol mis-use) to the Whitehouse Centre for specialist primary health care</p> <p>Promote the Whitehouse Centre as a resource for clinical advice regarding healthcare of vulnerable people</p> <p>Partners to feedback unmet healthcare needs to the KHF for discussion and actions</p>	<p>KNH, RP's</p> <p>WC</p> <p>KHF/WC</p>	<p>People are able to access primary healthcare easily and quickly so that worsening health does not impact on the risk of homelessness</p>	<p>Reducing health inequalities work becoming more embedded.</p> <p>Recruitment to specialist worker posts to be undertaken by SWYFT.</p> <p>Medical facilities at new supported accommodation should support better access to health care</p> <p>Still face barriers around hospital discharge - need to improve links with colleagues in Health.</p> <p>Focus on homelessness by Public Health may provide opportunities.</p> <p>May be some learning from the Bradford Respite and Integrated Care and Support Service (BRICSS) scheme.</p>

Outcome 3**Opportunities to make the best use of existing accommodation across all tenures, including the private rented sector, are maximised and clear pathways are agreed with partners**

Key Task		Activity	Lead / Resource	Target	Progress (as at September 2015)
3.1	Clear pathways in place which support the most vulnerable people, in line with their housing need and current provision M	Review and adapt how the Temporary Accommodation service is delivered. Minimise use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation for emergency use only. Sharper focus on supporting more timely throughput of Temporary Accommodation customers to more appropriate housing	HSS	Use of temporary accommodation and length of stays is reduced	TA service revised to enable staff to visit customers within their temporary homes to facilitate more effective move on. Greater focus on more effective 'turn around' of properties between customers while ensuring a consistent lettable standard. Greater availability of units to have positive impact on use of B&B Supported Accommodation Pathway Protocol is generally working well to move people through supported accommodation Support provider providing ongoing advocacy and assistance between agencies and service users

3.2	Promote good quality, suitable and affordable private rented properties and incentivise private landlords working with	Develop private landlord relationships by consolidating proactive rental service such as: Bond Guarantee Scheme, Property Improvement Plans, Inventories, Accreditation Scheme and support to bring empty homes back into use	HSS - Linking with possible Local Lettings Agency	More people are accessing a wider range of appropriate private rented accommodation	Housing Solutions' Private Lettings Service establishing proactive links with private landlords and partners. Facilitating and sustaining
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Outcome 3

Opportunities to make the best use of existing accommodation across all tenures, including the private rented sector, are maximised and clear pathways are agreed with partners

	Key Task	Activity	Lead / Resource	Target	Progress (as at September 2015)
	Kirklees Council S/M	<p>Develop an offer of ongoing support and advice to landlords and tenants to facilitate improved access to the private rented sector</p> <p>Develop a consolidated private landlord database and promote positive case studies. Continue to facilitate partnership working between private landlords and partner organisations i.e. Registered Providers</p>	<p>model (possible RP partners)</p> <p>HSS , Fusion</p> <p>HSS, PL'S (Forum, Working parties). REG private sector lettings</p> <p>HSS, Fusion</p>		<p>private rented tenancies.</p> <p>Established more effective communication channels ie Facebook page, e-Newsletter and greater web presence.</p> <p>HSS have facilitated private tenancies into empty properties brought back into use through partnership arrangements.</p>
3.3	Ensure available properties are best matched to the needs of the household M	Fully implement the Council's revised Housing Allocations Policy and Local Lettings Framework and operate a review process Complete	HSS , KNH	People applying to the Council's Housing Register are prioritised by housing need in accordance with fair, transparent systems	Housing Allocations Policy has been revised and is operational. Local Lettings Framework is operational

Outcome 3

Opportunities to make the best use of existing accommodation across all tenures, including the private rented sector, are maximised and clear pathways are agreed with partners

	Key Task	Activity	Lead / Resource	Target	Progress (as at September 2015)
		<p>Promote and extend the use of the Lets Help You website eg KHF members have this link from their own website</p> <p>Review the use of KNH specialist needs accommodation to ensure making the best use of stock including adapted properties</p>	<p>KHF</p> <p>KNH / Commissioning</p>		<p>Lets Help You is actively promoted</p> <p>Review of KNH Retirement Living Schemes nearing completion</p> <p>Ongoing work to match accommodation to the needs of people with ill health/long term conditions</p>
3.4	<p>Improve the efficiency of allocating properties by addressing issues such as waiting for references</p> <p>S/M</p>	<p>Review current arrangements to identify where the barriers exist and develop an action plan to address (see Outcome 2, key task 8)</p>	<p>Housing Partnership (RP's), SH providers</p>	<p>People are able to access settled housing more quickly</p>	<p>Working with partners to remove barriers to accessing accommodation</p> <p>Some providers reviewing their lettings policy.</p>
3.5	<p>Bring Empty Properties back into use through partner agencies</p> <p>M</p>	<p>Develop partnership schemes which facilitate property improvements, PRS allocations and property management</p>	<p>HSS – APR&C RP'S Providers, EHC – NEHL Comm Grps ie Fresh Horizons, Fusion</p>	<p>The number of empty homes in the district are minimised</p>	<p>16 units from former commercial and empty domestic properties brought back through Fresh Horizons and Connect and re-let through Private Lettings Service, Fusion 'Fair Chance' and Fresh Horizons.</p>

Outcome 3**Opportunities to make the best use of existing accommodation across all tenures, including the private rented sector, are maximised and clear pathways are agreed with partners**

	Key Task	Activity	Lead / Resource	Target	Progress (as at September 2015)
					Horton in partnership with Unity Housing brought back use of an empty scheme. Trinity Court, Fartown for over 55's with support needs.
3.6	Support and enable/facilitate the development of more affordable and supported housing M/L	Identify need, demand and gaps and work with partners to access funding opportunities Ensure delivery of new homes through effective project management	C & C REF REF	An increased number of affordable homes are available	2015 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) now produced and will support the development and adoption of the Council's Local Plan, scheduled for adoption late 2017. Clear political focus on housing delivery in Kirklees. Challenges arising from government's focus on home ownership rather than social rented.

LEAD/ RESOURCE KEY:

- HSS = Housing Solutions Service
- YPST = Young People and Support Team
- D&A = Duty and Assessment
- KHF = Kirklees Homelessness Forum
- KISHG = Kirklees Inclusive Supported Housing Group
- C & E = Customer and Exchequer Service
- RP = Registered Providers
- WC = Whitehouse Centre
- PL = Private Landlords
- SH = Supported Housing
- AHT = Accessible Homes Team
- KAP = Kirklees Advice Partnership
- C & C = Commissioning and Contractors
- SA = Support Agencies
- KFIG = Kirklees Financial Inclusion Group
- S & C = Strategy and Commissioning
- I & R = Investment and Regeneration
- SAP = Supported Accommodation Providers
- CAB = Citizens Advice Bureau
- PRS = Private Rented Sector
- APR&C = Access to Private Rented and Compliance team
- REF = Regeneration, Environment and Funding
- EHC = Empty Homes Charity
- NEHL = National Empty Homes Loan

Appendix I – Key legislative and policy changes

No Second Night Out Nationwide – 6 July 2011

The Localism Act 2011 – 15 November 2011

Laying The Foundation: A Housing Strategy for England – November 2011

Welfare Reform Act 2012 – 8 March 2012

Allocations Code of Guidance – 29 June 2012

Making Every Contact Count - 16 August 2012

The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012
– 24 August 2012

Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012 – 9 November 2012

The Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preferences for Former Armed Forces Personnel) (England)
Regulations 2012 – 30 November 2012

Appendix II – Consultation

A number of consultation events and activities have help inform the development of this strategy and agree priorities and outcomes. Consultation has taken place during the course of 2013 with the following groups and individuals;

- Stakeholder event with Kirklees Homelessness Forum and Kirklees Supported Housing Group, March 2013
- Focus group of service users (Disc event) – August 2013
- Consultation with Kirklees Council colleagues , September – October 2013
- Consultation with Cabinet portfolio holders, November 2013

Footnotes

ⁱ Kirklees Homelessness Forum and the Kirklees Supported Housing Group

ⁱⁱ DCLG's 10 Local Challenges to preventing Homelessness

ⁱⁱⁱ Making Every Contact Count – a joint approach to preventing homelessness, DCLG 16 August 2012

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-every-contact-count-a-joint-approach-to-preventing-homelessness>

^{iv} The Guardian, 18 October 2013

^v <http://www.veterans-uk.info/pdfs/vets-programme/vetstrategy1.pdf>

^{vi} KNH is the Council's ALMO (Arms Length Management Organisation) and has responsibility for the day to day management of council owned housing stock

^{vii} Michael Mandelstam, 2011

^{viii} CRI is a social care and health charity working with individuals, families and communities across England and Wales that are affected by drugs, alcohol, crime, homelessness, domestic abuse and antisocial behaviour

^{ix} Choose n Move is the Council's choice based lettings (CBL) system

^x Kirklees Preventing Homelessness Research, 2013 – Fusion Housing

^{xi} www.garesearch.co.uk