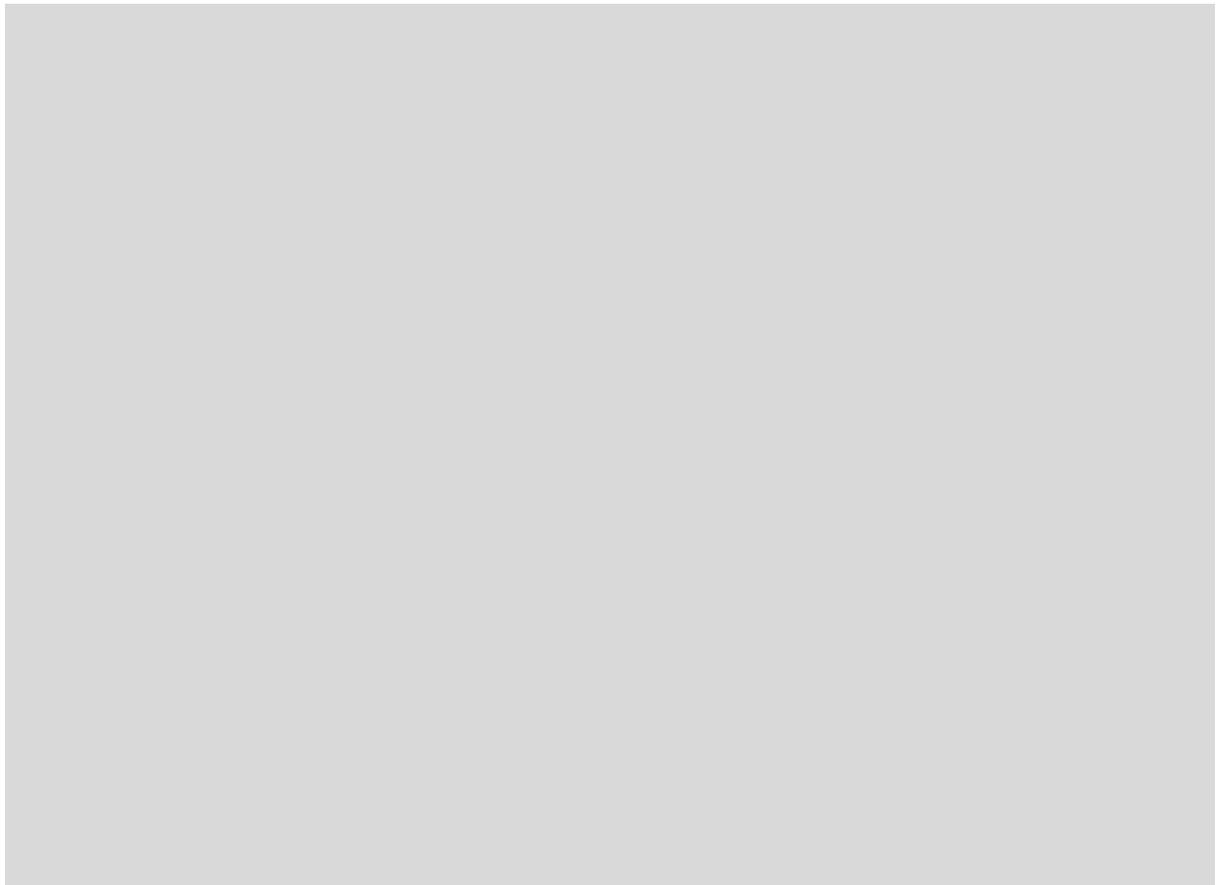


North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 – 2021 Year Two review



Date: May 2021

Version: Two

Author: Fiona Robson



North Tyneside Council

Contents

1. Introduction

2. Homelessness review 2020 - 2021

- Achievements
- Current picture

3. Next steps

1. Introduction

North Tyneside's Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy covers a two-year period of 2019 -2021. The Year One review was published in April 2021, and this review covers the period from 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021.

The strategy is monitored by the North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Partnership. The partnership is made up of a range of internal and external officers and organisations whose work contributes to the preventing homelessness agenda; and is chaired by someone independent of the local authority.

The delivery plan that supports the strategy priorities is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that the objectives complement existing work and emerging legislative and working changes are captured.

For 2020 – 2021, no homelessness partnership meetings took place to monitor the delivery plan. Due to the challenges that Covid-19 brought, resources had to be focused on reconfiguring services to be able to do the day job and keep households safe during the pandemic and national and local lockdowns.

2. Homelessness Review 2020 – 2021

2.1 Achievements

- Funding secured through the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Rough Sleeping Initiative 3 round for the continuation of the Homeless Support Officer to work with current and former rough sleepers, and those at risk of rough sleeping, and provide support once in a tenancy for an agreed period.
- Continuation of funding for the Homeless Response Service delivered through Changing Lives.
- Funding secured through the MHCLG Rough Sleeping Initiative 3 round for the creation of a mental health post to support the Housing Advice and Temporary Accommodation Teams.
- Personalisation Fund created through the MHCLG Rough Sleeping Initiative 3 round.
- Awarded funding through the MHCLG Next Steps Accommodation Programme to increase the number of dispersed properties and bed and breakfast placements in response to Everyone In.
- MHCLG Cold Weather Fund money received that enabled people off the streets and into accommodation, travel costs to reconnect to their home area if safe to do so and basic provisions.
- A MHCLG financial award to support the additional bed and breakfast placements made through Everyone In.
- Continuation of the Single Person Support Officer post. This role works with those individuals who previously would not have been helped to source accommodation and provides support for an agreed period once in their own home.
- Proactive engagement with bed and breakfast and hotel establishments to increase the number of businesses who will accept homeless households.
- Transfer of the homelessness out of hours service to an in-house contact centre.
- The introduction of a 0800 Freephone number for those with limited finances and at risk of homelessness to contact the local authority on.

- Commissioned providers continuing to deliver supported housing and support services in spite of the challenges encountered through Covid-19.

2.2 Current picture

2.2.1 The Housing Options Team (homelessness)

The Housing Options Team (homelessness) is the first point of contact for any household in need of free, independent advice regarding their current housing situation.

In response to Covid-19 and government guidelines, the team adapted their working practice to ensure everyone still received information and advice in a timely manner. The triage system still operated, with limited face to face interviews, and most interviews and assessments taking place through a telephone call.

2.2.2 Homelessness outcomes

The table below identifies at which stage of their homeless application a household had their homelessness resolved.

Year	Triage	Prevention	Relief	Decision cases	Final duty
2019 - 2020	35	360	268	67	50
2020 - 2021	1023	322	293	72	76

The dramatic increase in the number of households having their homeless application resolved at the triage stage can be attributed to Covid-19. The pandemic was a major factor in more households finding themselves in situations they did not expect to ever be in. This includes people being furloughed, people losing their jobs, loss of or reduced income, falling into rent arrears and receiving notice on their home.

2.2.3 Reason for homelessness

There are many reasons why someone may present as homeless or in need of housing advice. The top five reasons are:

Year	End of assured shorthold tenancy	Domestic abuse	Family no longer able to accommodate	Relationship breakdown (non-violent)	End of social rented tenancy
2019 – 2020	184	72	135	86	86
2020 - 2021	74	79	215	103	14

In line with the national trend for presentations, termination of an assured shorthold tenancy has been the number one reason for several years. The national ban on evictions has seen this figure fall but is still one of the top reasons for homelessness within the borough.

Family no longer able to accommodate has increased quite steeply. The pandemic and lockdowns are contributing factors to relationship and family breakdowns, as families struggled to get on within their home environment.

2.2.4 Age of main applicant in final duty cases

Any 16 or 17-year-old who presents to the local authority as homeless or at risk of homelessness is dealt with through Children’s Services. Housing does not maintain data on this age group.

Year	18 -19	20 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 - 59	60+
2019 - 2020	0	13	19	15	2	1
2020 – 2021	2	22	24	19	7	2

2.2.5 Temporary accommodation

In response to the pandemic, the government launched the Everyone In initiative in March 2020 to ensure that no-one was left on the streets or at risk of being street homeless. This resulted in a huge increase in household presentations to the local authority and unprecedented demand for emergency and temporary accommodation.

The local authority increased its provision of dispersed homes to 34, but this was insufficient to respond to the presentations. The Temporary Accommodation Team undertook some excellent engagement work with bed and breakfast and hotel establishments to increase the number of businesses willing to accept, what can be a very challenging client group. Properties were sourced both in North Tyneside and neighbouring local authority areas. Any household placed outside of North Tyneside was moved back in borough as soon as it was possible and safe to do.

82 individuals were accommodated as part of the Everyone Initiative from 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021. 73 presented on one occasion, with six presenting twice for accommodation, two presenting three times and one presenting for accommodation on four occasions.

All households accommodated receive support from the Temporary Accommodation Team for the duration of their stay.

2.2.6 Rough sleeping

Changing Lives continued to deliver their homeless response service and be the first point of contact for responding to and verifying rough sleeping notifications.

Bi – monthly rough sleeping estimates also took place, and the annual rough sleeping return for 2020 included three rough sleepers. This is lower than the previous years of eight.

The Homeless Support Officer and Single Person Support Officer continued their work to source suitable accommodation for current and former rough sleepers, those at risk of rough sleeping, and those individuals who previously did not receive any help or guidance from the local authority. Once suitably housed, the officers provide support for up to six months to minimise the risk of tenancy failure.

The Homeless Support Officer secured accommodation for 26 individuals, with 18 receiving ongoing tenancy support. The Single Person Support Officer sourced accommodation for 29 individuals, with eight receiving ongoing tenancy support.

2.2.7 Severe Weather Emergency Protocol

For 2020 – 21 winter, Covid-19 infection controls impacted on the use of communal spaces being used to accommodate rough sleepers. Communal spaces were considered unsafe, and not permitted, therefore the sit up service provided at a resource hall through Whitley Bay Street Pastors and their volunteers was not available to us.

Single room occupancy provision had to be sourced, i.e. bed and breakfast or a hostel. Establishments used by the local authority were provided with wellness packs for the individuals being accommodated. These included soap, sanitiser, wipes, and basic food provision. A mobile phone was also available on the premises to enable officers to contact those being accommodated.

The Protocol was activated on 30 occasions. Due to the extreme cold weather, the protocol period continued into April and May.

3. Next steps

North Tyneside is part of a sub-regional bid to the MHCLG Rough Sleeping Initiative 4 round. The ask is to continue existing services that are contributing to reducing rough sleeping in the borough and for the creation of some additional bed spaces to assist someone immediately off the street or prevent a return to the streets.

A bid has also been submitted to the MHCLG Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme. If successful, this will enable a small number of homes to be delivered with intensive support for those individuals that it is becoming increasingly difficult to house in existing services.

The local authority has also received awards through MHCLG Protect Plus and Cold Weather Funds to contribute to the cost of placements in temporary accommodation, securing move on accommodation, reconnecting individuals to their home area if safe to do so, and basic provisions.

Covid-19 meant the commissioning of supported housing and support services had to be delayed 12 months. This will now take place during 2021.

Following a poor response to the bed and breakfast procurement exercise in 2020, this will be refreshed and launched again. The aim of this is to ensure any placements made into bed and breakfast or hotel establishments are on our framework and are safe and suitable to place into.

Difficulties in being able to claim housing benefit for out of borough emergency accommodation placements has been a longstanding issue. Meetings have now taken place to explore this in more detail, and a pilot is currently operating to establish its effectiveness, with a view to it becoming permanent.

A review of service areas that respond to homelessness and the provision of temporary accommodation to ensure resources can meet customer need and the demands placed on the services.

The North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Partnership will be re-established, and membership reviewed to ensure it is reflective of service and client needs.

Engagement will take place with our partners who contribute to the preventing homelessness and reducing rough sleeping agenda to help inform the development of the next homelessness strategy post 2021.