Forward by Cabinet Member for Housing & Rural Issues:

Welcome to Durham County Councils Homelessness Strategy for 2013-18. This is the second Homelessness Strategy for the authority since Local Government Reorganisation in April 2009.

As Cabinet Member for Housing and Rural Issues, I recognise how important it is for residents to be able to access good quality housing and housing related services. Not only is housing important for the health and wellbeing of individuals and families, but it is key to building and maintaining strong communities and to the overall economic prosperity of the County.

I am proud of the progress made by the authority, alongside our many partners, to prevent homelessness and respond to the causes of housing need across the County. However, there is more to do in the challenging times ahead.

Working in partnership is essential to enable us all to meet the needs of our residents. To provide services to prevent our residents from experiencing the misery of homelessness and to enable individuals and families to fulfil their potential and to ensure our communities thrive. The Homelessness Strategy provides the framework demonstrating our continued commitment to partnership working to prevent homelessness for the residents of County Durham.

I hope you find this strategy informative and look forward to working with you all over the coming years as we continue to provide excellent services to those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness across the County.

Cllr Eddie Tomlinson:
Cabinet Member for Housing and Rural Issues:
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Appendix 1: County Durham Youth Homelessness Charter
Section 1 Introduction:

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 & 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. Homelessness can happen to anyone at any time so it is important that services are available to all in housing need, in addition to those at greatest risk due to social or economic influences.

Section 1 of the Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities to formulate a homelessness strategy by carrying out a homelessness review for the area. Section 2 of the Homelessness Act 2002 prescribes the considerations that local authorities should undertake in conducting a review of homelessness and the purpose of the review in terms of informing a future preventing homelessness strategy.

The Homelessness Act 2002 determines that local authorities must formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of that review – the life of the strategy should be no more than five years, and when the strategy expires or is due for expiry, the authority must publish a new homelessness strategy.

Homelessness strategies must include plans for:

- the prevention of homelessness;
- ensuring there is sufficient accommodation available for people who are, or who may become homeless;
- Ensuring there is satisfactory support for people who are, or who may become homeless, or who need support to prevent them from becoming homeless again.
- For a homelessness strategy to be an effective and relevant document, housing authorities need to ensure that it is developed in partnership with all stakeholders and service users.
Benefits of Preventing Homelessness Strategies

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) continues to recognise the importance of preventing homelessness and set out 10 “Local Authority Challenges” in the recently published “Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness” report. The Government’s ‘Gold Standard’, based around these 10 challenges, sets the bar for local homelessness services. A sector led peer review scheme underpinned by support and training, is designed to help local authorities deliver more efficient and cost effective homelessness prevention services.

Developing effective local strategies in partnership, to prevent & tackle homelessness proactively is a positive step towards achieving the “Gold Standard” represented by the 10 challenges. The challenges emphasise the importance of robust local preventing homelessness strategies, and a comprehensive housing options offer to people who are homeless or at risk of homeless. One of the challenges specifically relates to effective local homelessness strategies to meet emerging need.

The ten local challenges the government has posed to the sector are to:

1. Adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services.
2. Actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs.
3. Offer a Housing Options prevention service, including written advice, to all clients.
4. Adopt a No Second Night Out model or an effective local alternative.
5. Have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support.
6. Develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both clients and landlords.
7. Actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme.
8. Have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs.
9 Not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation.

10 Not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and then for no longer than 6 weeks.

The Council will seek to secure Gold Standard over the life time of this strategy. To ensure services and partnerships develop to reflect best practice the strategy action plan will be aligned to incorporate actions identified to assist in this goal. Cross cutting actions have also been included where required.

**Homelessness Strategy Objectives:**

Within this context, this homelessness strategy has six objectives which will be delivered through a partnership approach

1 To prevent homelessness for all in housing need across County Durham.

2 To ensure that services work in partnership to meet the holistic needs of all clients, including those with complex needs and / or those at risk of rough sleeping.

3 To ensure that sufficient, appropriate and affordable accommodation is available for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

4 To provide housing advice and housing options to those in housing need in County Durham.

5 To tackle the wider social and economic causes of homelessness by supporting people to access health, employment, training and associated services.

6 To achieve Gold Standard in meeting the 10 local authority challenge (*Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness*)
Section 2 Local Policy and Partnership Framework

Altogether Better Durham – Altogether Wealthier

The County Durham Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) articulates the vision for County Durham which reflects the views and aspirations of the community and opportunities for improvement. This is focused around an ‘Altogether Better Durham’. This vision helps to provide a framework which guides all of our detailed plans and programmes which will turn our vision into a reality and comprises five priority themes.

The County Durham Regeneration Statement underpins the Altogether Wealthier strand of the SCS, focusing on shaping a County Durham where people want to live, work, invest and visit whilst enabling our residents and businesses to achieve their potential. The County Durham Regeneration Statement 2012-22 sets out the long term aims and objectives for Altogether Wealthier which are to create:
The Regeneration statement not only underpins the Altogether Wealthier theme of the SCS, it also frames the strategic policy and delivery framework for Durham County Council’s Regeneration and Economic Development (RED) Service Grouping. The Housing Solutions Service sits within the RED service grouping with the County Durham Housing Strategy and Homelessness Strategy forming integral elements of this strategic policy framework.

In an overarching approach of ensuring that everyone has the opportunity of live in a decent home that they can afford, in a community where they want to live, the County Durham housing strategy 2010-15 concentrates on three key objectives: Housing Markets, Housing Standards and Housing People.

‘Altogether Better Housing People’ picks up the non-‘bricks & mortar’ elements of housing and concentrates on issues such as the provision of housing and housing-related support services to older people, vulnerable adults, gypsies & travellers,
homelessness & housing options, care & support provision, and the provision of Housing services within the social rented sector, particularly the Council's Internal and Arm’s Length housing Management Organisations.

An additional influence for the Homelessness Strategy is the County Durham Tenancy Strategy which provides the framework the individual Registered Provider tenancy policies and practices and sets the direction for letting affordable housing stock to meet local housing needs and improve the overall operation of the County Durham housing market. The Localism Act requires local authorities to produce a Tenancy Strategy that sits alongside and complements a local authority’s Housing Strategy, Homelessness Strategy and Allocations Policy.

The County Durham Homelessness Action Partnership is the main strategic group with responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the Homelessness Strategy and providing the challenge for Durham County Council and other partners to respond effectively to emerging trends. The Homelessness Action Partnership is one of seven working groups which report directly to the Housing Forum, which in turn reports directly to the County Durham Economic Partnership Board. This Homelessness Strategy is the result of the collaborative approach of the Homeless Action Partnership.

The following tables demonstrate the strategic structure in which the HAP operates.
Section 3 County Durham

County Durham lies at the heart of the North East, connecting Tees Valley with Tyne & wear and Northumberland. With a population of 513,200 across a total area of 862 square miles and 12 major centres of population, County Durham has a diverse spatial geography and rich economic history arising from a strong industrial heritage.

The population of the North East on census day was 2.6 million, an increase of 2.2 per cent from 2001 when it was 2.5 million. The 2011 Census estimate for the county is 513,200 which is an increase of 19,400 since 2001 or 3.9%. and higher than the 2010 population estimates. The 2011 census population estimate for households in the county is 223,800, which is a rise of 7.9% since 2001 (207,400 households).

The following table details the population age structure for the County compared to England and Wales.

Age Pyramid – Population age structure Census 2011: County Durham compared to England & Wales

Homelessness is caused by a complex interplay between a person’s individual circumstances and adverse structural factors outside their direct control. Structural causes of homelessness are social and economic in nature, and are often outside the control of the individual or family concerned and can include unemployment, poverty, the state of the housing market and changes to government policy. The economic context is important in establishing the needs of people across a wide geographical area such as County Durham and identifying the structural problems which may be contributing to homelessness. To provide an overview of the current
economic environment and challenges facing the County, we provide a snapshot of current relevant data. This context is an important component in developing a Homelessness Strategy that is responsive, evolving and will respond to changing demands and trends over the coming years.

**Index of Deprivation 2010**

- A higher percentage of the population living in the county live in the top 10% and top 30% most deprived areas nationally, (11.4% and 45.4% respectively), when compared with the England (10% and 30% respectively), average.

- There are higher levels of deprivation in the Employment, Health and Education domains when compared to England, in the top 10% most deprived areas.

- In the top 30% most deprived areas there are higher percentages of the county’s population suffering deprivation in all the domains except for the Housing, Crime and the Environment domains.

**Economy**

- County Durham currently has a low value-added economy, (around 61% if the national average). The types of jobs located in the County are generally not generating high levels of business productivity compared to the rest of the North East and the UK.

- Whilst business survival rates in County Durham are on a par with, and in some years better than, those for the North East and England, the number of registrations during 2011 at 30.7 per 10,000 resident adult population is below the North East at 33.1, and well below England at 54.0.

- Overall number of jobs in the County have increased from 162,836 in 2009 and 161,830 in 2010 to 163,412 in 2011. Biggest losses have been in Public administration & defence whilst all other sectors have seen both increases and decreases over the last couple of years.

**Labour Market**

- Areas that share the County’s distribution of GVA (Gross value added) by industrial sector also possess lower employment rates. Unemployment and specifically youth unemployment has risen to its highest level in a generation.

- Prior to the recession, County Durham’s employment rate had been rising and was converging with the national average at just under 73%. Over the last few
years the County’s employment rate has fallen, currently at 65.8% in March 2013, a small increase to the rolling annual average in the previous quarter but a 1.2% decrease for the corresponding period in 2012.

- Between April 2012 and March 2013 the employment rate in County Durham was 65.8% compared to 66.5% in the North East and 70.9% nationally. In the corresponding period in the previous year the employment rate in County Durham was 66.6% compared to 65.2% in the North East and 70.2% nationally. Regionally and nationally the employment rate has increased but in County Durham it has decreased in 2012/13 from a stronger than the regional position in 2011/12.

**Unemployment**

- In March 2012 unemployment in County Durham rose to 23,800 or 9.5% of the economically active population compared to 10.9% in the North East and 8.1% nationally. Of 15,894 Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants in County Durham in March 2012 (4.8% of the working age population), 5,560 were aged 18-24 representing 11.1% of that age group. By March 2013, the rate of increase in unemployment had stabilised at 9.2% or 22,700 residents compared to 10% in the North East and 7.8% nationally. Of 15,634 JSA claimants in County Durham in March 2013 (4.7% of the working age population), 4,955 were aged 18-24 representing 9.9% of that age group.

- The proportion of long-term JSA claimants remains high with nearly 1/3 of JSA claimants claiming for more than 12 months. In March 2013 5,055 JSA claimants (1.5% of the working age population) were claiming for more than 12 months compared to 2,855 in March 2012 (0.9% of the working age population) and 520 in March 2008 (0.2% of the working age population).

**Average Earnings**

- The average weekly earnings for County Durham residents in 2012, was £458. This is slightly higher than the regional average for the North East which stands at £455. The national average is higher at £508.

- The average weekly earnings have continued to rise annually, with 2012 showing the highest annual increase in the last 4 years, with a 4.3% increase in weekly earnings.

- County Durham’s median Household income in 2012 is £24,050 compared to £24,217 regionally and £28,318 in the uk. County Durham is at 99.3 % of the regional average and 84% of the national average.
• Gross Disposable Household Income in County Durham in 2011 is currently £13,522 compared to £13,560 regionally and £16,034 in the UK. County Durham is at 99.7% of the regional average an 84.3% of the UK average

Housing Market

• Gross mortgage lending in March 2013 reached £11.6bn, according to the Council of Mortgage Lenders (CML). The estimated total for 2012 is £143bn, up from £141bn in 2011. CML forecasts gross mortgage lending will reach £156bn in 2013. Improvements in the cost and availability of mortgage credit and the Government’s Help to Buy scheme are underpinning a recovery in the housing market. In recent months the market has seen the strongest performance for mortgage lending since 2008.

• The average price of a house in County Durham fell to £81,822 in March 2013. In the North East prices also fell to £96,515 and nationally (England and Wales) there was a marginal increase to £160,556. There have been monthly variations in the number of houses sold in County Durham, the North-East and nationally but overall in 2012/13 there was a reduction in sales volumes compared to 2011/12. Compared to 2008, both sales volumes and prices have decreased by around 1/3 in County Durham and the North East.

• There were 1210 new housing completions (1129 net) in 2012/13 compared to 851 (842 net) the previous year

Summary

This snapshot pulls out some key messages about County Durham’s economic conditions which impact on homelessness.

• The employment rate has fallen and is below the regional and national average.

• The unemployment rate has been falling in recent months but long term unemployment has increased.

• GVA in 2011 has increased but there is still a gap between County Durham and the regional and national average.

• The number of jobs in the County has remained stable in recent years with fluctuations in individual sectors.

• Average earnings are above the regional average.
• House prices on average are below the regional average.

• Housing completions have increased and mortgage lending nationally is also increasing.
Section 4 National & Local Context:

Since the general election in May 2010, the government has implemented a programme of change and reform. The national reform agenda has meant local homelessness services needed to adapt quickly to deliver services more efficiently, and to mitigate potential homelessness impacts arising from welfare reforms such as those affecting the national Housing Benefit scheme in England, and the introduction of Universal Credit from October 2013.

The list of developments in national policy contained in the box below pick out some of the key changes that have had - and will have - a direct impact on the way in which local housing authorities deliver allocations, lettings and homelessness services to their communities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency budget - 22 June 2010</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Spending Review - 20 October 2010</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Localism Bill - 13 December 2010</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordable Homes Framework – 15 Feb 2011</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>New Homes Bonus scheme design - 17 Feb 2011</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Welfare Reform Bill - 17 Feb 2011</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget - 23 Mar 2011</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Second Night Out in London – 1 Apr 2011</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Second Night Out Nationwide – 6 Jul 2011</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Localism Act 2011 – 15 Nov 2011</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocation of accommodation: Guidance for local housing authorities in England – Consultation - 5 Jan 2012</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget – 21 Mar 2012</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 – 1 May 2012</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Every Contact Count – 16 Aug 2012</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplementary guidance on the homelessness changes in the Localism Act 2011 and on the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012 – 8 Nov 2012</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012 - 9 Nov 2012</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Governments Housing Strategy


These are:
• Creation of new flexible tenancies to encourage the efficient use of social housing.

• Introduction of Home Swap Direct to enable social housing tenants to identify properties they could exchange to anywhere in the Country.

• Tackling rough sleeping through initiatives such as ‘No Second Night Out’ which targets support to people new to rough sleeping.

• Establishment of a new multi-agency team to work around troubled families.

• Introduction of the Social Sector Size Criteria to reduce under-occupation and create movement in the social rented sector.

• Armed Forces service personnel with urgent housing need to receive additional priority within the Allocation Schemes of Local Authorities.

• Providing support to home owners through independent debt advice, free legal advice at possession hearings and access to information and advice.

• Encouraging social housing providers to tackle tenancy fraud in their stock as a way to release much needed stock for families who need it.

Many of the reforms highlighted in the Government’s Strategy will pose key challenges for the Local Authority in the delivery of this Homelessness Strategy.
Section 5 Welfare Reform

Welfare Reform:

Whilst the Coalition’s reform agenda is wide ranging, by far the area with the most impact on people in housing need is Welfare Reform. It is therefore important that in developing this strategy, we review and try to understand the possible economic impact across County Durham and how reform will affect households. Whilst Welfare Reform is predicted to bring significant financial savings to the Exchequer (over £18 billion), the wider impact of reform is the intended behavioural change, seeking to provide incentives into work through structural changes to means tested benefits. As such, predicting how people will respond is therefore difficult but never the less, an understanding of the scale of the challenges across County Durham is important.

Overview of Welfare Reform Changes:

The Government’s agenda for Welfare Reform

- The introduction of Universal Credit to provide a single streamlined benefit.
- A stronger approach to reducing fraud and error with tougher penalties.
- A new claimant commitment showing clearly what is expected of claimants.
- Reforms to Disability Living Allowance, through the introduction of the Personal Independence Payment.
- Creating a fairer approach to Housing Benefit to bring stability to the market.
- Driving out abuse of the Social Fund system by giving greater power to local authorities.
- Reforming Employment and Support Allowance to make the benefit fairer and to ensure that help goes to those with the greatest need.
- Changes to underpin a new system of child support.

The table below describes the number of people claiming benefits in County Durham with the cost associated for each. (2012/13)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit affected by Welfare Reform</th>
<th>People affected</th>
<th>Annual total £ (m)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income based Jobseekers Allowance (JSAib)</td>
<td>10,200</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income related Employment Supports Allowance (ESAi)</td>
<td>3,660</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income Support (IS)</td>
<td>17,020</td>
<td>66.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax Credits (TC)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(People affected expressed by family count)</td>
<td>59,300</td>
<td>246.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Benefit (HB)</td>
<td>47,110</td>
<td>205.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Living Allowance (DLA)</td>
<td>23,440</td>
<td>85.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incapacity Benefit (IB) (Includes Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA))</td>
<td>24,640</td>
<td>94.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council Tax Benefit (CTB)</td>
<td>63,000</td>
<td>63.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Living Allowance (DLA) aged under 16 &amp; 65+</td>
<td>16,880</td>
<td>67.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carers Allowance (CA) all ages</td>
<td>6,480</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>271,730</strong></td>
<td><strong>809.1</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Monetary value per day* 2.4

In addition to reform of personal benefits, significant changes have already been made or are planned in relation to benefits to assist with housing costs.

**The reform of housing benefit covers five key changes:-**

- As from October 2013 payments for housing benefit will be made directly to the tenant in both the social and private rented sectors;

- In April 2013 a size criteria will be introduced for payment of housing benefit in the social sector which means that those tenants under occupying will have their benefit reduced;

- A number of changes to payment of housing benefit (Local Housing Allowance) in the private rented sector will be introduced resulting in reductions for a number of client groups in particular single people under 35;

- Charges for non-dependants living in a property will increase and the amount of housing benefit therefore will be reduced;
The integration of housing benefit into Universal Credit.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is continuing to add detail to the operational implementation of its initial policy reforms and the more recent cap on the future uprating of benefits, as announced in the Chancellor’s Autumn Statement. The Council will continue to monitor policy implementation and learning from pathfinder areas to limit the impact on households.

**Challenges for County Durham:**

The implications of welfare reform for housing are wide reaching and will impact hard on lower income households. Taken together with the changes to personal benefits, over the short term (next 12 – 24 months), there is a significant risk that households affected will be at risk of homelessness due to their inability to afford their housing costs whilst trying to manage reductions in household income alongside managing other debts.

The analysis suggests that £809.1m is spent annually in County Durham on benefits, that in turn equates to approximately payments of over £2m a day (£2.4m), with a consequential risk of loss to the local economy (money lost to the local economy) through direct expenditure and the local multiplier effect.

Welfare Reform will result in significant challenges for all households across the County. This will include both in and out of work households as reductions in benefit entitlement reduces households ability to afford their housing costs at a time of increasing costs in utility bills, food costs and the rise in access to expensive forms of credit via pay day lenders as families struggle to make ends meet.

**For people in receipt of Housing Benefit**

The integration of Housing Benefit (HB) into Universal Credit (UC) and the end of direct payments to social housing providers may result in higher arrears and increased rent collection costs for housing providers. Proposed caps to HB could lead to increased demand for smaller, cheaper properties. Changes to Housing Benefit will see an average claimant in County Durham potentially face:

- Tighter restrictions on help with private rent;
- A 25% increase in the ‘non-dependent contribution’;
- Restrictions for single under 25 year-olds extended to under 35 year-olds.
- HB limits to family size will be extended to social housing from April 2013.
What are the implications?

The impact of changes to Housing Benefit entitlements will affect a number of residents resulting in financial hardship and inability to afford rent or mortgage payments therefore placing additional pressure on the Council’s Housing Solutions Service.

The figures in brackets indicate the potential number of people affected in County Durham.

Welfare reform – housing benefit proposals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Private rented sector</th>
<th>Both sectors</th>
<th>Social sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 2011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Housing Allowance capped (11,200)</td>
<td>Charges for non dependent increase of 27% (5,500)</td>
<td>April 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People affected currently receiving transitional protection</td>
<td></td>
<td>Housing benefit for social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Housing tenant will be calculated according to the size of the property the household is assessed as requiring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2012</td>
<td>October 2013</td>
<td>April 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension to shared room rate from under 25 to under 35’s (790)</td>
<td>Direct payments</td>
<td>Housing benefit claimants of working age (up to 61) living in accommodation considered to be too large will need to make up any shortfall (8392)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact could be up to £40 per week reduction in benefit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Housing Allowance up rated on the basis of Consumer Price Index rather than local rent levels</td>
<td>2013 – 2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction of universal credit (47,000 in receipt of HB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Housing Benefit & Size Criteria in Social Rented:

The introduction of the “size criteria” as part of Welfare Reform seeks to put “under-occupying” social housing tenants on an equal footing with those in the private sector in receipt of Local Housing Allowance. The DWP estimates that the change will result in reducing HB payments by £490m in HB payments. These reductions will only be achieved if under-occupiers remain in their current property. If they move to smaller accommodation they will claim HB/Local Housing Allowance (LHA) at the lower rate, and the vacated properties will be let to households entitled to claim the full rate.
However, where households move to accommodation in the private rented sector, the eligible LHA rate may be higher than the rent in the social rented sector thus adding to and not reducing the cost to the tax payer.

Tenants affected by benefit reductions in the social sector will face several choices:

- Remain in their current accommodation and make up the shortfall from income or other savings which is unlikely.

- Remain in their current accommodation but are unable to pay, this will place pressure on existing advice services, increase financial hardship, result in an increase in arrears etc.

- Move to a smaller dwelling, although this may not be an option due to limited supply of one bedroom accommodation.

- Move to the private rented sector with higher rents but also higher LHA entitlement.

The number of households affected in County Durham by the proposals for social housing is approximately 7,500 and at an average of £13 per week additional amount to pay, this will result in £97,500 per week shortfall to the local economy.

**Under Occupation:** Looking at how realistic it is for tenants to move to more affordable housing, the table below shows a breakdown of those identified as under occupying against property size:
This identifies that up to 5,387 tenants would require a one bedroomed property if they wanted to move to avoid the under occupancy charge.

To date, we know that 369 tenants have already moved to smaller accommodation in 2012/13. A further 174 tenants have expressed a desire to move since they were made aware of the government policy change.

The table below shows a breakdown by property size of the property that has become available for let through the Durham Key Options during the current financial year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property Size</th>
<th>Under occupied by 1 room</th>
<th>Under occupied by 2 rooms</th>
<th>Under occupied by 3 or more rooms</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 bedrooms</td>
<td>4,148</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4,148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 bedrooms</td>
<td>2,430</td>
<td>1,209</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 bedrooms</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 bedrooms</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>6,695</td>
<td>1,278</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8,003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the year 2011/2012, only 937 one bedroom properties became vacant. At this rate, it would take nearly six years for everyone to move if they chose to do so. In practice, in weighing up their options, people will consider that moving may also require leaving family and friends behind as well as a support network they have developed within the local community.

With demand for 1 bed roomed or shared housing increasing in both the social and private rented sectors and a lack of this type of accommodation across the County, the options for single people and particularly those under 35 years old will be limited. There is therefore a need to develop suitable options for shared housing across both...
sectors and to consider conversions of larger property into shared units where appropriate.

A potential benefit of the housing under-occupancy changes is that it could, in theory alleviate overcrowding by freeing up larger houses through people moving to more affordable housing. However, in Durham this is unlikely to be a sizable benefit. Current waiting lists show 265 applicants who wish to move because their current home is not large enough.

Housing providers within the county are taking additional steps to help provide additional support to households at risk. Durham Key Options letting policy has been reviewed so that priority will be awarded to people suffering financial hardship because of the welfare reform changes. In addition, all housing providers in the county are in the process of adopting a ‘Taking in lodgers’ policy as well as a proactive approach to housing swaps to help those affected who wish to move where a suitable property is available.

The overall impact of these changes will be that more people will have to find the rest of the rent or move home to cheaper, more overcrowded properties. We can expect increased applications for one bedroom accommodation and not be in a position to assist due to lack of this type of accommodation. As a result, we expect increased arrears, hardship, homelessness and demands on debt advice and other services.

**Discretionary Housing Payments:**

While the government has increased the funding available for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) - for the council the funding will be £883,089 for 2013/2014 - it is clear that this is insufficient to meet the potential demand created by the withdrawal of and reductions in other welfare payments. If all of the households affected by the reductions due to under occupation in the social rented sector were to seek DHP support, this would amount to a demand of just under £100,000 a week. This would mean that the council would exhaust its total 2013/14 funding allocation in little more than eight weeks. In many instances, DHP is seen as a preventative measure, which helps to avoid a household getting into rent arrears problems and becoming homeless.
An analysis of DHP spending over the last few years is provided below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Year</th>
<th>Government grant</th>
<th>Actual spend</th>
<th>No. of claims</th>
<th>No. of awards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>£102,053</td>
<td>£90,357</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>£104,514</td>
<td>£117,317</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>£177,361</td>
<td>£189,254</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>£333,398*</td>
<td>£422,998*</td>
<td>793*</td>
<td>650*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Welfare reform measures will provide significant challenges for communities across County Durham. The impact will not be restricted solely to those in receipt of out of work benefits. In work benefit will also reduce and across the County, households in work and on low incomes together with those out of work will increasingly struggle to meet their living costs, placing increased pressures on household budgets and people’s ability to afford their home. This will pose increased pressures on front line services tasked with assisting in the prevention of homelessness; at time of increased pressures on service budgets as the authority seeks to mitigate against Government funding reductions.

The Council is working with partners to implement a triage service to ensure those residents requiring access to Discretionary Housing Payments do so, alongside support and guidance to access more affordable accommodation where possible.

In April 2013, researchers at Sheffield Hallam University identified that those local authority areas with the greatest levels of deprivation stood to be most impacted by welfare reform, losing most income as benefit payments are withdrawn and reduced, whilst having insufficient economic growth and employment opportunities to enable benefits claimants to move into work and off welfare.

In terms of absolute losses, the researchers estimate that the County Durham economy stands to lose £188 million per year because of the welfare changes. This
is equivalent to £565 per working age adult, slightly more than the regional average loss of £560 per working age adult and significantly more than the average loss of £470 per working age adult for Great Britain as a whole.

Given the nature of the reforms and their impact on the county, the council continues to monitor and respond to the implementation of the government’s welfare changes.

The council continues to prepare for the implementation of the welfare changes scheduled for this year (2013), including the introduction of a Welfare Assistance Scheme to fill the gap left by the withdrawal of the Social Fund from April 2013.

The Council will through this strategy, work with partners to support those effected by Welfare Reform to provide a partnership approach to support people to prevent homelessness wherever possible and increase access to training and employment opportunities.
Section 6 Homelessness Trends

Homelessness Trends 2008 – 2013:

The Housing Solutions Service monitors presentations to the service and reports trends and outcomes on a quarterly and annual basis. Recording of outcomes generally sit within either statutory homelessness duties or homelessness prevention.

The Statutory Homelessness Duty:

Section 184 of the Housing Act 1996 states that where a local authority considers a person may be homeless or threatened with homelessness within 28 days, they shall make such investigations as are necessary to establish whether the person is eligible for assistance and if so what duty is owed to them (if any).

The principal duty is an obligation to secure that suitable accommodation is available for a person who is:

- Homeless or threatened with homelessness in 28 days. (S175 HA 1996)
- Is eligible for assistance. (S.185 HA 1996)
- Is in priority need. (S.189 HA 1996)
- Is not intentionally homeless. (S.191 HA 1996)
- Has a local connection. (S.199 HA 1996)

Homelessness Prevention:

Preventing homelessness means providing people with the ways and means to meet their housing and any housing-related support needs in order to avoid experiencing homelessness. Effective prevention will enable a person to:

- remain in their current home, where appropriate; or
- to delay a need to move out of current accommodation so that a move into alternative accommodation can be planned in a timely way;
- Or to sustain independent living.

Prior to Local Government Reorganisation (April 2009) many of the former District Councils did not have computerised systems to record presentations or homelessness applications so we are unable to provide accurate data for this period.
From April 2009 a new integrated system was available; as a consequence the review of trends will cover 2009/10 to 2012/13.

Total presentations to the service will include clients applying as homeless and those threatened with homelessness where the Housing Solutions Service is able to prevent the loss of accommodation; clients seeking advice on housing options and Durham Key Options; information regarding their housing rights; or one off assistance to enable clients to make informed choices about their future housing options.

Over the period presentations to the service have increased from 3075 in 2009/10 to 6281 in 2012/13 representing a 104.2% increase. This has been achieved against a 30% reduction in front line Officers as the service restricted to meets its contribution towards the medium terms financial plan to reflect central government funding reductions.

Over the period presentations to the service have been mainly concentrated in the East (Seaham and Peterlee) and to the North (Derwentside and Chester-Le-Street).
The number of homelessness applications relates to the number of households who have approached the Housing Solutions Service where we have had reason to believe that the statutory threshold for enquiries to commence under Part VII of The Housing Act 1996, (as amended Homelessness Act 2002), have been met. That is where Housing Solutions have reasons to believe the applicant is eligible for assistance and homeless or threatened with homelessness within 28 days.

Homelessness applications to the authority have increased by 70% from 2009/10 to 2012/13. However, over the past year 11/12 – 12/13 applications have reduced by 2.2%. Over the period significant work has been undertaken to ensure a consistent approach to homelessness applications, investigations and decisions leading to a more consistent trend in applications from 2010/11 to 12/13.

The total number of decisions represent statutory decisions made by the Council following applications under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended Homelessness Act 202). The decisions made by the council as a percentage increase or decrease from 2009/10 – 2012/13 is:

- Ineligible households -90%.
- Eligible, but not homeless +85%
- Eligible, homeless but not in priority need +29.3%.
- Eligible, homeless, in priority need but intentionally homeless +10.8%.
- Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need +28.4%
The three main reasons for homelessness over the period have been:

- Domestic Violence
- Loss of Rented accommodation
- Non-violent relationship breakdown.

Whilst domestic abuse remains the main reason for homelessness across the county, there has been a 28.3% decrease in 2012/13 compared to 2011/12. This is a consequence of the on-going partnership work on reducing the prevalence of domestic abuse in County Durham and specialist training within the Housing Solutions Service in supporting victims of domestic abuse and a corresponding increase in supporting victims to remain in their own home if safe to do so through the Remain Safe project.

The top three reasons for priority need over the period have been.

- Households with dependent children
- Violence / threat of violence
- Mental illness

The main priority need groups broadly mirrors the main reason for homelessness with many households fleeing domestic abuse containing dependent children.

The predominant ethnic group requiring homelessness applications has been White British broadly in line with the demographic of the county. The predominant household type has been lone parents with dependent children followed by one person household and couples with dependent children. The predominant age group requiring homelessness assessment has been 25-44, followed by 16-24.
Over the period the Housing Solutions Service has prevented 3566 households from becoming homeless, an increase over the period of 281%. Over the past year the Housing Solutions Service has undertaken a diagnostic assessment with the assistance of the DCLG Specialist Advisor. This work concluded that the cost to the authority of processing a homelessness application is £924.20p, compared to the average prevention costing £741.36p – making prevention not only better for the family and individual, but also 28% cheaper. Over the period prevention of homelessness has therefore avoided costs to Durham County Council of approximately £652,000.

The local authority costs avoided do not include the wider social and economic savings of homelessness prevention. In August 2012 the Department for Communities and Local Government report: Evidence review of the cost of homelessness: attempted to establish the cost of homelessness to wider government departments, including the Department for Work and Pensions, Department of Health, Ministry of Justice and to Local Authorities. Combining these wider social and economic costs, each homelessness case is estimated to cost the wider economy between £24,000 and £30,000. Taking this lower estimate, homelessness prevention has saved County Durham £85.5 million over the past 5 years.

Over the past 12 months (March 12 – April 13) the service has seen a 22.8% increase in presentations with over 6,200 people seeking advice and support. Cases resulting in the prevention of homelessness have increased by 24.2% to 1159, exceeding the local performance indicator. At the same time there has been a 2.2% decrease in statutory homelessness applications.
It is also noted that there has been an increase in households presenting due to inability to afford their housing costs. Rent arrears cases have increased by 103%, possession cases have increased by 249%. Over the same period homelessness due to domestic abuse has decreased by 28.3%, whilst at the same time prevention of homelessness following the provision of additional security measures to enable victims of violence to remain in their home, if safe to do so, have increased by 92%. A significant milestone has also been reached with no 16/17 year olds being accepted as homeless over the period, indicating the success of the new Holistic Temporary Accommodation Support Service (HTASS) tasked with providing emergency supported housing and support to assist young people to return home.

Durham County Council remains committed, through this strategy, to work with our partners to respond to the needs of our customers. We will continue to provide services that, wherever possible, will prevent homelessness, promote choice, facilitate access to training and employment opportunities to enable our residents to contribute to thriving communities.
Section 7 Approach

What has changed over the past five years?

Over the past five years significant changes have been made across the Council’s Housing Solutions Service.

The Council works with partners to invest in and promote early intervention and prevention services. By doing so, we seek to support individuals and families across County Durham to avoid homelessness wherever possible. Alongside this, The Officers fulfil a generic role providing a holistic assessment and a support and advice service enabling clients’ needs to be assessed and met through prevention, housing options and the Council’s statutory responsibilities.

Core to this approach has been to develop an early intervention, prevention focused service offering solutions to all in housing need with the prevention of homelessness the central focus.

In response to this commitment, over the past five years the following services have been developed:

Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme: To assist clients to find and maintain accommodation in the private rented sector linked to tenancy support. The scheme guarantees a bond up to the equivalent of four weeks rent.

Homelessness Prevention Fund: Offering financial assistance to prevent homelessness, part of a wider “spend to save” policy.

Enhanced Housing Support Protocol: Bringing advice, support and accommodation services together to tackle the causes of homelessness and create sustainable tenancies for vulnerable adults.

County Court Duty Scheme Referral Protocol: Enabling clients at risk of homelessness to access free, specialist legal advice at court to defend claims for possession.

Joint Protocol for 16-17 year olds: Ensuring a joint assessment of young peoples’ housing, advice, support, training and emotional needs, by Housing Solutions, Children and Young Peoples Service, One Point and the Youth Offending Service, to enable young people to return home, if safe do so, or to plan for independence.

Mortgage Rescue: Part of a national scheme to offer shared equity or conversion to social rented tenure for home owners who are struggling with their mortgage payments.
**Possession & Repossession Loan Fund:** Interest free loans for homeowners at risk becoming homeless through repossession or eviction to enable them to recover their position and remain in their home.

**CLASP:** Care Leavers Accommodation & Support Protocol. Ensuring a partnership approach to planning for young people leaving care.

**Welfare Rights Worker:** Service Level Agreement with Welfare Rights Service to provide a dedicated officer within the Housing Solutions Service to support clients to access appropriate benefits to ensure accommodation is affordable and sustained.

**Hospital Discharge Protocol:** Protocol developed with Lanchester Road Hospital in Durham to ensure early intervention and referral for patients with undergoing assessment and treatment for mental health problems to ensure appropriate accommodation is secured prior to discharge.

**Personalisation Budget:** Agreed protocol with supported housing and floating support providers to assist clients with high support needs to access supported housing or their own home with additional support as required. The protocol ensures those who may be excluded from services are able to gain access with additional support to manage any identified risk.

**Specialist Debt Worker:** Two year contract with Chester-Le-Street Citizens Advice Bureau for a specialist debt worker to be based within the Housing Solutions Service offering specialist debt advice to clients who are homeless or at risk of homelessness due to debt related issues.

**In House Remain Safe Service.** From June 2012 the Remain Safe Service has been delivered by Direct Services following a review of the DISC service resulting in decommissioning to provide increase value for money and outcomes. The new service is jointly funded with the Safe Durham Partnership.

**Step Forward: Accommodation & Support Service.** Tender awarded in May 2012 to Stonham seeing 14 x two bed roomed properties leased and managed by the service provider offering floating support to young people moving on from supported housing and those in need of an intermediate supported housing offer.

**Adults Facing Chronic Social Exclusion Pilot:** 12 month pilot delivered by the Cyrenians from June 2012 delivering street outreach services in Durham City to rough sleepers to ensure those facing chronic social exclusion are supported to access a range of services and safe, supported accommodation. The service will further develop an understanding of the needs of rough sleepers across the County to inform any future commissioning of services. The Cyrenians have now been
successful in securing two years funding from the Homelessness Transitional Fund to expand the service across County Durham.

**Regional through the Gate Service:** Service jointly commissioned by the 12 regional Local Authorities and the Regional Offender Management Service. The service will ensure support to maintain and secure accommodation for those who have a history of repeat offending and homelessness if delivered to clients leaving HMP Durham, Holme House and Low Newton. The service was awarded to Foundation and commenced in November 2012.

**Emergency Supported Lodgings:** Following a review of the Night Stop Service, it was decided to decommission and reinvest funding in an Emergency Supported Lodgings Service operated by Children and Young Peoples Service for 16-17 year olds. This resulted in an increase in providers and the potential to increase the ability for placements to increase from three nights to three weeks. The service will further be extended to accommodate those 18-35 years old from 1st July 2013.

**Life Wise / Peer Education Services:** Highlighting the causes and consequences of homelessness and how to prepare for independence and avoid homelessness for young people aged 16-25 has been operating across County Durham by Centre point for the past 3 years. A funding contribution from Housing Solutions. This contract ended in March 2013. A service will be developed within the Family Intervention Project called STEPS that will offer training aimed at tenancy sustainment.

**Service Review & Diagnostic:** With assistance from Planning and Performance, the service participated in a service review and diagnostic assessment to determine overall performance, recommended improvements linking into the continuous service improvement plan. The resulting report and recommendation have been adopted in the service plan for 2013/14.

**Mortgage Rescue Officer:** Providing a dedicated Officer to assist home owners at risk of repossession by way of referral to the Mortgage Rescue Scheme or allocation of Repossession Loan Fund.

**Allocations Policy:** A review of the allocations policy has been completed to reflect new statutory guidance and provisions within the Localism Act. The new allocations policy has now been adopted together with the power to discharge homeless duty into the private rented sector.

**Housing Solutions Officer: Integrated Offender Management:** A dedicated Officer is based with the Integrated Offender Management Service offering advice and support to secure accommodation for Priority and Prolific Offenders.
**Housing Triage:** Protocol with a range of partners, including Housing Providers and Customer Services to ensure households affected by Welfare Reform changes are referred to the most appropriate solution, including advice and support on training, employment, debt, welfare rights and Discretionary Housing Payments.

**HTASS:** Holistic Temporary Accommodation and Support Service is to provide a flexible person centred accommodation and support service that meets the authority’s temporary accommodation duties under the homelessness legislation and provides added value which addresses the broader needs of the client to prevent future homelessness, maximise life opportunities, reduce social isolation and exclusion and promote improved health and wellbeing. HTASS includes:

- Temporary Accommodation & Support
- Joint Protocol for 16/17 years olds
- Crash Pads, including provision for care leavers
- Private Sector accommodation development

Alongside the development of new, innovative prevention initiatives, the Housing Solutions Service has developed a range of internal procedures to ensure the effective and consistent application of casework across the County. This provides for quality assurance checks and support and supervision to officers engaged in complex casework seeking to prevent homelessness to all who present to the service.

**Youth Homelessness:**

Young people face significant disadvantages in the housing market and struggle to make the transition to independence against a backdrop of increased numbers not in education, training or employment and restrictions to benefit payments to assist in their housing costs.

Youth Homeless North East (YHNE) is a collective of providers, local authorities, young homeless people aged 16 to 25 years old and other organisations committed to working together to identify and promote solutions to address young people’s housing needs. Durham County Council takes an active role in supporting YHNE to assess and address the housing needs of young people.

At the ‘Strategy for Change’ event held in December 2012, a consultation with members was undertaken to review and update the Housing Strategy priority solutions and actions for the period up to March 2014. The updated priority solutions are:
Priority Solutions

1. Improve the quality and range of temporary and supported accommodation ‘good quality homeless accommodation which creates better tenants and changes lives.’

2. Increase early intervention work in schools and with families.

3. To support member organisations to ensure sustainability and growth of the sector to address youth homelessness.

4. Improve the likelihood of young people living safely as contributing members of the community.

5. To ensure all services are accountable to the young people they serve.

6. Lobby policy makers and commissioners to prevent, tackle and resolve youth homelessness in the North East.

County Durham Young People’s Charter:

In 2010 the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) produced ‘A young people’s charter on housing’ based on consultation with young people (JRF, 2012). Youth Homeless North East was approached Durham County Council to produce a Youth Housing Charter for implementation by the Housing Solutions Team to ensure the specific needs and long-term aspirations of homeless young people in Durham are met.

The young people who took part in the research and whose experiences and opinions are presented in the charter wanted to know how The Youth Housing Charter would be used and if it would make a difference. In response to that question our intention is to encourage all local authorities and wider services providers in the North East to endorse the Youth Housing Charter to ensure housing and support services provided for homeless young people are informed and shaped by what young people want.

Durham County Council endeavour to combat homelessness by providing housing and support services that meet the needs and wants identified by young people within this charter.

Please see Appendix 1 (County Durham Youth Homelessness Charter)
Rough Sleeping: No Second Night Out:

The statement of the Government’s vision for tackling rough sleeping, No Second Night Out (NSNO), was published in July 2011. This built upon a programme of work launched in London in April 2011, already using the same heading. To assist Local Authorities to develop a response to rough sleeping, additional funding was allocated to the North East in 2012. Newcastle is the lead for Tyne and Wear and Northumberland and Durham County Council is the lead for Durham and Tees Valley. Since then, the 12 North East Local Authorities have been working together to develop services to meet the needs of rough sleepers and provide a response to meet rough sleepers accommodation and support needs.

The first step in ending rough sleeping is to make sure that people who are forced to sleep outside are identified quickly and helped in to services as soon as possible, so that they do not have to spend a second night on the streets.

In addition to No Second Night Out, there are three other elements to end rough sleeping:

- No one should arrive on the streets
- No one should return to the streets, including through eviction from supported accommodation
- No one should live on the street

No Second Night Out – the key principles

The Government identified five key principles in their vision:

- **Identifying rough sleepers**: new rough sleepers should be identified and helped off the streets immediately so that they do not fall into a dangerous rough sleeping lifestyle.

- **Involving the public**: members of the public should be able to play an active role by reporting and referring people sleeping rough.

- **Assessing needs quickly and safely**: rough sleepers should be helped to access a place of safety where their needs can be quickly assessed and they can receive advice on their option.

- **Accessing emergency accommodation and other services**: they should be able to access emergency accommodation and other services, such as healthcare, if needed.
• **Reconnecting to support**: if people have come from another area or country and find themselves sleeping rough, the aim should be to reconnect them back to their local community unless there is a good reason why they cannot return. There, they will be able to access housing and recovery services, and have support from family and friends.

**Delivering No Second Night Out in the North East**

All 12 Local Authorities, major providers of services and other key partners in the North East have signed up to this standard. Underpinning this will be a number of sub-regional and local protocols which ensures that NSNO is operational across the North East by mid-2012. These will set down the sub-regional approach and joint working mechanisms. All of the protocols will have in common:

- A local response to the five key principles of NSNO
- A joint approach, led by the local authority, which encompasses the voluntary sector, criminal justice agencies including the three police forces, health services including drug & alcohol treatment agencies, the retail & transport sectors and the general public.
- Joint working agreements that
  - recognise that rough sleepers can move across Local Authority boundaries and a consistent approach to their support is needed from all agencies
  - share resources and put in place reciprocal agreements to ensure rough sleepers can access services quickly and safely
- A monitoring framework to collect information on the picture of rough sleeping in each area and the outcomes from NSNO.

Where appropriate, actions to ensure Durham County Council deliver on the regional statement unpinning the delivery of No Second Night Out will be included in the action plan appended to this strategy.

**Resources (Support People & DCLG Homelessness Grant):**

The provision of housing related support, formerly known as the Supporting People Programme, is now the responsibility of Children and Adults Service (CAS) and is
funded from non-ring-fenced funding. There are approximately 40 providers delivering over 100 services to vulnerable people across the county, aged 16 to people who are in their 90’s and to a diverse range of client groups including young people, teenage parents, offenders, domestic abuse, substance misuse, learning disability / difficulty, mental health, single homeless, and frail elderly.

Current services support approximately 15,000 clients at any one time, through either floating support services or accommodation based services and during 2012/13 supported in excess of 30,000 vulnerable clients. Outcome information from St. Andrews, for short term services, indicates that of the 628 departures 82.5% of these were positive, planned moves.

During 2012/13 approximately 32800 clients were supported through floating support and 1350 clients supported through accommodation based services. Overall the Council spends £10m on floating support, provided by 18 providers and spends £6.1m on accommodation based services delivered by 27 providers.

Since 2011, the funding for these services has been under pressure as the Council’s medium term financial plan has had to account for significant reductions in Government spending. For those providers having to take these funding reductions into account we have endeavoured to give them sufficient time to respond in a strategic way and to explore other ways of delivering the services which will minimise the impact of clients. Unfortunately, this is not always possible however we commend the providers in the way they have approached these challenging times.

The next few years (2013-2015) will see a further reduction of £2m from preventative services, which will impact on providers, service capacity and the number of clients services will be able to support. The future of funding for this sector remains at risk given the support provided is not statutory and the Council will focus on the delivery of statutory services. Having said this, the role of preventative services is growing in recognition within the Council and an option that will be explored is the alignment of preventative services to statutory service provision as a complete pathway for clients in line with the Health & Social Care Bill.

The Council receives a Homelessness Prevention Grant from Department for Communities and Local Government of £433,013 each year up to 2014/15. This grant allocation is not ring fenced; however, agreement has been achieved for the grant to be allocated to developing services to prevent homelessness. Currently all grant allocation is committed or spend identified to maintain current prevention services or in response to increased requests for assistance due to welfare reform.
Section 8 Summary & Next Steps

Over the past five years the Council and its partners, have made significant progress following Local Government Reorganisation to improve services to people across County Durham in Housing Need. This has included the development of a range of services established to respond to the changing needs of customers resulting in a 281% increase in households prevented from becoming homelessness avoiding over £85 million of costs.

We have worked hard to ensure service delivery is consistent and accessible across the County. Presentations have increased by over 100% to 6,281 households seeking assistance in 2012/13 alone. Whilst homelessness applications have increased by 70% over the period, this is against the need for the service to offer a consistent approach, and once this has been achieved homelessness applications have stabilised with a small 2% decrease in 2012/13.

Whilst investment in homelessness prevention and improved outcomes for customers has been encouraging, households across County Durham face significant challenges.

Over the past year we have noted a 249% increase in claims for possession across rented accommodation and a 103% increase in cases of rent arrears. With current and future implementation of welfare reform measures, both in work and out of work households face increased pressures on their income. Due to the behavioural changes welfare reform measures aim to achieve, in encouraging people to seek training and employment opportunities, it is difficult to provide a definitive prediction to assess trends in presentations over the coming months and years. However, we need to ensure that Durham County Council and our partners continue to work together to provide advice and support to those who seek our help and maintain our focus on homelessness prevention and increasing access to provide support for people to enter training and employment opportunities to break the cycle of homelessness.

The following action plan has been developed, following consultation with our partners, and sets out how Durham County Council seeks to respond to housing need across Durham over the next five years. The action plan will be monitored by the HAP and reviewed annually to ensure we continue to meet the needs of our residents.
Appendix 1:

The Youth Housing Charter for Homeless Young People
Acknowledgements

The most important participants and contributors to the Youth Housing Charter are the young people who have worked incredibly hard in drawing up the research plan, taking part in research sessions and contributing their own stories. Young people have been generous in sharing their experiences of becoming homeless, the dangers and the hurdles they faced in finding and being able to keep their ‘own place’.

The Youth Housing Charter could not have been produced without the work and support of YHNE Regional Champions; Youth Independence Forum, Moving-On, Barnardo’s, Community Campus and Trinity Youth. A big thank you also goes to the Durham Care-Leavers Group and young people from HMP Askham Grange on Centrepoints’ Youth Educators programme, for their time and contribution to the research.

We would like to thank Barnardo’s North East for the support they have provided including the support of Sam McLellan, a Young Apprentice who has been on placement with YHNE.

The production of the Youth Housing Charter has been funded by Millfield House Foundation and Northern Rock Foundation.
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Background

Youth Homeless North East was approached Durham County Council to produce a Youth Housing Charter for implementation by the Housing Solutions Team to ensure the specific needs and long-term aspirations of homeless young people in Durham are met.

In 2010 the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) produced ‘A young people’s charter on housing’ based on consultation with young people. (JRF, 2012) The JRF Charter recognises the difficulties all young people face in today’s housing market. In producing the Charter we have built on the foundations of the JRF Charter with the aim of identifying the housing aspirations and needs specific to young people who have experience of homelessness and to produce a charter that addresses their needs and wants.

The young people who took part in the research and whose experiences and opinions are presented in The Charter wanted to know how The Youth Housing Charter would be used and if it would make a difference. In response to that question our intention is to encourage all local authorities and wider services providers in the North East to endorse the Youth Housing Charter to ensure housing and support services provided for homeless young people are informed and shaped by what young people want.

Introduction

The UK continues to struggle in the midst of recession with the most vulnerable suffering the greatest impact of economic pressures. Unemployment, low wages, the impact of welfare reforms and changes to housing benefit has compounded the existing high levels of deprivation across the region. Young people who are unemployed or on low wages, moving to a first tenancy are amongst the most vulnerable. Vulnerability is further exacerbated for young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, often with chaotic lifestyles and a spectrum of complex needs, with little or no support.

Every year significant numbers of young people become homeless, many as a result of family breakdown and others leaving-care. Often these young people are unprepared for a move to independence and have no vision of where they want to live in the future. Unfortunately for many this is not a planned move with the support of their families.

What has emerged clearly from carrying out the research is that homeless young people find it very difficult to think beyond their immediate or short-term circumstances. Asking homeless young people about future housing aspirations proved to be a challenge. Access to housing, types of housing, the bricks and mortar was not the main priority; what emerged as an overall theme was the need for timely and appropriate support provided flexibly on a long-term basis.

Given the ‘complex needs’ and chaotic lifestyles associated with homelessness, together with the obvious vulnerability of young people, we should not be
surprised by the emphasis placed on the need and desire for support. (McDonnagh et al., 2011)

This paper includes ‘The Charter: What young people want’ from housing and young people’s services, and presents the research findings shared by young people.

Methodology

The research process has been managed by a Working Group comprising Durham Housing Solutions, Moving On, Youth Independence Forum and Barnardo’s.

The research took place in two stages; the first entailed speaking to young people in Durham and Newcastle to inform and develop the research format, questions and delivery process. We have used the JRF Charter headings as a framework for our research with homeless young people. Based on the feedback we received from the first stage we designed a group session research format. Case-studies were also gathered to provide a picture of individual experiences.

The second stage was delivered by YHNE Regional Champions; Moving On, the Youth Independence Forum, Barnardos’ in Northumberland, Community Campus and Trinity Youth who consulted LGBT young people. Each of the Regional Champions delivered research sessions with young people within their sub-region, apart from Trinity Youth who has a regional remit as Regional Champion for LGBT young people.

Across the region 59 young people participated in the research sessions, aged 16-25 years old, with one 26 year old. All of the young people had experience of homelessness or were at risk of becoming homeless. At the time of carrying out the research the majority of young people were living in some type of supported or shared accommodation, the remainder were living in private rented tenancies, shared accommodation, non-supported registered social landlord (RSL) or a council tenancy. Four young people were serving custodial sentences in HMP Askham Grange and 1 young person was ‘sofa-surfing’.
The Charter: Meeting the housing needs of young people at risk of homelessness.

Durham County Council endeavour to combat homelessness by providing housing and support services that meet the needs and wants identified by young people within this Charter. In order to achieve this we make the following pledges to young people:

Prevention

We will provide education about the realities of homelessness in schools and for families and carers.

We will provide mediation services as early as possible to resolve problems so that young people can remain at home when appropriate and to enable sustainable positive relationships with family, carers and friends when they have to move out.

We will ensure young people receive adequate preparation for independent living and plan with them for successful transitions.

We will implement thorough needs assessment processes and listen to young people to make sure they get the right support and the right housing.

Housing

We will ensure that all housing offered to young people is secure with adequate staffing, security, locks on doors and a land phone-line for emergencies.

We will help young people to secure permanent accommodation they can call their own rather than moving between temporary accommodation.

We will respect young peoples’ right to have friends staying over within the context of balancing rights with responsibilities.

The area

We will try to provide housing to young people in an area they know, where they are aware of available facilities and services, where to go for help, what the transport links are and close to training and employment.

We will ensure young people move to an area where they will feel safe and welcomed taking into account individual needs such as sexuality.

When young people want it, we will offer them housing in an area close to family, carers, friends and other support networks.
Support

We are committed to ensuring young people who have been in-care receive the support they want from Children’s Services and are able to maintain contact with foster carers after leaving the care system.

We recognise that times of ‘transition’, including moving between accommodation, are difficult for young people so at these times we will provide additional support.

For young people who would like longer term support and when things start to go wrong, we will provide extra support including moving young people into supported housing for a while to help them resolve their problems and avoid eviction.

We know that young people prefer to have the same worker and not have to retell their stories and build new relationships all the time. Where possible we will try to ensure young people have the same worker.

We are committed to ensuring we have workers who are suitably qualified and who know about homelessness and understand the issues young people face.

Managing finances

We want to see housing benefit continue to be available for those aged under 25 years old.
We wanted to find out young people’s perceptions and experiences of ‘family and home’ as this is the foundation on which most of us base our aspirations of what we want our family and home to be in the future. Positive experiences of family and home often underpin successful transitions to adulthood including independent living.

From speaking to young people we found that the concept of ‘family and home’ are often contentious for homeless young people, as many have had negative experiences which have led to homelessness and some have spent a childhood in-care.

‘Evidence consistently points to the higher incidence of difficulties during childhood amongst single homeless people.’ (DCLG, 2012)

‘Home in the past means memories for me – I was happier, it meant achievements and stability.’

‘Love – you should feel loved .. Even here (in prison) I still get love’.

Some one said that feelings and emotions were what home was: ‘that’s it isn’t it, pride, tears, upsets, laughter’.

Family or relationship breakdown remains the biggest cause of homelessness amongst young people. A survey carried out by YHNE with local authorities and other providers of youth homeless services in the North East, looking at February 2012, found that ‘42% of young people presenting as homeless to local authorities had experienced family breakdown’. (YHNE, 2012)

‘The main ‘trigger’ for youth homelessness is the breakdown of family relationships, often compounded by difficulties at school (for 16/17 year olds), overcrowding at home, mental health problems, substance abuse and crime.’ (DCLG, 2012)

The main reason I ended up in this situation was my complicated relationship with my parents. It was no longer healthy for me to live at home with my parents.

In addition, young people from a ‘care’ background are at greater risk of becoming homeless ‘40% of care-leavers experience homelessness within the first six months of leaving local authority care’. (The Care Leavers’ Association, 2012)
A group of young people who had all been in-care at some stage in their lives, some most of their lives, described moving around regularly with little stability. The experiences they have of ‘family and home’ are reflected in their responses; with the first comment being ‘home means nothing to me’. Significantly, a young person currently in prison, in a different group used the exact phrase ‘home means nothing to me’. Others describe their home lives as ‘hectic’ with ‘fights and arguments’ taking place.

Went into care when I was 14 years old. Mam had mental health problems and couldn’t look after me and my brother.
Prevention

The DCLG Youth Accommodation Pathway approach suggests an integrated 4 step prevention process:

1. ‘minimise demand’ through educating young people about the realities of housing choices.
2. ‘reducing crisis and demand’ through targeting early intervention at young people most at risk of becoming homeless.
3. Further ‘reducing crisis’ by preparing and planning with young people to avoid a homeless crisis occurring.
4. ‘a single integrated service gateway’ jointly delivered or commissioned by Housing and Children’s Services providing preventative functions to assess needs, plan and advice on appropriate housing options and also to address wider needs in relation to education, training and employment, health, life skills and income advice. (See Appendix 1)

The Youth Accommodation Pathway approach reflects what young people told us they want and need:

Young people want to be adequately prepared to move to independent living. In order for young people to make informed choices about housing and support they need comprehensive information on their housing and support options. The young people we spoke to had little or no knowledge of housing and related areas prior to finding themselves homeless or threatened with homelessness. Young people suggested that schools should provide education on housing and homelessness to all young people and that the same information should be provided to parents and carers.

Young people told us that they want us to prevent homelessness by providing mediation services earlier to avoid family breakdown where possible, and build bridges to ensure good relationship going forward. They also want us to ensure young people and their parents and carers have adequate information, advice and guidance in order to prepare young people to move-on in a planned way.

I had a pretty bad upbringing. Dad was very violent to me and my mam. I was an angry teenager and began mixing with the wrong people, getting involved with drugs and alcohol – led to a downward spiral. I got kicked out of the family home at 16 years old. I ended up sofa surfing and rough sleeping for about 8 months. I met an outreach worker when I was hanging around a bus shelter. After a while I began to trust him and he approached my family trying to get things sorted out. My dad had left and me and my mam managed to work things out. It worked and I still continue to have a great relationship with the youth worker to this day.
The young people who had been in-care said they should have a longer period of time to prepare for leaving care and with continued support from Children’s Services.

Growing into adulthood is often challenging for young people and those around them. A transition into adulthood that also entails having to move to independence is even more challenging particularly as for many young people this is often brought about because of a difficult life experience. Young people want us to help them make this ‘transition’ through ensuring adequate planning and preparation takes place.

‘..probation need to help me find somewhere, family say they’ll support but don’t really agree with what I want’.

The importance of addressing needs through providing an appropriate support plan to address housing but also personal, health, education, employment and training needs is well documented. Young people told us they want to be listened to in having their needs assessed and in planning how those needs should be met. Support plans that also address interests, aspirations and quality of life go further in addressing not just the practical and short-term needs of individuals but rather the long-term needs and wants which can make a difference in achieving sustainable well-being.
Housing

‘A place you can do what you want, when you want, somewhere you can mould and decorate so it reflects your own personality’.

When looking for help with accommodation young people see themselves perceived in relation to a host of problems including housing but not limited to housing. Young people are likely to undergo at least one assessment and often multiple assessments in order to gauge exactly what their needs are in order to address them.

What is clear from the research findings is that homeless young people have few if any housing or other ‘aspirations’. It has been difficult to get young people to look into the future and think about what they want for themselves. Instead young people are coping with the difficulties of their day-to-day lives which are constantly challenging; they focus on what the priorities are for them now and in the very near future.

In stark contrast young people who see independent living as ‘a challenge but rewarding process, with benefits in terms of personal freedom and growing confidence’ (JRF, 2011); the perceptions of young people we spoke to are summed up by what one young person said to us ‘I need to think about where I’m going to, what I’m going to do. ...It can be unsettling’.

One young person did mention home ownership;

“Like to live in the countryside (grew up on farm). I’d like to own my own home but that’s difficult...so maybe private rented.” This young person saw private rented accommodation as way to get property in an area with less problems and safer.

The majority of young people we spoke aspire to have their ‘own place’ with the following attributes:

- A safe area, a secure property a ‘peaceful’ environment.
- To live close to family and/or friends.
- Be part of and engaged in the local community.

These areas are in fact basic ‘expectations’ that we all share in relation our housing and the neighbourhood we live in. Young people had limited knowledge of the types of housing available and a progression route they could take.

Housing options and choices

Young people need more information and earlier about their housing options in order to make choices about the type of housing they need and want. We found that the young people we spoke to had little knowledge or understanding about housing options other than housing they had actually lived in. All young people should receive information and advice about the full range of housing options available to them. This should include the option to return home if appropriate.
and support to do so as well as private rented options and the pathway that will lead to a permanent tenancy.

Young people who become homeless often experience a transient existence in moving through a range of housing options. Young people tell us they do not want to move around, they want a fixed home of their own. In presenting housing options we should be clear about the ‘pathway’ and timescales involved to enable young people to achieve a secure home of their own that can be sustained over time.

The young people we spoke to have experienced a range of housing from emergency accommodation, hostels to their own tenancies with the council, housing associations and private landlords. We asked young people to tell us about what in their views were the positive and negative aspects of housing options.

Young people talked about enjoying having ‘freedom’, having their ‘own space’ and being able to ‘have the whole house the way I want it’. Young people want the freedom to have their friends and partners stay over.

Privacy and space are important to young people, though difficult to achieve as a homeless young person. For those young people who had experience of living in children’s homes they had little privacy with ‘different people coming in and out’, where even having your own room is not a sanctuary with people ‘knocking on your door’ and ‘coming in uninvited’. They also described how they had to ‘share everything apart from your own clothes’ and sometimes needed permission to ‘go in or out of the living room’.

Safety is an area of real concern for homeless young people in relation to their current situations and future housing needs. Some of concerns they express are about very basic needs, things the majority of us take for granted.

Young people who are currently in prison highlighted barriers they face in moving to independence. For this group previous convictions and past bad behaviour caused serious limitations when they come to seek housing.

**Young Offenders**

‘If you’re done for arson, you’re doomed’.

‘Trust is a problem’.

‘we’re not deemed a priority in prison .. at present, we’re not seen as a priority, you always get into a bail place, maybe a B&B, you have to just sit there all day. It’s like a game; it’s so backward the housing stuff’.
Emergency Accommodation

Young people had a very realistic view of emergency accommodation seeing it in terms of literally making sure you are ‘off the streets’ and to an extent keeping you safe. However, emergency accommodation was seen as being of poor quality and often young people do not feel safe there. ‘Night Stop’ was seen as a more positive option by some, others are put off by the idea of staying in someone’s home.

Supported housing

‘Supported accommodation, that depends. I’ve been in places where they really don’t....’

Consistently young people recognised the support, advice and guidance provided in supported housing, with some providing education and training opportunities including life skills to prepare and enable a young person to live independently. However, the temporary nature of this type of housing is an issue for young people who want longer-term security of tenure. Young people would like to stay
in supported housing longer, and have continued support once they move into their own tenancy.

Young people felt it was not always easy to move out of supported accommodation as once housed they no longer have ‘priority homeless status’. Young people we spoke to do not want to live in housing where there is a lot of noise. Young people highlighted the need to abide by a clear set of rules and boundaries as a negative aspect of supported housing. The issue which arises the most is around a lack of freedom particularly in relation to who, and how often friends can stay over. Young people did recognise that there is a need for rules in supported housing and that they are protected and benefit from those rules.

Shared housing

The key benefit of living in shared housing was the opportunity to make friends; young people said that they were ‘never lonely’. Young people also identified shared housing as being a ‘cheaper’ option than some.

The drawbacks of shared living identified were noise, a lack of respect form other residents with people not sharing their responsibilities in relation to cleaning or paying bills. These issues could lead to fall outs between residents and disputes arising. The living space was seen as small and young people had difficulties in accessing furniture for unfurnished tenancies.

Council housing

Having a council tenancy was identified as one of the most affordable housing options. Young people see council housing as offering them their ‘own space’, they see it as a more secure tenancy than other options in relation to permanency and as place where they feel safe.

Young people said that council housing is in ‘bad areas’ where the area is run down and where they don’t feel safe.

‘Council houses are in areas you wouldn’t want to go, it’s just maybe going to be trouble. And they often don’t help people they don’t want to’.

‘If I said I lived in .............., people would say they wouldn’t dare…but it’s ok if you keep yourself to yourself’.

Young people find coping with bills difficult, not just rent but also fuel cost and balancing paying bills on a low income. Repairs and maintenance was highlighted as an issue but some young people acknowledged being in a council tenancy meant the property was maintained and repairs carried out by the council.
Housing Association

Generally there was a very positive response to housing association properties as young people see them as offering low rents, security (adequate locks, alarms etc.) and being your ‘own place’ (offering a secure long-term tenancy) providing independence. Young people described housing associations as being ‘responsible landlords’ (with properties well maintained and responsive to tenants). One young person had not been offered a furnished tenancy or furniture pack through a housing association.

Private Rented

Young people said that private rented accommodation tends to be in ‘good areas’ and housing is of a high standard. Again, young people felt private rented housing provided independence and their own space. Some young people reported that private rented is ‘too expensive’ also they have to rely on the landlord to carry out repairs and they don’t like that the landlord is able to access the tenancy at any time (without the permission of the tenant).

Key themes emerging in relation the type of housing young people want are;

- Having my own place
- Affordable
- Security of tenure
- Security of the actual property with adequate locks, concierge, intercom etc.
- Good quality and well maintained
- Quiet

Where young people want to live

Where the house or flat is located is also important. It should be close to networks of support; for some this will be family, for others friends and services. For young people who have lived in-care, in a family or have spent long periods of time in supported and shared accommodation, moving to independence can bring loneliness and isolation. Young people need to feel they have people around them and that they are part of a community offering friendship and support. Sir Roy Griffiths in his proposals for community care stated,

‘Families, friends and neighbours and other local people provide the majority of care in response to needs which they are uniquely well placed to identify and respond to.’ (HMSO, 1986)

‘I want to live in the area I come from, with family around’

‘far enough away from family so you don’t have to see them all the time just when you want to.’

Relationships, knowing who you can go to if things go wrong, are essential to all of us. Significantly, the young people we spoke to, identified their mobile phones
as being an important source of support, social networking was also mentioned. Young people described how they stay in touch with friends using mobiles and social networking sites and how they are reassured knowing that they can always contact a friend.

‘If any of us fall sick, wind up in debt or are in some other way in need of help, our first port of call in almost every case, will be family and friends. Only if they can’t help, or if we are isolated from them, will we turn to charities and statutory assistance.’ (Lemos, 2006)

For young people moving to independence knowing they have access to emotional and practical support on an on-going basis is essential to them living successful lives and maintaining their home. When support is not provided by family and friends we have to make sure a support network exists’ that young people are linked into and that they have access to across time.

For lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender (LGBT) young people who often experience prejudice and intimidation it is imperative that they are housed in areas where they feel welcomed and safe rather than threatened and insecure. The areas where young people get housed are very important, some want to be close to family and friends because of the support and most young people want to live in an area known to them.

It is also about the local environment, a neighbourhood where the properties are well maintained, an area where people want to live – an area that is thriving. The reality for many young people is that they are housed in areas where there are often issues of crime, anti-social behaviour and deprivation; this has an effect on young people’s lifestyles and choices, ‘the area is poor, I’m never there’, ‘I avoid going home because I don’t want to be by myself and because of the area’. As well as wanting to be housed in a ‘nice area’, young people want good quality housing ‘somewhere to be proud of and also feel worthwhile’.

In line with ‘Positive Pathways’ young people should be housed where they have access to ‘a wider range of advice and support such as education, training and employment, health services including specialist counselling, substance misuse and sexual health services as well as life skills and income advice’. However young people need to be involved and engaged in positive activities, spending time socially, taking part in sports and community activities.
Support

‘All young people need trusted adults to guide them towards adulthood. Many are fortunate to receive considerable (financial and emotional) support from parents as well as teachers and other community leaders. Disadvantaged young people at risk of homelessness often miss out on much of this support.’ (Quilgars et al, 2011)

The young people we spoke to described varying experiences of support from family and friends to support workers.

Friends

‘Could tell them anything and they are always there for me’. ‘They are there if I need someone to chat to and a change of scenery’.

‘Help me get by … let me know they love me’.

‘Same as family’.

‘couldn’t live without fishing and some time with friends’.

‘My boyfriend is always there for me’.

‘Support me daily in here.’ (Prison)

The care-leavers group identified friends as a key source of support including members of the group who shared experiences of being in-care and of moving to their own homes. These shared experiences created an obvious bond. Young people also identified mobile phones, Facebook and PS3 as a crucial source of support in enabling them to stay in touch with friends.

Family

‘I always see them and they’re always there for me’.

‘My family because they support me with everything. This being emotionally, financial and stability. I also know I can turn to them’.

‘not there but want them to be’.

Only a small number of the young care leavers identified family as providing support ‘love, support and care’.
We asked about what support young people need to enable them to move to ‘independent living’. The top two themes were support provided by support workers including social workers, housing support workers, probation officers etc. and support received from family and friends.

The young people who had been in-care told us that they would like more support from Children’s Services in preparing to leave care, in setting up their own home and to maintain contact more regularly and over a longer period of time. Some young people who had been looked after by foster parent described how they no longer had any contact and felt abandoned on leaving foster care. Young people want the choice to be able to continue their relationships with foster parents and even children’s homes. Young people associated the loss of these ties with the ending of funding for foster placements. Young people having left the care system expressed a need for the type of support they received whilst in-care to continue when they moved on to their own place. Many young people, having lived in a communal situation or with families find living independently very lonely.

Many of the young people we spoke to have had experience of moving to new accommodation a number of time, those in-care from care homes and foster homes and for all young people moving through emergency, shared, supported and independent tenancies. They told us they find these moves difficult and stressful, with lots to organise and the fear of the unknown. At these times young people want additional support to enable them to make a successful transition.

Things sometimes go wrong, young people feel lonely and isolated and they don’t know which electricity supplier is the cheapest. In these instances support, information, advice and guidance are needed. Young people recognise for themselves that they need support to build and sustain successful, healthy, happy lives. Young people told us that they want support to be available longer and if things do start to go wrong they want more help and support to sort out the problem or to be moved into accommodation where they can be supported. Young people stressed the need for well trained and informed staff with an understanding of the issues homeless young people face and have the skills to develop empathetic relationships with young people. What they do not want is to become homeless again through losing their tenancy.

Whether the support worker is a teacher, youth worker, social worker or probation officer; young people want to have the same person providing support, the worker moving with them rather than having to have to tell their stories again and go through another assessment. This actually describes the role of a ‘Lead professional’ as described within guidance under the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). (DfE, 2012)

Young people want the workers who support them to know about homelessness and to understand the issues young people face. Young people suggest that they could be involved in training support staff, talking about their own experiences.
Support Workers

Support workers were identified by all groups as a source of support, however in some cases the support provided is limited, for example young people describe staying in touch with a social worker but say ‘she doesn’t do much for me’ and others describe support that is there ‘if needed’.

The young people who had been in-care described positively ‘staff who listen to you, someone you can bond with and talk to ...on our level’. One young person had particularly enjoyed living for a time in supported lodgings where a support worker she ‘could talk to’ had two dogs.

Another thing was the support of my resettlement worker. I actually lost it a couple of times and said I was not going to work and she said ‘you’ve got to stay focussed and keep doing it – you’ll soon get your flat and be out of here.’ That kept me going – shed was a role model – it wasn’t someone banging on to me, she believed in me, but it was hard, very hard.

The staff all go to bed at 11.30pm and they sleep in the next house to the hostel, they can’t hear what’s going on. There’s no supervision at night – there are panic buttons but I couldn’t use those, it would only make things worse – it was bad enough, I had to live there. With my support workers support I made it. I got on to a degree course, worked every night to support myself and eventually got my own flat.

‘My probation officer here at prison has stood by my decisions and offered me support. I always can count on her to be there if ever needed’.

When I had good support the worker listened to me, understood me and worked hard at building a good relationship with me. I trusted her as she was interested in me and my situation.

She always had time for me and kept our appointments and kept me fully informed about what was going on. It wasn’t just about helping me get a roof over my head, she helped with getting me a doctor, dentist, pregnancy team, bills and how to budget, to eat healthy, how to keep myself safe and look after me and my baby.

The support I got was a good experience but I know this may have been just good luck as friends have had limited support and workers who really didn’t want to listen or help.
Young people want support workers who listen to them, who understand the issues they face and can relate to them. LGBT young people often feel marginalised and sometimes face difficulties in being accepted.

“I was in care, after this had a flat. It didn’t work out. I was being homophobia bully at work, then had a few problems with my extended family. I wasn’t coping and needed to get out of the area.
...is quite a homophbic town. I was given a hard time at school. When I moved out of the children’s home I hardly ever saw my social worker. Other people saw there worker every week. She was well meaning but didn’t have a clue how to support me as a gay man. I think she didn’t make appointments with me because maybe she didn’t feel comfortable, maybe homophobic. I never felt I could just call her and talk about things, like the other care leavers did. But she found Outpost for me and that’s great because I can talk about anything with them. They understand me and give me support that suits me. I love it and am really happy.”

Sometimes young people need a range of support to meet their needs before they will be in a position to begin to plan to live independently or for others to enable them to maintain tenancies.

Luckily I got some counselling for drugs and alcohol and realised how little confidence I had but my worker got me on a training course, doing hairdressing. I began to look after myself, feel better and managed to get a shared flat.

Young people across most groups also identified training providers, schools, colleges and even employers as a source of support. They also recognised the importance of working in order to have enough money to live on ‘money – must have, can’t live without it’, ‘have to work to earn a living’ and also the opportunity to learn new things.

Information, Advice and Guidance

Young people do not know where to access all the support they need or information to help them make informed decisions.
‘Getting housing benefit is a nightmare’.

‘There’s that bond thing ... say I got a private, I’m not gonna have the money straight away’.

‘What about kitting your house out? Lots of people can’t .. there’s that community care grant, you fill out a form’.

‘What about a local connection? You need a local connection somewhere’.

‘If I wanted to move could you help? I want to live with my mum anyway, but just, you .......

It is clear from these comments that young people have some knowledge, some information but they do not know for certain what support is available to them, how to access the right benefits, grants and help with furniture etc. They do not have sufficient information to be able to make informed choices that will enable them to be able to move into and maintain a home of their own for themselves and for some with their children.

Health and well-being

It is though worth considering health and well-being in a wider context;

‘Health and well-being is not simply the absence of illness and access to primarily health care when needed.’ It relates to having a healthy diet, taking regular exercise and addressing drug and alcohol issues. Taking part in positive activities and having good social networks through friends and family also contribute to health and wellbeing. (Lemos, 2006)

In their paper ‘Tackling homelessness and exclusion: Understanding complex lives’, the JRF highlight the overlap between mental health issues, drug and alcohol dependency and other street activities with homelessness. Young people we spoke to described how they use alcohol and drugs in an effort to mask anxieties, stress and problems sleeping.

Young people talked about how they might turn to alcohol or cannabis ‘social habit and I love it’, ‘when you’ve got nothing to do’ and because ‘it blocks stuff and helps you get by’.

Been in care since I was 3 years old. At 18 years old I was given my own accommodation, leaving care grant but no further support from Social Services. I was scared being on my own, I felt lonely, isolated and unprepared, no continued support despite asking for it. Got involved with drugs and alcohol to help me cope with the situation.
It is therefore crucial that we consider the physical and emotional health needs of young homeless people and seek to respond to existing health issues and prevent new ones occurring.
Managing finances

It is widely believed that recent and planned welfare reforms will have the greatest impact upon the most deprived. Many young people currently have their rent, support costs and any furniture package paid for through benefits they receive. Recent speculation about linking benefits to rates of pay rather than inflation could see benefits fixed for the next two years whilst living cost continue to rise.

Young people want and need support which comes at a cost. Supported tenancies, furniture packs and furnished tenancies are an attractive and often essential resource for young people moving into a tenancy. However once young people gain employment they become liable to cover the often very high cost of support and furniture. Struggling to manage budgets young people can quickly fall behind with payments and get into debt which in turn threatens their tenancy.

‘I would have to work 6 days a week just to cover rent and have a few quid left in my pocket.’

‘Doesn’t encourage me to get a job …I would be better off sitting on the dole for 18 months, the rent is sky high’.

As a kid my life was dominated by domestic violence. I just couldn’t take it anymore, I just couldn’t protect mam.

I ended up homeless at 16 year old and was put in emergency accommodation. I was working – an apprenticeship on £120 a week, but I had to pay £95 per week to live there. Other young people like me – stood outside drug dealing – they weren’t paying anything – on benefits – they made their money from drugs.

I was working five days a week but couldn’t afford to pay £95 a week as I had only £25 left for transport to and from work and my food and clothes.

I was moved on to another hostel and was there for six months. I still had to pay £95 there. It was £300 arrears when I left there – it was just too hard to keep up the payments. I tried to get a pay rise but couldn’t – I was stuck. I felt so stupid to be working. Other said ‘look I don’t work and I get this money and just sit and smoke dope all day’.

I thought hold on I’m paying taxes so they can live like that.
When young people are experiencing financial difficulties they don’t always know what is available to them from the housing provider, they don’t know where or who to go to if they are having problems in paying their rent, they don’t know what grants or benefits they are entitled to or if support is available.

One young woman described how she changed electricity supplier, when she was cold-called at the front-door, only to find out later that the supplier is actually one of the most expensive.

Recently we have seen the introduction of the ‘Single Accommodation Rate’ which will impact upon young people in tenancies with multiple bedrooms. One young person who is already struggling to manage a very tight budget told us that she will have to find an extra £13 to cover the cost of a second bedroom she doesn’t use.

‘Housing benefit is great at the moment as it covers all the cost at the minute ..without it I would be screwed’.

Young people rely upon housing benefit to pay their rent however earlier this year, Prime Minister David Cameron outlined a number of ideas with the aim of reducing the state welfare budget. Within the ideas covered was the suggestion that housing benefit should be removed for young people under the age of 25 year old. Housing benefit is crucial in allowing young people without recourse to family support to pay their rent. Whilst a decision on housing benefit rests with Government, this Charter supports young people’s assertion to ‘keep housing benefit for those under 25 years old’.
Conclusion

In setting out to produce The Housing Charter we had imagined a document with a greater emphasis on actual housing. In fact what young people have told us about their needs places a far greater emphasis on the support they need in order to prepare, plan for, move into and maintain a place of their own. It also describes a journey, one which with the right intervention and at the right time can avoid or minimise housing crisis.

The young people we spoke to did not tell us about their aspirations to become home owners, they did not describe their housing journey as ‘challenging but rewarding’. The journey for the young people whose views are presented here is often frightening, lonely and entrenched in hardship caused by poverty and isolation. Their aspirations are not demanding, actually they are basic needs and expectations to have a secure home of their own where they are safe, close to their friends, families and support networks in a community where they are welcomed and feel part of. In property that is well maintained.

They recognise, and this was consistent across all of the young people we spoke to in Durham, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and Tees Valley, that they need support to enable them to achieve even these very basic aspirations.

Security of tenure and knowing you can pay your rent each week are vital in having a ‘home’. Recent welfare reforms and changes to housing benefit mean that young people already struggling to survive face an even greater challenge in making ends meet. The young people we spoke to find it difficult and stressful to manage their finances. Juggling finances, sometimes succumbing to a hard sell and balancing what they need to do with what they want to do, is a constant challenge and dilemma. It is not surprising that a 17 year old faced with the choice of staying home alone or going out on the town with some friends, chooses the friends, perhaps spending the electricity money or the rent in the process.

Endorsing The Youth Housing Charter and ensuring the wants and needs of homeless young people highlighted within it are addressed will help young people in the North East secure the housing and support to meet their needs and avoid further homelessness.

‘...we should make every contact count – giving local services the incentives and flexibility they need to intervene earlier to tackle these underlying problems and to ensure that those at risk of homelessness get access to integrated and responsive services – preventing a common life experience from turning into a housing crisis.’ (DCLG, 2012)

The Government increasingly recognises the importance of prevention in addressing homelessness. The Preventing Homelessness Grant provides £400m over a four-year period to local authorities and the voluntary sector. A further £70m was made available in 2011 for local initiatives to prevent and tackle homelessness. Many local authorities and other service providers are investing in mediation services, floating support, personalisation, rent deposit schemes and access to furniture. These services provide a greater opportunity to meet
the immediate needs of young people whilst laying the foundations for them to plan and achieve their future housing and lifestyle aspirations.

Youth Homeless North East would like to encourage all twelve North East local authorities and wider service providers to endorse The Youth Housing Charter to address ‘what young people want’. We would also recommend that The Charter be used in conjunction with the DCLG ‘Positive Pathways approach’ of ‘Developing positive accommodation and support pathways to adulthood: Minimising the risks of youth homelessness and supporting successful transitions for young people’. (Crown, 2012)
References


Youth Homeless North East (2012) Youth Homelessness in the North East Survey
The Positive Pathway aims to support the following outcomes for young people: achieving in education; career success; being healthy; having positive relationships, and involvement in meaningful, enjoyable activities.

Steps 1 – 4: An integrated focus on PREVENTION: Young people staying within the family network for as long as it’s safe and possible to do so. If they need to leave, agencies pro-actively plan options with the young person(and their family where appropriate)

1. **Minimise Demand**
   Education work in schools/other youth provision on reality of housing choices for young people

2. **Reduce crisis & demand:**
   Early intervention work is targeted to keep young people at high risk of homelessness in the family home/network

3. **Reduce crisis**
   Plan & prepare with those at high risk of homelessness BEFORE they are in crisis

4. **A Single Integrated Service Gateway:**
   jointly delivered and/or commissioned by Housing & Children’s Services
   Functions: Pro-active prevention of homelessness, assessment of needs, planning and advice on options & access to short stay /longer stay accommodation if needed
   But also easy access to a wider range of advice and support, e.g.: Advice & support re: education, training & employment
   Health services e.g. counselling, substance misuse, sexual health
   Life skills & income maximisation advice

Steps 5 – 7: Young people can access 3 broad options and can move between them until they are ready to move on into more settled accommodation (Step 8). A big focus here on stabilising, engaging in education, training & employment.

5. **Supported accommodation** as a starting point for higher needs or young age (16/17/18). Living in a hostel, a foyer or supported lodgings until assessed as ready for next move.

6. **Floating Support** in their own accommodation, based on level of need, to support success in education, training & employment, health & well being & ability to manage a tenancy & sharing with others.

7. **Shared student-style accommodation** for those in full time education, training/apprenticeships with “light touch” support. A key to this is affordability for young people.

8. **Moving on**
   Young person is ready to make their next move with minimal/no support. The aim is that they are positively engaged in education, training or employment, they have good health & emotional well being, positive relationships & the ability to manage a tenancy & sharing with others.

---

Steps 5 – 7: Young people can access 3 broad options and can move between them until they are ready to move on into more settled accommodation (Step 8). A big focus here on stabilising, engaging in education, training & employment. This part of the pathway is based on the concept of progression & readiness to succeed, so accommodation & level of support are tailored to individuals. Support may be on site, floating support, or light touch: lead tenant, concierge, college/ training provider.
Appendix 2:

Durham County Council:

Homelessness Strategy 2013-18:

Action Plan:
This homelessness strategy has six objectives:

1. To prevent homelessness for all in housing need across County Durham.

2. To ensure that services work in partnership to meet the holistic needs of all clients, including those with complex needs and/or those at risk of rough sleeping.

3. To ensure that sufficient, appropriate and affordable accommodation is available for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

4. To provide housing advice and housing options to those in housing need in County Durham.

5. To tackle the wider social and economic causes of homelessness by supporting people to access health, employment, training and associated services.

6. To achieve Gold Standard. This is a standard set by government as it is aimed at being effective and efficient rather than an enhanced service. By demonstrating that we have achieved this standard may result in additional funding.
Each objective is then linked to the Gold Standard Challenges:

The **ten local challenges** the government has posed to the sector are to:

1. Adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services.

2. Actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs.

3. Offer a Housing Options prevention service, including written advice, to all clients.

4. Adopt a *No Second Night Out* model or an effective local alternative.

5. Have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support.

6. Develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both clients and landlords.

7. Actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme.

8. Have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs.

9. Not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation.

10. Not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and then for no longer than 6 weeks.
**Objective: 1**

To prevent homelessness for all in housing need across County Durham.

**Gold Standard 1:**

We have adopted a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Adult &amp; Children Service / RED / Resources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>DCLG Grant -</td>
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<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>Completion Date</th>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All service groups are signed up to the homelessness strategy with a corporate commitment to deliver the aims and objectives</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>January 12</td>
<td>Identify relevant departments Draft report to seek commitment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead member foreword within the local preventing homelessness strategy makes explicit commitment to early intervention and prevention</td>
<td>July 13</td>
<td>August 13</td>
<td>Briefing note to Member and Head of Service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide quarterly briefing sessions, including joint training across local authority services and VCOs, regarding the local response to homelessness and the importance of preventing homelessness, via prevention champions training.</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Develop internal / external training plan for prevention champions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide briefings to elected members on the local strategic response to homelessness</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Develop internal briefing programme &amp; regular attendance at scrutiny committee.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide quarterly updates to Housing Forum highlighting progress and blockages in delivery of strategic objectives to assess additional resource allocation</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Agree reporting timeline</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure Preventing Homelessness Grant allocation is fully utilised for the delivery of the Housing Options/Prevention Services</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Seek Head of Service agreement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Continue Corporate agreement to carry forward any under-spend in preventing homelessness grant funding</strong></td>
<td><strong>September 13</strong></td>
<td><strong>On-going</strong></td>
<td>Seek Head of Service Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ensure Government contribution to DHP is being used in a targeted way to prevent homelessness via incorporating assessment and triage into Housing Solutions Service.</strong></td>
<td><strong>September 13</strong></td>
<td><strong>On-going</strong></td>
<td>Review triage service to ensure target group access DHP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Continued support to Homeless Action Partnership and Third Sector Forum.</strong></td>
<td><strong>September 13</strong></td>
<td><strong>On-going</strong></td>
<td>Ensure programme of HAP &amp; Third Sector meeting developed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Action 2

**Objective: 5**
To tackle the wider social and economic causes of homelessness by supporting people to access health, employment, training and associated services.

**Gold Standard 2:**
We actively work in partnership with your Voluntary Sector stakeholders and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs.

<table>
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<td>Key Partners</td>
<td>HAP – RED</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Within current resources.</td>
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<th>Status</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Via homelessness strategy - service map all VCO and other key partners (specifically statutory services &amp; registered providers) in the area.</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>Annual review</td>
<td>Review current directories to assess suitability.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure all partners are consulted with regarding any changes to policies or practice and in the review of the homelessness strategy action plan.</td>
<td>September 14</td>
<td>Annual Review.</td>
<td>Develop review programme via HAP and Third Sector Forum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and agreed homelessness contacts within each VCO &amp; within all Registered Providers following delivery of Prevention Champions Training.</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>Annual review.</td>
<td>Seek SPOC in each organisation and include in prevention champions training.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and agree Named homelessness contacts within LA services (specifically), Housing Benefit, Children’s Services, Adult Services, Environmental Health, Supporting People</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>Annual Review</td>
<td>Seek SPOC in each Department and include in Prevention Champions Training programme.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and agree Named homelessness contacts within other statutory services (Police, Probation, JCP, CMHT,)</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>Annual Review</td>
<td>Seek SPOC in each Department and include in Prevention Champions Training programme.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensure Housing Solutions represented on local Health &amp; Wellbeing</td>
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<td>Board</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ensure via DKO that Housing Solutions is engaged with Registered Provider Community Investment programmes and services to tenants and residents of social landlords, including job clubs, training and skills opportunities for tenants and support providers in the delivery of housing options as required, for example via Enhanced Housing Options Wizard.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>September 13</strong></td>
<td><strong>Annual Review</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ensure action included in DKO action plan to be monitored via Steering group</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ensure Housing Solutions continue to develop and support Partnerships include enabling access to Furniture/white goods and food banks</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>April 14</strong></td>
<td><strong>April 15</strong></td>
<td><strong>Review current provision and assess gaps / possible funding routes.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Develop Joint working or SLAs with credit unions in regard to referrals of clients and possible allocation of repossession loan fund.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>October 13</strong></td>
<td><strong>April 14</strong></td>
<td><strong>Review current providers and seek agreement.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Map and review delivery of LSC contracts across the County to identify provision and areas lacking access to social welfare advice and develop appropriate partnership response.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>October 13</strong></td>
<td><strong>April 14</strong></td>
<td><strong>Review current provider’s gaps and seek appropriate referral routes.</strong></td>
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<td>Action</td>
<td>Start Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review service standards for housing solutions service delivery in</td>
<td>October 13</td>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>Review current standards. Consider wider regional minimum standards. Include in HAP &amp; Third</td>
<td>Review via regional homelessness group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>partnership with key partner agencies (including VCOs) and service</td>
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<td>Sector action plans.</td>
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<td>users</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide regular training updates to customer service staff on housing</td>
<td>November 13</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Review current training materials and agreed delivery programme.</td>
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<tr>
<td>solutions services, including effective referrals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seek to establish regional common service standards will all Local</td>
<td>October 13</td>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>Review all current procedures to ensure effective and up to date.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Authorities setting minimum service standards for all clients</td>
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<tr>
<td>approaching housing solutions / options services.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review internal procedures to ensure offer effective guidance to</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Include in HSS service plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>delivery of consistent service.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensure individual and team training plans include housing law and</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Review current training and quality assurance systems.</td>
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<tr>
<td>skills based training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensure effective delivery of procedures in regard to case allocation,</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>Annually</td>
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<tr>
<td>quality of advice, corrective actions, and customer</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Develop process of quality checks including Team Leaders / Managers sitting in on customer interviews to ensure consistent, quality service is delivered. | September 13 | Annually | Agree regular programme of quality checks to be included in HSS service plan.  
Promote the use of NHAS, training, mortgage debt advice and information resources | September 13 | Annually | Review current resources and promote to front line. 
Ensure Baseline offer continues to include access to the private rented sector and all prevention tools for people who do not fulfil the statutory homelessness criteria. | September 13 | Annually | Ensure cost effectiveness of prevention services are monitored and highlighted to ensure continued investment. 
Review access arrangements (including home visits, outreach surgeries, comprehensive online advice and information via web and EHO Wizard) | September 13 | April 14 | Implement recommendations form service & diagnostic review.  
Update Equalities impact assessment. | September 13 | April 14 |  
Review options for development of triage service promoting self help, access to private rented sector via Durham Key Options and enabling resources to be targeted to those in greatest need. | Nov 13 | April 14 |
## Action 4

**Objective: 3**
To ensure that sufficient, appropriate and affordable accommodation is available for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

**Gold Standard 4:**
We have adopted a No Second Night Out model or an effective local alternative

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<td>HAP - RED</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Regional Grant Within current resources.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>Completion Date</th>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete annual street counts / estimates in accordance with DCLG guidance and with reference to Homeless Link toolkit</td>
<td>October 13</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Agree rough sleeper count / estimate process via HAP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to support the development of Adults facing Chronic Exclusion (ACE) in response to rough sleepers.</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Continue to support steering group / review / implement findings of prompt report.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure reporting of new rough sleepers feeds into regional monitoring process.</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Update HS Staff / ACE Project staff on reporting of rough sleepers via No Second Night Out (NSNO) provisions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete annual health needs audit and ensuring finding informs service developments.</td>
<td>May 13</td>
<td>Annually.</td>
<td>Review guidance and implement audit. Upload action plan with findings.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a regional single service offer that is consistent across local partners, including an effective and robust reconnections policy.</td>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>September 14</td>
<td>Agree and develop SSO with regional Las. Implement and monitor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure ACE pilot and NSNO response in County Durham is communicated to key partners and public via promotional activity and Prevention Champions Training.</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Regular updated on ACE to HAP and incorporate response into Prevention Champions programme.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Start Date</td>
<td>End Date</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensure ACE continues to provide direct access accommodation to rough sleepers.</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Continue to support development of ACE / The Fells to promote direct access for rough sleepers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop access to Crash pads and Emergency supported lodgings for rough sleepers.</td>
<td>September 14</td>
<td>April 15</td>
<td>Review current provision and assess possible access for rough sleepers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop options for female rough sleepers to ensure access to accommodation and support.</td>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>April 15</td>
<td>Review current provision. Map gaps. Identity possible funding sources.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop MEAM pilot to address the accommodation and support needs of those clients excluded from services.</td>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>April 15</td>
<td>Identify partners and funding stream for application.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure ACE continues to provide a system for forming an assessment of rough sleepers within 72 hours of identification, including those with no local connection/entitlement.</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Support future funding applications to continue response to rough sleeping.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree regional reconnections policy, including access to travel funds and plans to ensure accommodation and support is accessed.</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>November 13</td>
<td>Develop and agree via regional Las group.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure NSNO offer in County is delivered in collaboration with key partners - Police and Community Safety, the local community, Outreach, faith groups, day services and others such as parks, parking and refuse collection as appropriate cooperating with local service offer and referring rough sleepers into local services</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Continued to support NSNO Steering group across County Durham.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop mediation services via FIP and / or relationship counselling services to reduce loss of accommodation due to relationship breakdown.</td>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>September 14</td>
<td>Map existing provision for mediation service. Review possible funding routes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote formal links between ACE other housing and support providers and Regional Through The Gate Service to promote early identification of those at risk of homelessness prior to release from custody.</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>Continue to attend Through the Gate Steering group to assist in integration and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure floating support is offered immediately following the securing of a tenancy by former rough sleeping to avoid breakdown of placement.</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>Review current support arrangements. Consider funding streams for additional floating support provision.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closure liaison between housing solutions / ACE and substance misuse teams to provide tailored advice and support.</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>Consider options / models of working to support client group.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Action 5

**Objective:** 2, 3, 4, 5

2. To ensure that services work in partnership to meet the holistic needs of all clients, including those with complex needs and / or those at risk of rough sleeping.

3. To ensure that sufficient, appropriate and affordable accommodation is available for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

4. To provide housing advice and housing options to everyone in County Durham

5. To tackle the wider social and economic causes of homelessness by supporting people to access health, employment, training and associated services.

### Gold Standard 5:

We have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that include appropriate accommodation and support.

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review and extend Hospital Discharge protocol and evaluate effectiveness.</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Monitor effectiveness / review / amend and extend to other hospitals / departments if required.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to monitor effectiveness of Joint Protocol and Care Leavers Accommodation &amp; Support Protocol (CLASP) via Holistic Temporary Accommodation and Support Service (HTASS) Steering group.</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Complete annual review and quarterly monitoring to ensure service is meeting desired outcomes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Start Date</td>
<td>End Date</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review referral pathways offered by regional through the gate service to support accommodation and support needs of returning prisoners and their families.</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Continue to support development of service and involvement in service evaluation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review Move-on arrangements with supported housing providers in light of welfare reform.</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>September 14</td>
<td>Review options, developed shared tenant scheme.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review supported housing commissioning arrangements and the impact of HTASS on referral pathways and move-on plans to maximise effective use of resources.</td>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>September 14</td>
<td>Establish project group, evaluate current model, and recommend future arrangements.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review impact of HTASS on floating support services and ensure continuity of support is offered where appropriate following move-on from HTASS</td>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>September 14</td>
<td>As above.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review Pathways model for young people via HTASS to ensure effective and reducing use of B&amp;B</td>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>September 14</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review move-on arrangements and support from TA offered by HTASS and potential increase in use of PRS.</td>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>September 14</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate personalisation pilot to assess impact and recommendations for service improvement.</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>December 13</td>
<td>Continue to monitor use and effectiveness of service. Recommend improvements where identified.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop referral routes into employment, education and training options advice and support is available to all customers.</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>Review current referrals routes and recommend / develop improvements.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure links are maintain and developed to ensure the Think Family approach is adopted across Housing Solutions and services developed in support of trouble families services.</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>Review current practice and develop in line with good practice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure Priority and Prolific Offender (PPO) role continues to provide support for offenders to ensure accommodation options are</td>
<td>January 14</td>
<td>March 14</td>
<td>Evaluate role and make recommendations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
available for, including access to private rented sector.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consider jointly commissioned services to respond to housing need across the authority, for example, health, criminal justice, DWP et cetera taking advantage of GP commission arrangements based on evidence of need established via health needs audit.</th>
<th>April 14</th>
<th>July 14.</th>
<th>Completed Health Needs Audit. Report findings to appropriate groups. Present Homelessness Strategy priorities to relevant groups to seek corporate support to joint working</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review options to provide peer education to young people to prevent homelessness.</td>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>June 12</td>
<td>Map existing provision. Identify possible funding routes. Develop options report.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Action 6

**Objective:** To ensure that sufficient, appropriate and affordable accommodation is available for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

**Gold Standard 6:** We have developed a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both client and landlord.

**Lead Agency/Agencies**

Andrew Burnip: Durham County Council

**Project Manager**

Andrew Burnip

**Key Partners**

Registered Providers / HAP

**Resources**

Within current resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>Completion Date</th>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensure bond scheme / prevention fund continues to provide access to Private rented Sector (PRS) is not restricted to only those households in priority need</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>March 14</td>
<td>Review current policy and identify / implement improvements to increase sector take up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review PRS strategy to ensure it is linked to the homelessness strategy, wider housing strategy tenancy strategy and allocations strategies.</td>
<td>March 14</td>
<td>September 14</td>
<td>Evaluate PRS discharge policy to ensure effective.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review joint working arrangements with Housing Renewals Team to increase access to PRS.</td>
<td>January 14</td>
<td>March 14</td>
<td>Ensure protocol maximises outcomes for all clients.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure PRS tenants gain access to Discretionary Housing Payments via emerging triage service.</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>November 13</td>
<td>Review and evaluate triage process.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review Welfare Reform liaison officer role to maximise access to PRS.</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>March 14</td>
<td>Evaluate role and effectiveness in increasing access to PRS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop referral routes into warm front type services to minimise fuel poverty.</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>March 14</td>
<td>Establish current offer and embed in service options</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity Description</td>
<td>Start Date</td>
<td>End Date</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review involvement in Landlord hotline facilities operated by renewal team.</td>
<td>January 14</td>
<td>March 14</td>
<td>Ensure referrals to HSS to increase opportunity for prevention.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop Ring before you serve notice service in partnership with renewals team for private landlords seeking possession.</td>
<td>March 14</td>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with partners to develop availability of shared accommodation for under 35s at the LHA level</td>
<td>July 13</td>
<td>November 13</td>
<td>Research options and develop implementation plan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess support available to landlords to convert or improve their properties for sharing and for managing shared tenancies.</td>
<td>July 13</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop PRS offer via DKO to ensure PRS is accessible to those registered via Durham Key Options.</td>
<td>July 13</td>
<td>March 14</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider availability of additional incentives to assist social tenants unable to afford their homes due to under occupancy charge to access to the private rented sector.</td>
<td>July 13</td>
<td>March 14</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Objective:
1. To prevent homelessness for all in housing need across County Durham.

### Gold Standard:7
- We actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme

### Lead Agencies
- Andrew Burnip:
  - Durham County Council

### Project Manager
- Andrew Burnip

### Key Partners
- HAP

### Resources
- Within current resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>Completion Date</th>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide briefings for Housing Solutions and Customer Service to ensure basic knowledge of all options available to homeowners in debt via online Prevention Champions.</td>
<td>July 13</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>Review and update current training materials and develop delivery plan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide briefing to partner agencies, stakeholders, and elected members on service to prevent repossessions.</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>Quarterly</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review website to ensure up to date - advice and information is accessible and available in a range of formats, including leaflets and posters that are available on reception and at partner agency receptions</td>
<td>November 13</td>
<td>March 14</td>
<td>Establish baseline / update and agree regular review.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure MRS and prevent repossessions in included in prevention champions training provided to reception staff / switchboard / call centre staff have a basic understanding of the local response to people who are in mortgage arrears</td>
<td>July 13</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>Review and update current training materials and develop delivery plan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Start Date</td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Details</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue engagement in court users group to increase referrals from County Court Duty Scheme.</td>
<td>July 13</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Review and update current training materials and develop delivery plan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue regular meetings with zone agent to ensure access to MRS completions for DCC.</td>
<td>July 13</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Confirm SPOC for HSS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review repossession loan fund and consider options for Credit union to deliver project further to include financial capability training.</td>
<td>July 13</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>Evaluate current scheme and consider options to ensure VFM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review any large scale closure of employers and ensure ability to offer onsite support to those facing redundancy.</td>
<td>July 13</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Work with Economic Development Team SPOC to monitor any employers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Action 8

**Objective:**
1. To prevent homelessness for all in housing need across County Durham.

**Gold Standard 8:** We have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lead Agency/Agencies</th>
<th>Andrew Burnip: Durham County Council</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Manager</td>
<td>Andrew Burnip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Partners</td>
<td>HAP / RED / Regional Homelessness Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Within current resources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>Completion Date</th>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review homelessness strategy annually with partners.</td>
<td>June 13</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>Establish process via HAP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review homelessness policy.</td>
<td>June 13</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>Review current policy and update to reflect service developments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The document is 'live' and regularly updated on progress and this is</td>
<td>June 13</td>
<td>TBC</td>
<td>Agree review process with HAP, Third Sector &amp; Housing Forum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>available on the Council’s website and monitored via the HAP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review all leaflets and literature promoting access to the Housing</td>
<td>July 13</td>
<td>August 13</td>
<td>Evaluate current material and update / disseminate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solutions Service.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieve Gold Standard Status:</td>
<td>November 13</td>
<td>March 15</td>
<td>Agree peer review process with 2 regional Las. Evaluate evidence form</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>review and adopt in continuous improvement plan prior to application</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>of GS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Action 9

**Objective:1,2,3**

1. To prevent homelessness for all in housing need across County Durham.
2. To ensure that services work in partnership to meet the holistic needs of all clients, including those with complex needs and / or those at risk of rough sleeping.
3. To ensure that sufficient, appropriate and affordable accommodation is available for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

**Gold Standard 9:**

- We do not place any 16 or 17 year olds in B&B accommodation

**Lead Agency/Agencies**

Andrew Burnip:  
Durham County Council

**Project Manager**

Andrew Burnip

**Key Partners**

HAP / Children & Adults  
DCLG Grant / within current resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>Completion Date</th>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continue to review effectiveness of JP via HTASS Steering group including provision of crash pads for 16/17 year olds.</td>
<td>January 14</td>
<td>March 14</td>
<td>Agree evaluation via HTASS commissioning group. Implement service improvements.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review Emergency Supported Lodgings Service to ensure no 16/17 year old is placed into B&amp;B.</td>
<td>January 14</td>
<td>March 14</td>
<td>Agree evaluation via HTASS commissioning group. Implement service improvements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review Life Skills training, mediation and peer education services across the county to identify gaps and develop countywide service provision to localities with greatest need.</td>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>June 14</td>
<td>Review current provision. Agreed preferred delivery model. Locate funding and commission.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Intervention Project continues to target families in need of holistic support and intervention.</td>
<td>July 13</td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>Review referrals routes from HSS to FIP/ Family wise to increase training and employment outcomes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review HTASS, Step Forward and Emergency Supported Lodgings</td>
<td>January 14</td>
<td>March 14</td>
<td>Agree evaluation via</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Service to ensure effective in providing temporary accommodation options and move-on.

| Establish a pre eviction protocol panel for all supported housing providers. | September 13 | October 13 | Review current draft / establish consultation / implement improvements and monitor. |
| Support the work of Youth Homelessness North East. | September 13 | on-going | Review DCC pledges from Youth Homelessness Charter and agree actions. |

For further information please contact: andrew.burnip@durham.gov.uk