

***Gateshead Council
Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2013 – 2018***



“The best possible life chances for all through good quality affordable homes in thriving, inclusive and sustainable communities”.

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1. Foreword

Welcome to the 2013 – 2018 Preventing Homelessness Strategy for Gateshead. The strategy has been formulated to continue to work towards the eradication of homelessness.

Good quality and affordable housing underpins the achievement of all aspirations in life, ranging from improved and sustained health, to better education attainment, ability to unlock opportunities in the workplace and feeling secure within society.

Our service vision is:

“The best possible life chances for all through good quality affordable homes in thriving, inclusive and sustainable communities.”

The headline priorities for the service to deliver are:

- The Property: contributing towards ‘increasing and maintaining the supply of good quality housing to meet the needs and aspirations of tenants and residents.
- The People: supporting people to secure and maintain a home and improve their quality of life.
- The Place: making Gateshead a better place to live, and doing so by making best use of our financial, staff and stock resources.

Within Gateshead Council, Housing Services provides help to prevent homelessness, provide homelessness advice, identify housing options and support home purchase. The service provides housing support to people setting up new homes, help to maintain tenancies, help for those fleeing domestic abuse, people with mild learning disabilities, young people, people with mental health problems and other areas of vulnerability.

Homelessness is a complex problem with multiple causes requiring flexible solutions. Over the course of the previous Homelessness Prevention Strategy, Gateshead Council and our partners have worked to establish a range of homelessness prevention options. Additionally, in the face of rising levels of street homelessness nationally, we are committed to the government’s strategy of No Second Night Out.

Across a range of services Gateshead has recognised the importance of targeted early intervention approaches to meet the needs of our communities. To achieve the best possible results it is essential that partners across different sectors and departments understand their important contribution. Likewise, it is crucial that these partners appreciate the cyclical benefits that our homelessness prevention services have on all of their service areas including health, the criminal justice system, children and families and education.

Our new homelessness prevention strategy for 2013 is set in a challenging climate of economic downturn and high levels of unemployment, government austerity measures including significant reform to the welfare system and difficult housing market conditions. We know that individually, these factors can disproportionately effect vulnerable people and increase the risk of homelessness. Collectively, these factors produce an environment that is bound to have a considerable impact nationally and locally.

The challenge is significant; however, we do not want to produce a homelessness prevention strategy that is merely reactive. We remain ambitious in our vision and know that we have experienced skilled and innovative agencies within local partnerships that will rise to the challenge and continue to prevent homelessness effectively and work towards achieving Gold Standard for service provision.

Through the Vulnerable Persons Strategic Housing Group, we find creative ways to meet special housing needs and support new development provision to meet identified need.

Gateshead Council is committed to this 5 year strategy, which will be reviewed regularly, and sets out the common purpose of the Council to work with its partners, stakeholders and service users to eradicate homelessness in Gateshead wherever possible.



Councillor Catherine Donovan
Portfolio lead on Housing

2. Background to the Strategy.

2.1. The National Context

The [Homelessness Act 2002](#) places a duty on local authorities to:

- ✚ provide free advice and information about homelessness and preventing homelessness to everyone in their district.
- ✚ assist eligible individuals and families who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and in priority need.

Within the Act, the government made homelessness prevention a priority by providing increased funding to tackle homelessness, setting challenging targets for prevention and placing requirements on local housing authorities to produce Homelessness Strategies. The Homelessness Strategy was to be informed by a review of performance, current service provision and estimated future need. The Act stated that the focus of these strategies was to be on prevention measures, as well as emphasising the importance of offering advice to all people in housing need.

The government later identified a number of targets in relation to homelessness. These included:

- ✚ to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010 by 50% (against December 2004 figures).
- ✚ to end the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless 16/17 year olds by 2010.
- ✚ to end rough sleeping by 2012/13.

National strategies and guidance that have helped to shape this Homelessness Strategy include:

- ✚ Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives (2005) <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/137815.pdf>) Homelessness Prevention, reduction in the use of temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010, from 2010 B&B no longer suitable for 16/17 year olds.
- ✚ Sustainable Communities: Homes For All (2005) www.westminsteronline.org/.../FiveYearStrategyODPM.pdf) Choice Based Lettings schemes in all local authorities in England by 2010.
- ✚ [No One Left Out: Communities Ending Rough Sleeping](#): (2008): aimed to end rough sleeping in UK for more than one night by 2012.

- ✚ [No Second Night Out](#): (2011). This government plan sets out six joint commitments to ensure multi agency working to give local people the tools to tackle rough sleeping and put an end to second nights out on the street.
- ✚ [The Localism Act](#); (2011): Lets local authorities meet their homelessness duty by providing good quality private rented homes. This option could provide an appropriate solution for people experiencing a homelessness crisis, at the same time as freeing up social homes for people in real need on the waiting list.
- ✚ [Laying the Foundations – a Housing Strategy for Coalition Government](#) Social and England (2011) affordable housing reform (chapter 3)
- ✚ [Making every contact count](#): A joint approach to preventing homelessness (2012) sets ten local challenges for housing authorities to ensure that every contact local agencies make with vulnerable people and families really counts to ensure that we prevent households, regardless of household make up from reaching a crisis point where they are faced with homelessness.
- ✚ [The Welfare Reform Act \(2012\)](#): Restricts Housing Benefit entitlement for social housing tenants whose accommodation is larger than they need and also introduces Universal Credit to replace most existing welfare benefits.
- ✚ [Gold Standard 2013](#) - Led by a small expert team based at Winchester City Council and supported by the National Homelessness Advice Service, the peer-led scheme will provide a host of free training and support to help local authority housing options teams learn from each other and gain Gold Standard status.

2.2. The Local Context

The increasing demands on social housing and the instability within the housing market and the economy as a whole, has lead to real challenges in preventing homelessness and resolving the needs of those who have become homeless. Gateshead was previously in a position of increasing homelessness and increasing expenditure on temporary accommodation. However, in the past 3 years, even within the context of global economic crisis, there is now a downward trend of homeless acceptances, an increase in homeless preventions and a decrease in the use of temporary accommodation, especially the use of bed and breakfast accommodation.

This is the third Homelessness Strategy to be produced by Gateshead. Like it's predecessors the focus is on homelessness prevention and there have been many achievements in recent years. Here are some examples and there is further detailed information at appendix 3.

Homeless Preventions

- ✓ Since 2008, there has been a 87 per cent increase in Homeless preventions.

Household acceptances

- ✓ In the last 5 years there has been a 64 per cent decrease in the number of applicants accepted as owed a main homelessness duty.

Households in temporary accommodation

- ✓ 13 households were in temporary accommodation on 31 March 2012, 64 per cent lower than the same period in 2008 The 2010 government target to reduce the use of temporary accommodation by 50% was achieved and has been maintained consistently.
- ✓ Significant saving in Bed & Breakfast spend from £218,000 in 2007/2008 to £6,130 in 2011/2012. This is a 98 per cent decrease in the money spent on Bed & Breakfast.

Homeless cases outstanding at the end of the year

- ✓ 83 per cent decrease in the number of homeless households waiting to be re-housed as of 31 March 2012 compared to March 31 2008.

Specialist Debt Advice

- ✓ Total amount of money managed over last 5 years £15,365,065.
- ✓ Total amount gained for service users over last 5 years £9,476,341.

Households assisted

- ✓ In 2011/2012, 3613 households were assisted by the Housing Options team, which equates to a 44% increase on the households that were assisted last year.

Lettings Policy

Changes to the new [lettings policy](#) will help tenants in response to major changes to welfare benefits made by the government.

Changes to [Housing Benefit entitlement](#) will see benefits reduced if tenants are judged to be 'under-occupying' their homes; something expected to adversely affect almost 3,000 council tenants of working age who claim housing benefit and under-occupy their homes under the definitions in the Welfare Reform Act. In some cases, the changes may also have an impact on older residents.

Changes to the new lettings policy will assist council tenants and their families who are deemed to be 'under occupying' under the new rules. The changes are designed to make it easier for working age council tenants and their

families affected by the benefit changes to move to a home with fewer bedrooms.

2.3 Gateshead objectives and action plan

Local Authorities have a range of various objectives that they wish to achieve in their respective areas. Set out below is the Corporate Priority and the two main objectives that Gateshead wishes to achieve via our Homelessness Strategy. These objectives also form part of the Improvement and Development Action Plan (IDaP) for Housing Services in Gateshead:

Corporate Priority: *Building Stronger Communities.*

Supporting people to secure and sustain a home and improve their quality of life;

Preventing Homelessness Strategy objectives:

- ✓ *Improve access to housing for vulnerable or socially excluded groups and increase housing support provision for all groups.*
- ✓ *Embed the findings of the Vulnerable Persons Strategic Housing Group in relevant work streams, strategies and commissioning plans.*

The objectives above are captured within 6 main headings in the Vulnerable Persons Strategic action Plan:

- ✚ Health
- ✚ Domestic Violence
- ✚ Children and Young People
- ✚ Substance misuse and offending
- ✚ Ex military
- ✚ Cross Cutting

The action plan which, is subject to regular revision, is attached at appendix 6.

3. *Links to other council Strategies and plans.*

A key aim of the Homelessness Strategy is to align with other key strategies and plans. The Strategy plays a key role in shaping service action to some of the most vulnerable people in the Borough.

Strategic Tenancy Policy

The Localism Act 2011 places a specific statutory duty on all council's in England and Wales to produce a Strategic Tenancy Policy which sets

out the broad objectives to be taken into consideration by housing associations when formulating policies on the letting of social housing. The Government has made it clear that it wants local authorities to have a degree of strategic influence over how affordable housing providers implement their lettings policies. Housing providers will be expected to give 'due regard' to the objectives and principles set out in a local authority's Strategic Tenancy Policy.

The Strategic Needs Assessment

The main role of the Assessment is to inform future policy and priorities. The emerging needs have therefore been used to develop the new Corporate Plan for the Council and beyond this, the management of performance and the development of Strategic Indicators. This is the first time that an assessment of need on a wider scale has been undertaken.

The Council Plan 2012 - 2017

The Council Plan 2012 – 17 describes our priorities for Gateshead over the next 5 years. It will focus on:

- Meeting the needs of Gateshead residents and reducing inequality
- Delivering our long term strategy, Vision 2030
- Delivering our ambition of sustainable economic growth and well being
- Focusing on our 'have to do', statutory functions (strategic, democratic, safety)

The Council plan has been informed by the **Gateshead Joint Strategic Needs Assessment** which provides an evidence base of the key socio-economic needs in Gateshead.

The Homeless Strategy links with the strategic needs assessment of the financial exclusion, child poverty and domestic violence elements of the plan to help some of the most vulnerable households in the Community. It also links with the strategic aim of providing affordable and decent housing, improving health and wellbeing and giving children the best start in life.

The Housing Strategy 2013 – 2018 - The strategy will provide a single reference document for all of our housing-related activity, replacing a number of current strategies and incorporating all the statutory housing documents the Council has to produce¹. It provides a comprehensive assessment of the challenges facing the Council to ensure that every person who lives, or would like to live, in Gateshead can access and remain in a home that meets their needs, free from harm or harassment, irrespective of what stage of life they

¹ It satisfies the requirement to publish a Homelessness Strategy under the provisions of the Homelessness Act 2002 and replaces the Private Sector Renewal Strategy, the Empty Homes Strategy and Older Persons Housing Strategy. The statutory Tenancy Strategy, required under the Localism Act 2011, and financial assistance policy, required under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002, are annexed to the strategy.

are at. It will identify a programme of actions that will maximise the contribution of housing to wider economic growth and personal health and wellbeing.

Vision 2030

Vision 2030 is Gateshead's Sustainable Community Strategy which sets out the following ambitious and aspirational vision for Gateshead:

"Local people realising their full potential, enjoying the best quality of life in a healthy, equal, safe, prosperous and sustainable Gateshead."

Vision 2030 reflects the views of thousands of people and is informed by evidence gathered from Gateshead's area profile - which gives a picture of the quality of life and services across the borough.

The Six Big Ideas

Gateshead has undergone a journey of transformation over the last 20 years based on a long term vision and commitment to unlocking the potential of Gateshead. Vision 2030 aims to improve the wellbeing and equality of opportunity for everyone in Gateshead so that all residents and businesses can fulfil their potential. This 20 year strategy is clear about what needs to change and continues to accelerate our programme of transformation of Gateshead... one which focuses on people and place through 6 Big Ideas:

Gateshead goes Global

Gateshead goes Global seeks to maximise the opportunities of globalisation for local benefit and reward and to recognise our role in the international community.

Creative Gateshead

Creative Gateshead is all about investing in our heritage and our people. It's about giving local people the chance to enjoy a variety of creative experiences and opportunities that improve their quality of life as well as the look and feel of the borough.

Sustainable Gateshead

This big idea is about making Gateshead more sustainable. This means looking at how we live, how we travel, use our resources and energy as well as how we ensure a sound economic future and an attractive local environment for Gateshead.

Active and Healthy Gateshead

We want Gateshead to have one of the healthiest communities in the country with the building blocks in place to support and encourage people to take up opportunities to improve their health and lifestyle.

Gateshead Volunteers

Gateshead Volunteers is about involving more local people in their community in a way that benefits them and their community. We want Gateshead to be known as a national leader in promoting and supporting volunteering.

The Homeless Strategy links in with the Active and Healthy big idea within vision 2030.

4. Monitoring and Review.

The strategy action plan for the next five years will be monitored and reviewed regularly by the Housing Services Manager.

The strategy also incorporates a constant opportunity feedback form, (at appendix 5) which readers can complete and return to Housing Services at any time during the life of the strategy. All feedback will be considered and replied to where applicable.

5. Alternative communication formats

This document *may* be available on request in large print, Braille, audio device or alternative language- contact Housing Services on 0191 433 2735.

6. Appendices

Appendix 1

Where are we and how can we be contacted?

Community Based Services
Social Care and Independent Living
Housing Services
Gateshead Civic Centre
Regent Street
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NE8 1HH

Telephone: 0191 433 3000

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Appendix 2

Partnership and Stakeholder Consultation

The development of the strategy has been made possible with the grateful assistance of our partners and stakeholders. Consultation and feedback has been received from:

- Housing Portfolio
- Members of the Council
- Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).
- The Gateshead Housing Company.
- The disability forum.
- Gateshead Access Panel
- Talisman.
- The Vulnerable Persons Housing Group.
- Shelter.
- Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB).
- Staff within Housing Services and other Council departments.
- Northumbria Police.
- Registered Social Landlords.
- Gateshead Private Landlords Association.
- Changing Lives
- Aquilla Way.
- Norcare.
- Public consultation including former service users.

Appendix 3

Key Achievements.

Please double click on link to open:



Key Achievements

Appendix 4

The Homelessness Review Current Situation & Recent Homelessness Performance.

In order to move forward with the Preventing Homelessness Strategy it is necessary to take stock of the recent trend and current level of need and resource in Gateshead.

Please double click on link to open:



Analysis of
Homelessness.pdf

Housing Requirements at April 2012

Information extracted from the Newcastle/Gateshead Strategic Housing
Market Assessment 2011/12:

Double Click on link to open:



NewcastleGatesheadSHMAFinalApril2011[1].pdf

Appendix 5

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

An explanation of the headings, initiatives and references used in the strategy.

Double Click on link to open:



Glossary of Terms

Appendix 6

Continuous Feedback form - we encourage feedback on all of our services and offer you the opportunity to complete this form and give us your opinion about any aspect of the Preventing Homelessness Strategy.

Preventing Homeless Strategy feedback form

Your name :

address:

e:mail address:

telephone number

Home: Work:

Mobile:

Please give us details of your feedback:

What would you like us to do now?

Thank you for your feedback. When completed please return this form to:

*Phil Walker
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Appendix 7

Strategic Action Plan

The Gateshead strategic vulnerable persons action plan.
The plan is regularly updated by Housing services.

Please double click on icon to open



Microsoft Excel
97-2003 Worksheet