

or



Darlington Preventing Homelessness Strategy  
2015-17<sup>1</sup>

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<b>Draft</b>	<b>Produced</b>	<b>Amendments</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	March 2015	PM/KD
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Final Draft	<b>June 2015</b>	

## Forward

Darlington's Sustainable Community Strategy; One Darlington, Perfectly Placed is the driver of this document. It sets out a vision for how the people of Darlington will access opportunities despite any personal or social disadvantage. It also sets out a vision for future investment decisions and in particular for housing. The Preventing Homelessness Strategy falls within two of the three "conditions" within the Sustainable Community Strategy:

**Building strong communities-** the preventing Homelessness Strategy recognises the need for a partnership approach in its delivery. There is a need for public sector partnerships across a range of organisations while the voluntary sector are a key part of the service delivery and the private sector are playing an increasingly important role particularly in the delivery of housing.

**Spend every pound wisely-** these are difficult times for public sector funding so it is essential that we focus resources so that we get the best value possible

The Preventing Homelessness Strategy also forms part of 4 of the 8 outcomes:

- **Building safe and caring communities-** those at risk of homelessness or becoming homeless are among the most vulnerable members of our community. How we address homelessness says much about the community we want to build
- **Enough support when needed-** the Preventing Homelessness strategy focuses on providing the right help to avoid homelessness and also providing the right support to get people into stable housing should they become homeless
- **More people healthy and independent-** there are very clear links between homelessness and poor health. Homelessness can lead to poor health but poor health can also lead to homelessness. Another key factor is that those who need support can very easily become dependent on the support. The direction of the strategy encourages independence
- **Children with the best start in life-** the risk of homelessness can come in many forms but the real victims can often be the children, who are forced to change schools, see domestic abuse or are part of a family where a member has an addiction. Addressing the risk of homelessness or finding stable housing is often the first step in helping that child to a better quality of life now and in the future

**At its heart therefore this strategy is about working in partnership to help some of the most vulnerable members of our community**



*Veronica Copeland, Cabinet Member Adult Social Care and Housing Portfolio*

## Executive Summary

This strategy focuses on preventing homelessness. It will only cover two years rather than five so that we can bring it into line with the Housing Strategy which will next be published in 2017. During the life of the previous homelessness strategy we saw very significant changes as the Country came to terms with the recession. Yet despite the reductions in public sector funding and the increase in numbers who were approaching for help, the Council has achieved a great deal. Over the five years of the previous strategy we remodelled the way we manage the application process and changed the pattern of service delivery shifting towards delivering more support within the community.

During this period the number of new applications for help has shown a consistent increase. However, we have responded to this by continued improvement to our performance. We set out to increase the level of preventative action to avoid the worst effects of homelessness and we are now recognised as one of the best performers in England for doing this. We have achieved this while keeping costs among the lowest in England.

We see a number of significant challenges facing us over the next two years not least are the continued challenges of delivering a service while public sector finances continue to reduce. We also have identified a number of underlying trends that need to be addressed including:

- Increase in the number of people with mental health problems seeking help
- Increases in the use of B&B's
- The need to make better use of private sector housing
- Building a strong partnership to meet these challenges

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<sup>1</sup> See page 7

The strategy has two aims:

1. **Find a solution before it happens:** The first and fundamental aim of this strategy is to prevent homelessness.
2. **Find a quick solution if it does happen:** Unfortunately, even with the best efforts, it is recognised that there will be occasions when someone will become homeless, so the second aim is to make sure that a suitable solution can be found as quickly as possible

There are four objectives set out in the strategy:

1. Early Intervention and prevention
2. Minimise the use of temporary accommodation
3. Strive to ensure no one is in Homelessness Crisis for a second night
4. Building the Partnership

To support the objectives there are 22 actions. Some of these actions relate to the 10 challenges contained in the Government's 10 challenges to Local Authorities that make up the "Gold Standard" contained in making every contact count<sup>1</sup>. The actions sit within the Councils's Mid Term Financial Plan and have been the subject of an Equality Impact Assessment and extensive consultation

## 1.0 Introduction

### Why a new Strategy?

The Preventing Homeless Strategy sets out how we will tackle Homelessness over the next two years

We decided to call the new strategy “Preventing Homelessness” as this better reflects what we want to achieve. This follows the lead set by the Government when it produced “Making Every Contact Count” in 2012 which focuses on the role of “prevention”. Prevention is a key strategic theme that has been adopted by successive Governments.

The Homelessness Act (2002) requires all local authorities to develop a Homelessness Strategy every five years, based on a review of the local homelessness situation. The last Homelessness Strategy for Darlington was produced to cover the period 2010 to 2015.

During this time a number of significant changes have taken place locally and nationally that make a new strategy essential. However we also need to bring the Preventing Homelessness Strategy into a



coordinated planning cycle with the Housing Strategy which is due to be renewed in 2017. The Housing strategy is one of the pillars of Darlington’s Sustainable Community Strategy. As a result this strategy will cover the period of 2015 to 2017. A new strategy will be produced in 2017.

### Focus of the Strategy

At the time that this strategy was being produced the Government produced a number of funding initiatives designed to target funding at those who are likely to be trapped in a cycle of long term homelessness.

This illustrates that as well as a focus on prevention there is a need to tackle the issues that can create long term homelessness. Both of these themes can be found in this strategy.

### Planning for the Future

We recognise that homelessness is not just about housing. Poor health can be a cause of homelessness or an effect of homelessness. Homelessness might lead to crime but the reverse is also true. There are many interrelated links that suggest that the delivery of this strategy has to be about a partnership approach. The Sustainable Communities strategy “One Darlington, Perfectly Placed” focuses on the need for strong partnership to move forward. Therefore the delivery of this strategy is based on building a partnership that can collectively address the challenges that we have before us.

## 2.0 National and Local Context

The population in Darlington is estimated to be 105,564<sup>2</sup>, made up of 46,670 households. The population is expected to grow by a further 2000 by 2020. The last Strategic Housing Market assessment in 2012 estimated that there was a need for about 300 new “affordable” properties per year. Like the rest of the UK housing supply is not keeping up with housing demand

Government funding has significantly reduced for housing but despite this Darlington will see between 100 and 200 new properties for affordable rent being built each year. The Council is also committed to build more properties using its own resources. Although this growth is welcome it is still below the estimated need for new affordable rented housing

The private sector is also growing with the numbers of private rented properties increasing rapidly (18% of the total housing stock at 2011 Census). In addition work is ongoing to bring empty homes back into use.



This sector continues to grow largely through the purchase of existing properties. Owner-occupation will see the largest planned growth of new build homes. As well as the growth in housing there are ambitious plans to support the growth of the economy with for example the development of Central Park, a mixed advanced industries and housing development.

Darlington was ranked as the 75<sup>th</sup> most deprived Local Authority out of 326<sup>3</sup>. Although we have not seen the levels of unemployment that other areas of the Tees Valley experienced during the recession we still experienced a noticeable downturn with unemployment higher than the national average. There are now signs of the local economy recovering.

Increases in available housing and the recovery of the economy should help in the longer term to ease underlying pressures on homeless services

Key changes are also planned in the delivery of Adult Social Care and Health. The Clinical Commissioning Group in Darlington and the Council are developing a joint commissioning approach that will see joined up commissioning of services. This should help to address some of the issues that emerged during the review for this strategy concerning the number of people seeking help that had health and social care issues.

There are some positive signs for the future but we also face significant challenges as we move forward.

The policy framework affecting homelessness is both extensive and complex. Summarised here are the key features:

<sup>2</sup> Source: ONS Mid-year population estimates 2012

<sup>3</sup> Source: IMD 2010

## National Policy:

### Homeless Guidance

Probably the most significant guidance is: **'Making every contact count: A joint approach to preventing homelessness'** DCLG 2012.

The strategy sets out 10 local challenges for local authorities that form the Gold Standard:

1. Adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness
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 preventative service
4. Adopt a No Second Night Out model or an effective alternative
5. Have housing pathways agreed
6. Develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups
7. Actively engage in mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme.
8. Have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness
9. Not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed & Breakfast accommodation
10. Not place any families in B&B accommodation unless in an emergency and then for no longer than 6 weeks



The Council were invited to participate in the first stage of the Gold Standard challenge which included a Peer Review. The review reported in March 2015 and as a result Darlington was invited to participate in the next stage in the process.

The national housing strategy is set out in **Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England**, published in November 2011 it set out to:

- Increase the number of houses available to buy and rent
- Improve the flexibility of social housing (increasing mobility and choice) and promote home ownership
- Protect the vulnerable and disadvantaged by tackling homelessness and support people to live independently

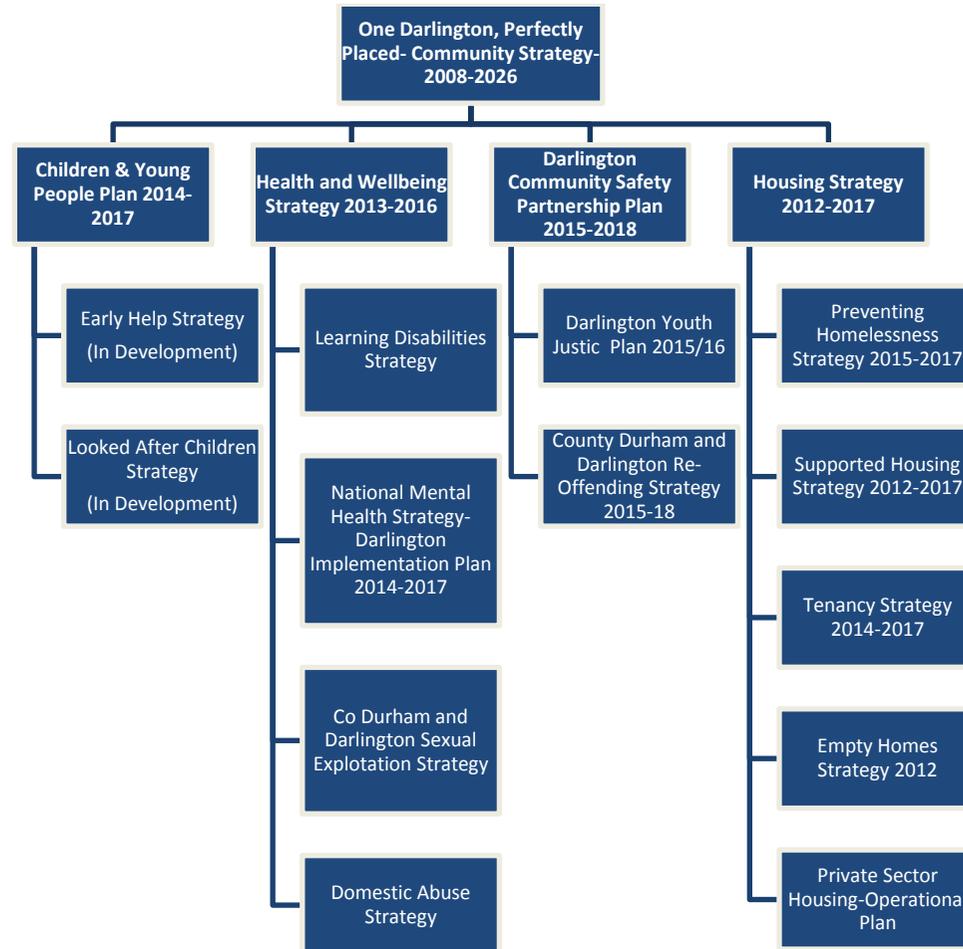
A number of significant changes were introduced as part of **The Localism Act 2011**:

- Reforming homelessness legislation to enable councils to discharge their duty by offering good quality private rented homes where appropriate, freeing up social homes for people in need on the waiting list
- It gives back to local authorities the freedom to manage their own waiting lists, and makes it easier for them to move existing social tenants to more suitable accommodation.
- It also encourages authorities to make use of the existing flexibilities within the allocation legislation
- Introduces Flexible Tenancies

Further significant changes are being introduced through the **Welfare Reform Act 2012**:

The Government is making significant changes to Housing Benefits, introducing a Universal Credit system (designed to simplify the benefits system and improve work incentives) and introducing a cap on benefits payable. These changes present a significant challenge to landlords, their tenants and local authorities responsible for meeting housing needs in an area.

**Local Policy:** The Preventing Homelessness Strategy forms part of the delivery of the Community Strategy. It relates to and is dependent on a number of other local strategies. The diagram below illustrates the range of relations that are important to delivering the Preventing Homelessness strategy:



### 3.0 Achievements Since 2010



Although this has been five years of significant change there have been many successes:

- ✓ The Gold Standard Peer Review fund the Homelessness Service and partnership working to be of the highest standards
- ✓ A successful bid with Durham and Northumberland Councils for funding through the Domestic Abuse fund. A total of £78.500 was awarded to Darlington
- ✓ A successful joint bid with Durham County and First Stop to the Single Homeless fund that helps offenders with their housing and support needs while deterring them from offending. A total of £85,439 was awarded to Darlington
- ✓ The Housing Plus service has been introduced aimed at preventing vulnerable Council tenants from putting their tenancy at risk.
- ✓ Successful implementation of the Key Point of Access (KPA) which has streamlined the assessment and referral process in services for those at risk of homelessness. This has led to reduced representations and reduced waiting time for services
- ✓ Housing Options now take a better preventative approach to homelessness, identifying issues with tenancies prior to them failing. Officers work alongside landlords including negotiating notice periods
- ✓ Partnership working between DBC and the voluntary sector has greatly improved in the intervening years. Providers work more closely together and will share information and support plans with clients moving between services. The joint working and multi-agency approaches help facilitate looking at the bigger picture surrounding the clients' issues, for example, the joint protocol with Children's Services for 16-17 year olds
- ✓ Implementation of the Local Connection policy has significantly reduced the number of bed spaces being occupied by people with no local connection
- ✓ Providing an appointment system to reduce repeat callers and to give a full comprehensive and structured appointment.
- ✓ Looking at the risks and needs of the client, including, identifying pathways and action plans to independent living, identifying the skills the client needs to enable them to manage a tenancy, as well as considering accommodation support or floating support
- ✓ A floating support service designated for complex needs clients has been able to work with a high number of people who have been known to services for years and have been able to support them to find independent accommodation
- ✓ A women only shared house has been opened and achieved 98% successful move on
- ✓ Young people are being supported to access more move on accommodation through a providers links with Landlords
- ✓ The YMCA and the 700 Club at St George's Hall introduced short hold tenancies to give clients additional rights.

## 4.0 Review of Housing Options and Homelessness

### What was included in the review

There have been a number of elements to this review:

1. A strategic review was completed during 2014 into Homeless related support services and this included some of the functions within Housing Options and Homelessness
2. An internal operational review has also taken place of performance and cost. This included benchmarking performance
3. As part of the Government's Gold standard a Peer Review was conducted.

Across the reviews a wide range of interests have been engaged including service users, stakeholders and those delivering the services.

### Gold Standard: Diagnostic Peer Review-Results:

In February 2015 an independent Peer Review supported by the National Practitioner Support Service took place in respect of Homelessness Service in Darlington. This was a comprehensive review and the results were very good:

**Table 1: Summary results DPR**

Pre-visit Assessment	Score
Homeless Strategy Overview	79%
Onsite assessment	69%
Interviews	84%
<b>Total overall score</b>	<b>77%</b>

The following were identified as being particularly good:

*"Partnership working in Darlington is outstanding"*

*"Prevention of homelessness is the key focus that underlines all service delivery"*

*"Excellent facilities within the front line customer service centre"*

A number of specific recommendations were made as a result of the review. They covered the twelve areas included in the Peer Review and are incorporated within this strategy and in operational action plans.

Although the overall results were good the challenge before us now is to address the areas identified for improvement within the constraints of the current financial climate.

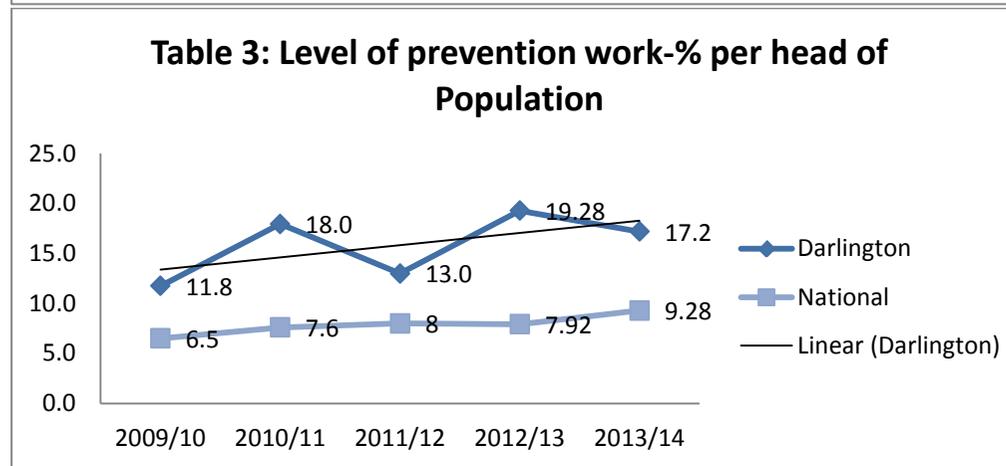
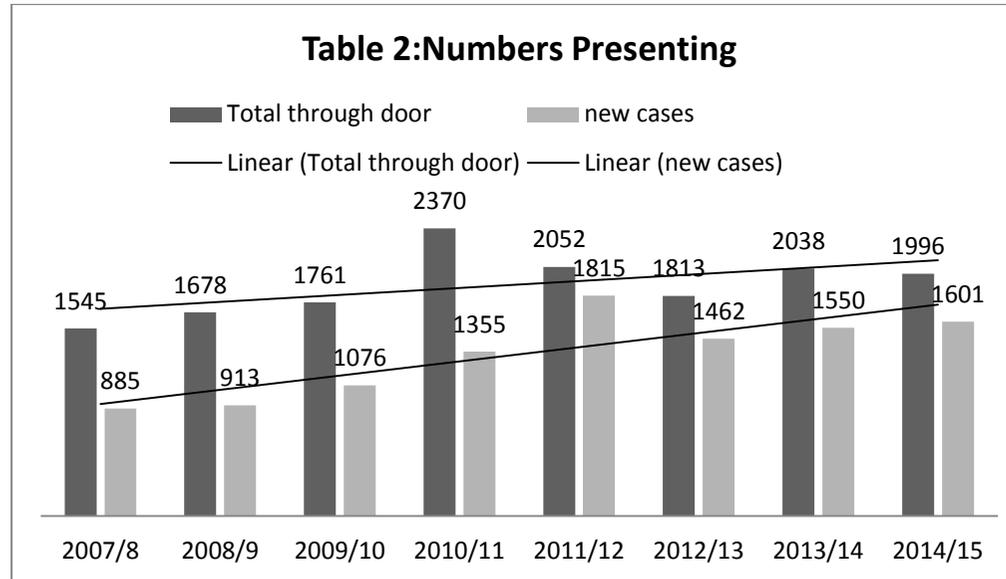
We therefore need to retain what we do well while making adjustments identified within the review.

## Performance

The trend in people in need of the Housing Options Service has been showing a steady increase. There has been a rise in approaches from 1545 cases in 2007/8 to 1996 in 2014/15 (Table 2<sup>4</sup>). The most significant issue is that the number of new cases has consistently increased and has almost doubled during the period

While there has been an increase in the numbers approaching Housing Options, the level of successful prevention interventions has also been steadily increasing with Darlington performing well above the national average (Table 3<sup>5</sup>).

The introduction of the Key Point of Access (KPI) and a new appointments system have improved the service leading to better outcomes.



Support needs are now identified at an early stage and there is improved signposting.

A continuing issue is finding solutions for those with complex needs. They often are involved with a number of agencies and require on occasions intensive help. Although this is a small group they can often require considerable resources. Good progress has been made in improving cooperation between agencies but there is more to do.

Within the overall increase in those approaching some presenting issues are reducing. Table 4 illustrates this.

<sup>4</sup> DCLG P1E Statistical Returns 2004-2015

<sup>5</sup> DCLG P1E Statistical Returns 2004-2014

## Presenting Issues

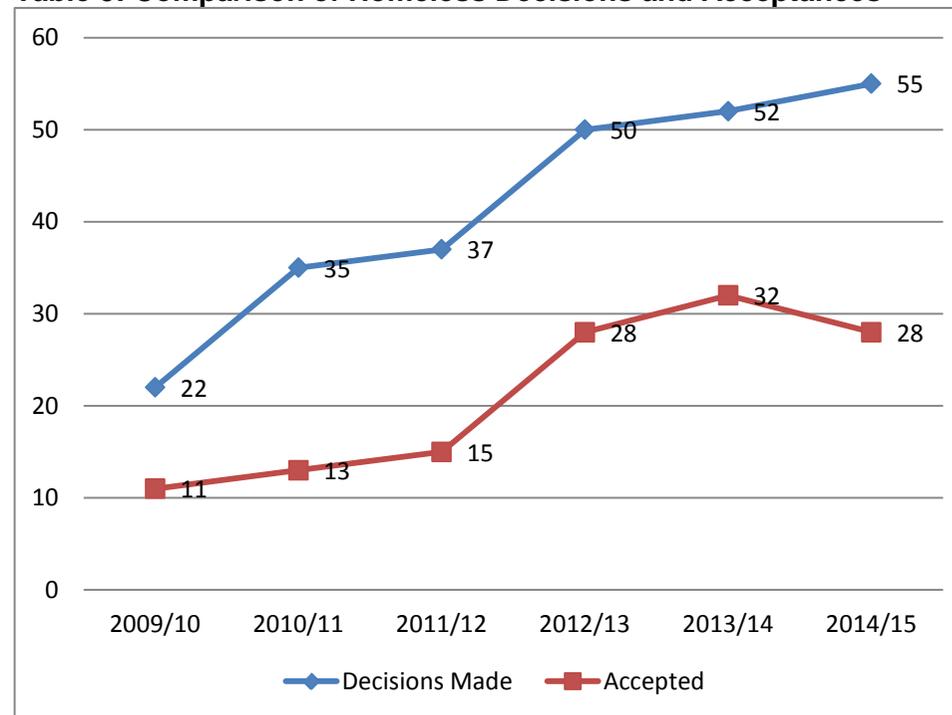
A more detailed analysis of presenting issues demonstrates the range of needs

Table 4: Presenting issue				Trend
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	
Leaving Family or Friends home	171	201	199	
Relationship breakdown- non violent	101	138	101	
Other Reasons	123	137	120	
Domestic Abuse	70	93	81	
Sofa Surfing	83	153	109	
Drug/alcohol issues	17	26	20	
Mental Health Issues	46	51	43	
Rent Arrears	43	50	36	
Mortgage Arrears	31	24	10	
Possession proceedings	15	23	21	
End of Tenancy	120	108	93	
Child protection issues	6	9	9	
16/17 year old	18	39	49	
Non-domestic violence/ ASB	18	22	35	
Physical Health Issues	18	21	31	
Financial Difficulties	9	54	58	
Unsuitable/disrepair	51	44	51	
Prison Leaver	25	28	39	
Overcrowding	25	35	40	
<b>General Advice</b>	823	782	851	↑
<b>Total</b>	<b>1813</b>	<b>2038</b>	<b>1996</b>	↓

## Decisions about Homelessness

The numbers about whom a decision is made is quite small. In 2013/14 a total of 52 decisions were made. Of these the Council accepted that 32 were due a responsibility of rehousing. Of those not accepted 15 were intentionally homeless, 4 were eligible but not in priority need and one was not eligible.

**Table 5: Comparison of Homeless Decisions and Acceptances**



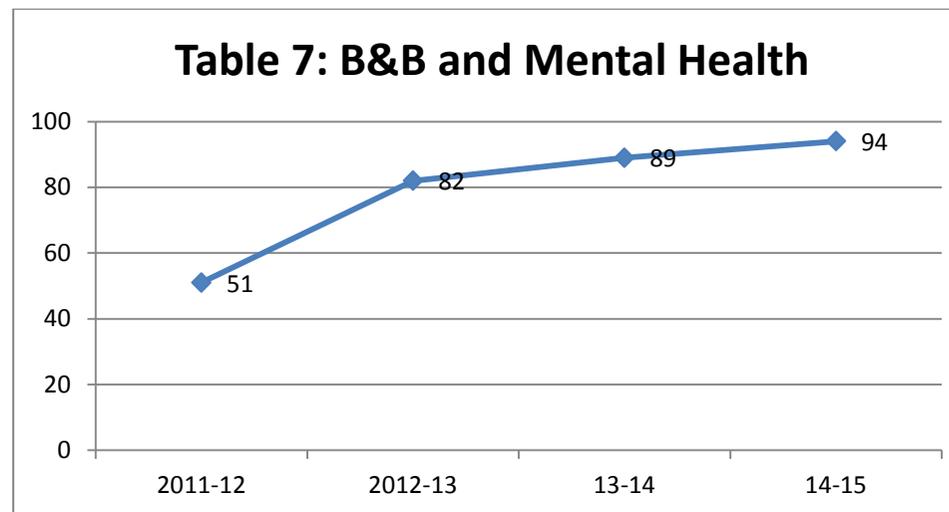
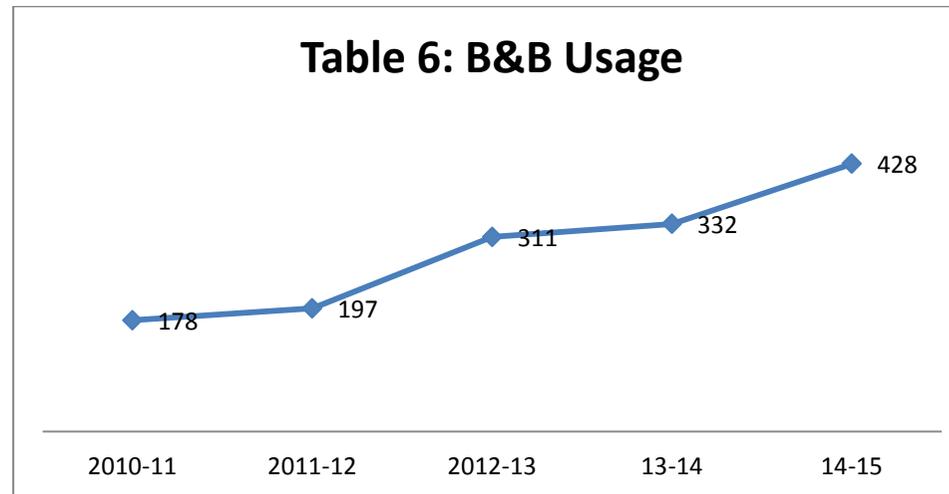
There has been a general increase in the use of Bed and Breakfast since 2010. Usage has partly increased as a result of adopting the No Second Night Out and Below Zero initiatives

Although usage is well below the national average focused work is proposed to reduce the need for this type of accommodation.

About a quarter of all those who made use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation had a mental health issue as their main need and when taking account of those with mental health as a secondary need the figure rises close to half.

The numbers with a mental health problem who are going into Bed and Breakfast has been increasing reflecting an increase in numbers seeking help.

During the calendar year to December 2014 analysis showed 242 of those seeking help had mental health as a first or secondary need.



Many have other needs as their main issue such as financial problems or drug or alcohol problems masking the extent to which mental health is a factor overall.

The growth in numbers accessing B&B accommodation seems to reflect the difficult cycle of housing failures that have seen some people with complex needs failing in a succession of different forms of housing including supported housing, leaving Bed and Breakfast as the only option available. This presents a significant future challenge



### Cost of the Homeless Service

Government funding for Homeless Services is no longer a separate grant and now forms part of the Council's General Fund

#### Expenditure 2013/14

- Total Net Expenditure on Homelessness: £170,000
- Net expenditure on Bed and Breakfast Accommodation: £19,000
- Net Expenditure on Temporary Accommodation: £14,000

Final expenditure for 2014/15 had not been reconciled by the time this strategy was produced but indications are that costs have only risen slightly during the year.

### Benchmarking Costs

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) produce cost comparisons for homeless services:

**Table 8: CIPFA Cost per head of population-all England**

<b>Darlington</b>	<b>£1.6</b>
Average (mean):	£6.0
Upper Quartile Boundary:	£5.9
Median:	£3.6
Lower Quartile Boundary:	£2.2

Overall, Darlington has among the lowest costs in comparison to other Local Authorities in England. When these costs are set against the other performance information that CIPFA collect Darlington comes out as offering exceptional value for money.

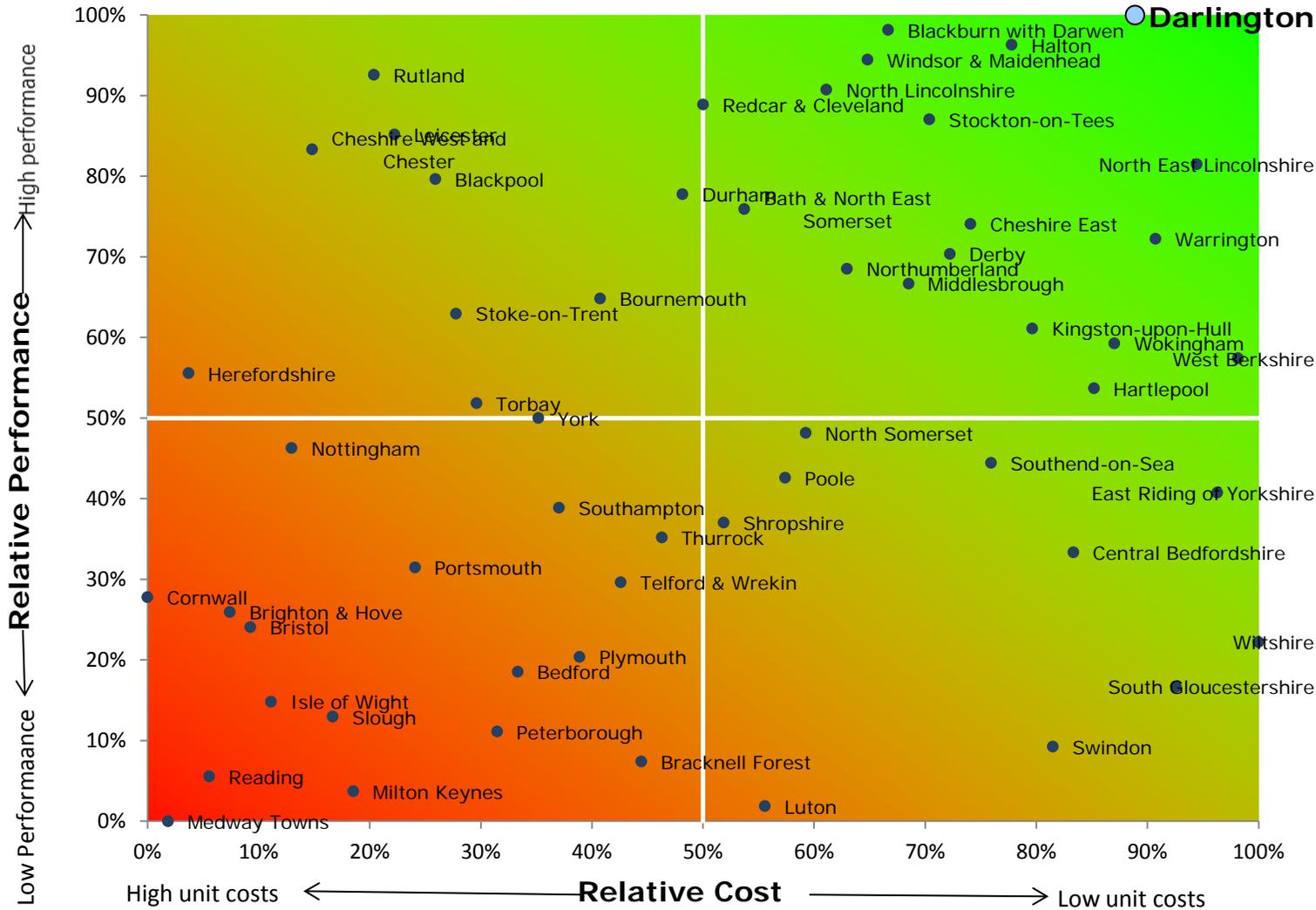
### Value for Money

CIPFA produce Value for Money comparisons which take account of the cost of the service and performance.



Table 9 produced by CIPFA demonstrates that Darlington provide excellent value for money. The table shows that Darlington is the best performing Local authority in England. (The table below only shows the comparison with Unitary Authorities for clarity of the diagram):

**Table 9: CIPFA Value for Money Homeless Service 13/14**



**Summary of the Review Results**

There are a number of areas for specific attention including the use of Bed and Breakfast Accommodation and how we make use of Private Sector Accommodation. We also need to review the way we manage the homeless pathway to ensure that we find the best solutions for our customers while delivering a cost efficient service.

Our partners agree that there is a need to work closely together to meet the challenges of the next two years and to maintain current high levels of performance

## 5.0 How needs and services are changing

### Access to Housing

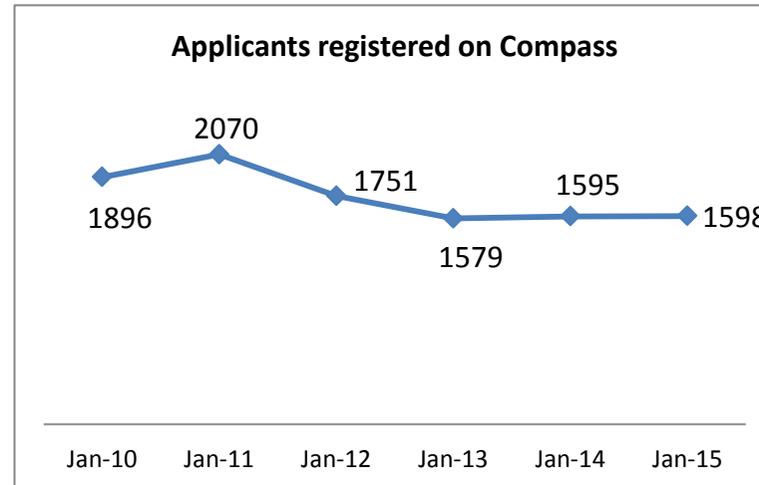
Although the numbers seeking help have shown an upward trend, numbers who are registering with the Choice Based Lettings Service, Compass have shown a decline from 1896 in 2010 to 1598 in 2015 (Table 10).

During this time there has been a small decrease in Council stock due to regeneration and Right to Buy while there has been growth in properties provided by other Registered Housing Providers (Housing Associations) that have offset this. The main growth on the waiting list has been single people under the age of 40. In response the Council has changed its allocations policy to allow people aged 18 and over to apply for first floor flats, thereby increasing housing options

### Private Sector

The growth of the private sector has increased housing options. However, changes to the Housing Allowance have created reduced options for younger people. A key issue has been the inconsistent management in the

**Table 10: Applicants Registered on Compass for Darlington**



sector. The Council's Private Sector Housing is taking a leading role in working with Landlords to improve this situation.

### Health

There has been a growing awareness of the links between health and homelessness. As part of Inclusion Health Programme's work the Department of Health commissioned St Mungo's to investigate the health costs of homelessness.

In-depth analysis shows the cost of services to address physical health conditions ranging from £6,468 to £44,612 per person in a 12 month period. This does not include mental health care, treatment for substance use or medication. Among the local challenges has been dealing with Hospital Discharge and finding suitable accommodation for people with physical disabilities

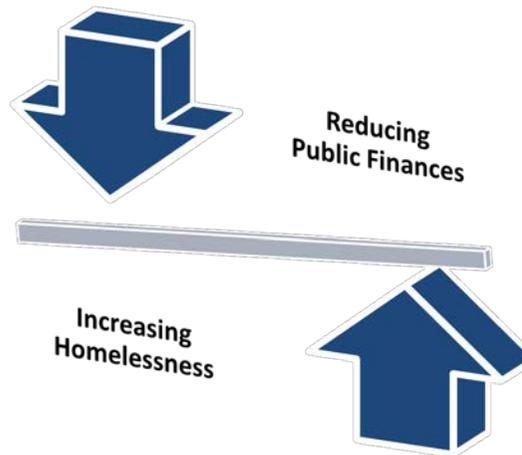
### Integrated Offender Management

This provides a strategic umbrella to bring together representatives from criminal justice agencies, the local authority, health services and the voluntary sector, to address locally determined offending priorities through targeted interventions. Darlington's successful joint bid with Co Durham for the Help for Single Homeless Fund reflected this approach focusing on offenders and meeting their housing and support needs to deter them from offending. The bid contained a multi-agency approach with the Third Sector playing a major role.

## 6.0 Challenges for the Strategy

Preventing homelessness is far more cost effective than dealing with its consequences and the new strategy will continue to focus on prevention and early intervention:

- The impact of the Welfare Reforms will continue to be a factor. Universal Credit is planned for introduction in Darlington in November 2015 and drawing on the evidence from the pilot areas it seems that it will present a number of challenges
- Health is also a major issue. There are issues concerning drug and alcohol abuse that cross over into the criminal justice system.
- Addressing the growing numbers of people presenting with mental health as a need.
- There is a small “hard core” of people who have complex needs in need of assistance
- There is a need for further work on the needs of 16/17 year olds and those coming out of the Looked After system

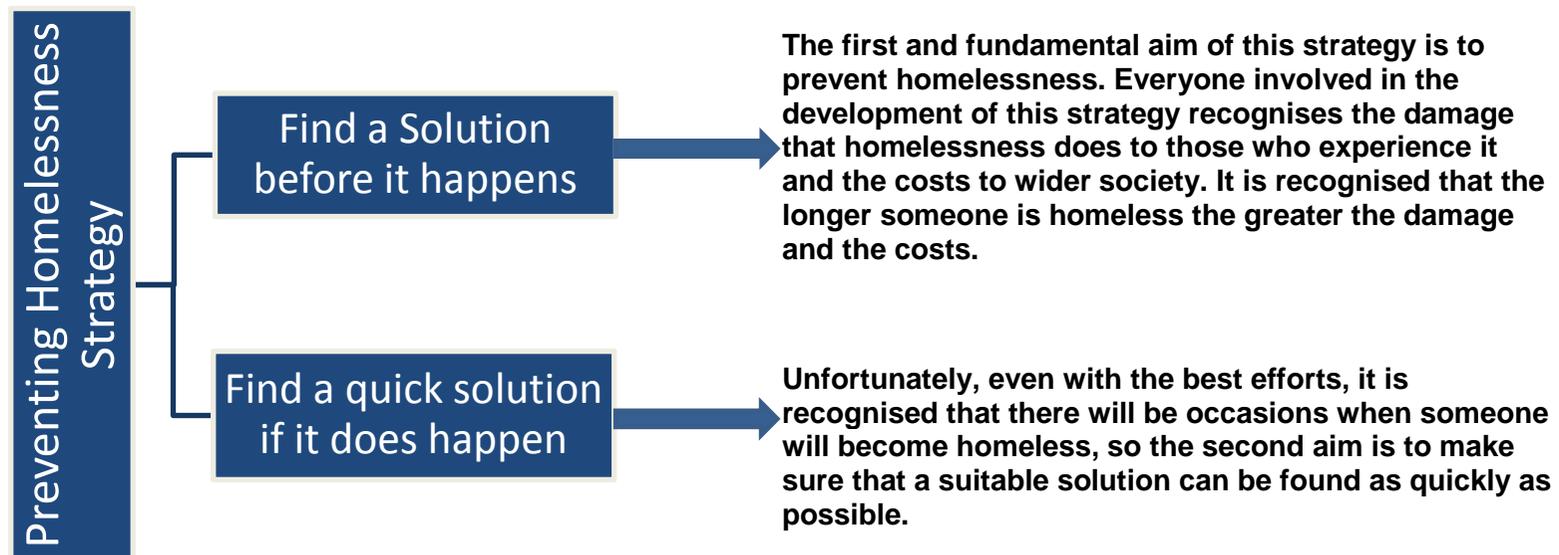


- Significant reductions in public sector funding will see further changes to the way services are delivered and what services are available. This will have both direct and indirect consequences over the long term
- Access to private sector housing is important but this needs to be of good quality
- There is very little suitable temporary accommodation available for those with physical disabilities
- Refuge accommodation does not allow male children aged over 16 to stay.
- Both Stakeholders and the Peer Review have identified the need to improve the quality of private sector accommodation available

- The use of B&B's has grown consistently over a number of years but is still relatively low. However, the use of this type of accommodation needs to be reviewed
- The new Re-Offending Strategy has identified further interventions are needed to address the housing and support needs of those who are at risk of offending or re-offending particularly women
- We need to continue to work with schools and colleges to provide information and build awareness of the risks of homelessness
- The Empty Homes project has demonstrated that homeless and excluded people can be helped to gain skills and find stable accommodation
- To tackle the challenges we now face we must build on the partnerships that we have forged while taking advantage of the increase in available housing.

## 7.0 Aims of the new strategy

Two clear aims emerged from the development of this strategy:



## 8.0 Objectives

We have developed 4 inter-related objectives that will form themes for this strategy:

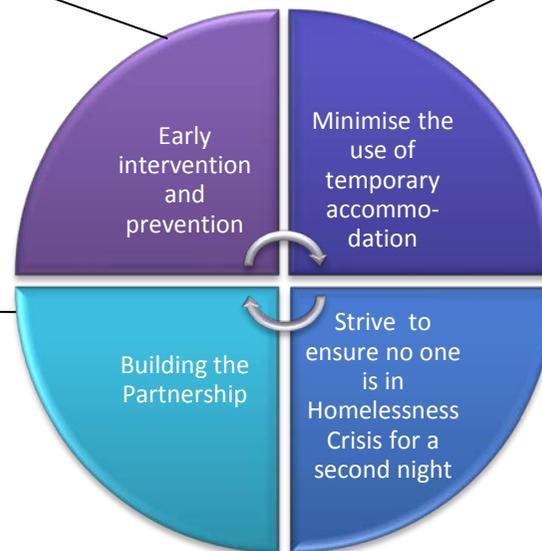
### Early Intervention and prevention

To prevent homelessness through information, advice and support to those at risk of homelessness

Support actions and changes to service delivery to help people to remain in safe and stable accommodation

### Building the Partnership

Develop new and build on existing partnerships to jointly meet the challenges that we collectively face is critical to achieving the aims of this strategy



### Minimise the use of temporary accommodation

Recognise that some people will become homeless and that they need to be moved to an appropriate solution as quickly as possible

### Strive to ensure no one is in Homelessness Crisis for a second night

The number of people who are found to be sofa surfing or are in other forms of homelessness crisis has been growing. It is critical that we find a housing solution quickly for these people to avoid the worst effects of homelessness

## 9. Priorities for Action

Objective	Action	Description	Who	When	
1	Early Intervention and Prevention	Action 1	We will focus on keeping people in their existing accommodation (wherever practical and appropriate to do so).	Janette McMain	Immediate and ongoing
		Action 2	We will adopt the principles set out in "Making Every Contact Count"	Janette McMain	Sept 2015
		Action 3	We will ensure there are clear housing pathways for all client groups	Janette McMain/ First Stop	Dec 2015
		Action 4	We will work to maintain the current high level of preventative work within Housing Options	Janette McMain	Immediate and ongoing
		Action 5	Work with Police and Probation to ensure a pathway to suitable accommodation on discharge from prison	Janette McMain	Sept 2015
		Action 6	We will develop educational work with young people about housing options, the skills needed to maintain independent living and the reality of homelessness	Janette McMain/ Various Providers	On going
		Action 7	Review outcome of the Housing Options Advisor working in the MASH to identify young vulnerable children that could potentially be homeless at 16 and plan preventative work	Janette McMain/ Children Services	July 2015
		Action 8	We will work with Children's Services to develop a protocol ensure that where needed suitable housing options are available for those leaving the Looked After system to reduce the risk of future homelessness	Janette McMain/ Nicola Childs/ Children Services	Sept 2015
		Action 9	Work with Commissioning Services to ensure that there is an appropriate range of support and supported accommodation available	Janette McMain/ Nicola Childs	Jan 2016
		Action 10	Review the case management processes within Housing Options to achieve the best possible outcomes for customers	Janette McMain	Sept 2015

<b>2</b>	<b>Minimise the use of Temporary Accommodation</b>	Action 11	We will review the use of B&B's to ensure minimum usage	<b>Janette McMain</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
		Action 12	We will strive to ensure no 16/17 year olds are not placed in a B&B	<b>Janette McMain</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
		Action 13	We will ensure families are not placed in B&B accommodation unless it is an emergency and then for a period of less than six weeks	<b>Janette McMain</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
		Action 14	We will review the quality and suitability of temporary accommodation	<b>Janette McMain</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Build the Partnership</b>	Action 15	We will develop a new Preventing Homelessness Partnership to monitor progress of this strategy and help to develop a new strategy in 2017	<b>Janette McMain</b>	<b>Dec 2015</b>
		Action 16	We will work closely with health service colleagues to identify those at risk by making every contact count to reduce health inequalities.	<b>Janette McMain/ Miriam Davison?</b>	<b>Dec 2016</b>
		Action 17	Review the needs of those with mental health issues	<b>Janette McMain/ Julie Wheatley</b>	<b>Nov 2015</b>
		Action 18	We will work in partnership to ensure that linkages are made to education, employment and training opportunities	<b>Janette McMain</b>	<b>Dec 2016</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Strive to ensure no one is in Homelessness Crisis for a second night</b>	Action 19	We will strive to deliver the principles of no second night out	<b>Janette McMain</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
		Action 20	We aim to reduce the number of homelessness crisis situations arising from hospital discharge from West Park	<b>Janette McMain/ West Park Hospital</b>	<b>Dec 2015</b>
		Action 21	Work with Private Sector Landlords to increase the availability of good quality accommodation	<b>David Burrell</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
		Action 22	Identify suitable temporary accommodation for victims of domestic abuse for whom current available temporary accommodation is unsuitable	<b>Nicola Childs</b>	<b>August 2015</b>







## Equality Impact Assessment Record Form 2012-16

### Section 1 – Service Details and Summary of EIA Activity

<b>Title of activity:</b>	Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2015-17
<b>Lead Officer responsible for this EIA:</b>	Ken Davies
<b>Telephone:</b>	01325 388435
<b>Service Group:</b>	Neighbourhoods and Resources
<b>Service or Team:</b>	Housing and Building Services
<b>Assistant Director accountable for this EIA</b>	Pauline Mitchell
<b>Who else will be involved in carrying out the EIA:</b>	Hazel Neaham, Head of Housing Janette McMain, Housing Options Team Leader

<b>What stage has the EIA reached? Update as EIA develops.</b>		
<b>Stage</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Summary of position</b>
<b>Stage 1: Initial Officer Assessment. Whole Population likely to be affected identified</b>		Homelessness or the risk of homelessness could happen to anyone
<b>Stage 2: Further Assessment. Target Population likely to be</b>		Some groups of people are at higher risk of homelessness than others. These include: Those who do not have a permanent home

<b>affected identified</b>		<p>Those where the tenancy is being terminated</p> <p>Those in financial difficulties</p> <p>Those in rent arrears and mortgage arrears</p> <p>Those living in over crowded conditions</p> <p>Victims of domestic abuse</p> <p>People with a Mental Health issue</p> <p>Drug and Alcohol abusers</p> <p>People fleeing non domestic abuse and violence</p> <p>People leaving prison</p> <p>People under the age of 18 who need accommodation</p> <p>First time tenants</p>
<b>Stage 3: Further Assessment. Individuals likely to be affected identified</b>		<p>About 2000 approaches were made to the Council in 2014/15 from people who were at risk of homelessness and 1600 were new applications.</p> <p>People come from a variety of backgrounds and some have multiple protected characteristics</p>
<b>Stage 4: Analysis of Findings</b>		<p>There are particular groups who may experience additional risks discrimination if they become homeless. These include single women, those or from an ethic minority and people under 18 and other vulnerable groups such as people with a Learning Disability. There is a further level of risk for people who are also gay, lesbian or transgender</p>
<b>Stage 5: Sign-Off</b>		<p>Ken Davies</p> <p>Pauline Mitchell</p>
<b>Stage 6: Reporting and Action Planning</b>		<p>The actions will fit into the monitoring processes established for the Housing Strategy</p>

## Section 2 – The Activity and Supporting Information

<b>Details of the activity (main purpose and aims)</b>
<p>Local Authorities are required to produce a Homelessness Strategy ever five years (Homelessness Act 202). Guidance from the Government in 2012 (Making Every Contact Count) focused on prevention as an over-arching approach. The Darlington Preventing Homelessness Strategy follows this approach. Its' aims are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Find a solution before it happens- recognising that the consequences of homelessness can be devastating for the lives of the people affected preventing homelessness is a critical aim</li> <li>2. Find a quick solution if it does happen- recognising that in some circumstances people will become homeless. The shorter the time until a suitable solution is found the better the prospects are of</li> </ol>

avoiding the worst effects of homelessness

The focus of the strategy is to wherever possible avoid people becoming homeless by means of early interventions

**Who will be affected by the activity? (groups and numbers)**

**Whole population**

The total numbers approach for people does vary while the underlying trend of new applicants has been consistently upward over the past five years. In 2014/15 the number of new applicants had reached 1601 while the total number of applicants was 1996. They came from a wide range of backgrounds and needs.

**Target population**

On Average :

- About 51% of applications are from families with one or more children
- About 49% are either single people or couples
- 99% of applicants class themselves as White/British
- About 5% have mental health issues
- About 1.2% annual are people age 16/17
- Less than 1% of applicants are aged over 65

**Individuals**

Over 97% have their homelessness issues through some form of preventative action

Last year 55 applicants of a total of 1996 had a formal decision made. Of these 28 were rehoused as statutorily homeless with the remainder being found as either being homeless but not in priority need or being intentionally homeless

**What data, research and other evidence or information is available which is relevant to the EIA?**

The Council has gathered the following information:

- Statistics from the Governments homelessness P1E return
- Evidence from CIPFA benchmarking information on homelessness services
- Information from National Practitioner Support Service Peer Review of the homeless services in Darlington which involved consultation with stakeholders
- Results of the review of homeless related supported services which included consultation with stakeholders and service users
- Survey of people seeking assistance because of the risk of homelessness
- Consultation with stakeholders and the general public
- Information from the Key Point of Access

## Section 3: Officer Assessment

Use this table to record your views on potential impact on Protected Characteristics. As the activity and the assessment develop your views may change – record them here.

It is important to be searching and honest about this – many Council activities are planned to be of positive benefit to identified target groups but can often have the potential for inadvertent effects on other groups.

Protected Characteristics	Potential Impact			Potential level of impact				Summary of Impact
	Positive/Negative/Not Applicable							
Age	P			H				<p>Anyone could be affected by homelessness and the consequences can be devastating. Research indicates that the longer someone remains homeless the greater the consequences.</p> <p>This strategy sets out to prevent these consequences</p> <p>Very few people aged over 65 become homeless and a small under of people age 16/17.</p>
Race	P			H				<p>See above</p> <p>A small number from a range of minority groups seek help</p>
Sex	P			H				See above
Gender Reassignment	P			H				See above
Disability (summary of detail on next page)	P			H				See above
Religion or belief	P			H				See above
Sexual	P			H				See above

<b>Orientation</b>								
<b>Pregnancy or maternity</b>	P			H				See above
<b>Marriage/ Civil Partnership</b>	P			H				See above

### Section 3: Officer Assessment - continued

The Council must have due regard to disabled people's impairments when making decisions about 'activities'. This list is provided only as a starting point to assist officers with the assessment process. It is important to remember that people with similar impairments may in reality experience completely different impacts. Consider the potential impacts and summarise in the Disability section on the previous page. Officers should consider how the 'activity' may affect a disabled person.

<b>Mobility Impairment</b>	P			H				Access to temporary accommodation is limited by the limited availability of accessible accommodation. This is addressed within the strategy
<b>Visual impairment</b>	P					L		There are no specific issues identified for this group
<b>Hearing impairment</b>	P					L		There are no specific issues identified for this group
<b>Learning Disability</b>	P					L		A small number of people with a Learning Disability become homeless.
<b>Mental Health</b>	P			H				Mental Health is identified a a priority area for action
<b>Long Term Limiting Illness</b>	P			H				Poor health has been identified as a priority area for action
<b>Multiple Impairments</b>	P			H	M	L	nil	Access to temporary accommodation is limited by the limited availability of accessible accommodation. This is addressed within the strategy
<b>Other - Specify</b>			NA					

#### Cumulative Impacts

##### Change activities

##### Potential cumulative impacts

Increased preventative activity

An increasing level of preventative activity should help to further reduce discrimination

## Section 4: Engagement Decision

<p><b>Is engagement with affected people with Protected Characteristics required, now or during the further development of the activity?</b></p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p>
<p><b>If YES, proceed to the next section.</b>  <b>If NO, briefly summarise below the reasons why you have reached this conclusion.</b></p>	
<p></p>	

## Section 5 – Involvement and Engagement Planning

<p><b>Has the assessment shown that the activity will treat any groups of people with Protected Characteristics differently from other people? Yes</b></p>
<p><b>If yes, please state which groups and how</b></p> <p>A number of groups have been identified for additional action to reduce disadvantage including disabled and people with mobility problems. Additional suitable temporary accommodation has been identified as an action. People with mental health issues have been identified as a priority area for action.</p>
<p><b>Will the differential treatment advance equality for people with Protected Characteristics? Yes</b></p>
<p><b>If yes, please state which groups and how</b></p> <p>People with protected characteristics may experience additional disadvantages if they become homeless by taking a preventative approach the worst of these affects will be avoided</p>
<p><b>Will the differential treatment cause or increase disadvantage for people with Protected Characteristics? No</b></p>
<p><b>If yes, please state which groups and how</b></p>

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<b>Involvement and Engagement Plan</b>			
Which organisations, groups and individuals do you need to involve or engage and how?			
<b>Date of plan entry</b>	<b>Organisation, Group or Individuals</b>	<b>Date of event or activity</b>	<b>Type of activity – venue, channels, method and staffing</b>
May	Public consultation on strategy		Via Website/Circulation of strategy
April	Consult with stakeholders		Workshop
April	Consult with applicants		Survey
December	Consult with stakeholders		Workshop
	Consultation with stakeholders and service users of homeless related support services		Mixture of workshops, face to face discussions and surveys

## Section 6: Engagement Findings

	<b>Date/summary of engagement carried out</b>	<b>Summary of impacts identified</b>
<b>Age</b>		Identified that there are specific issues about the vulnerability of 16/17 year olds who become homeless
<b>Disability</b>		Identified need to investigate access for disabled people to temporary accommodation

<b>Mobility Impairment</b>		Identified need to investigate access for disabled people to temporary accommodation
<b>Visual impairment</b>		Identified need to investigate access for disabled people to temporary accommodation
<b>Hearing impairment</b>		No specific action identified
<b>Learning Disability</b>		No specific action identified
<b>Mental Health</b>		A significant number of people have mental health as either a main or secondary need
<b>Long Term Limiting Illness</b>		The links between poor health have been identified
<b>Multiple Impairments</b>		Identified need to investigate access for disabled people to temporary accommodation  It was noted that multiple needs was a critical issue
<b>Other - Specify</b>		
<b>Race</b>		No specific action identified
<b>Sex</b>		It was noted that women may experience additional disadvantages in mixed sex temporary accommodation

<b>Gender Reassignment</b>		It was noted that for those who become homeless they could experience additional disadvantages
<b>Religion or belief</b>		No specific action identified
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>		It was noted that for those who become homeless they could experience additional disadvantages
<b>Pregnancy or maternity</b>		No specific action identified
<b>Marriage / Civil Partnership</b>		No specific action identified

## Section 6: Engagement Findings – Continued

<b>a) How will the proposal help to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation?</b>
Taking a preventative approach will avoid people going into temporary accommodation where the highest risks accrue. It is also that some people become homeless because they are already experiencing these issues. The strategy therefore looks to find suitable stable accommodation as soon as possible to alleviate the worst effects of homelessness.
<b>b) How will the proposal help to advance equality of opportunity?</b>
The strategy recognises the specific issues associated with homelessness and strives to reduce the numbers who become homeless by finding satisfactory preventative solutions that will provide platform for those affected to overcome any disadvantage they experience
<b>c) How will the proposal help to foster good relations?</b>

Developing a strong partnership will ensure an exchange of information identifying issues and resolving at least some problems

**During the engagement process were there any suggestions on how to avoid, minimise or mitigate any negative impacts? If so, please give details.**

The key issue is having sufficient resources available to achieve the ambitions within the strategy. A partnership approach is being developed to deliver the strategy through which will help to plan the most effective way of delivering what is required within the resources available. This in turn help to deliver a number of action what will help to reduce issues of discrimination

## Section 7 - Sign-off when assessment is completed

Officer Completing the Form:		
Signed	Name:	Ken Davies
	Date:	30 April 2015
	Job Title:	Housing Strategy Officer
Assistant Director:		
Signed	Name:	Pauline Mitchel

	<b>Date:</b>	30 April 2015
	<b>Service:</b>	Housing and Building Services

## Section 8 – Reporting of Findings and Recommendations to Decision Makers

Based on the EIA findings, the report may consider the options in the table below, but the report must contain a clear statement of the impacts so that decision-makers can understand the effects of the decision that is being recommended.

<b>What does the review of the information show?</b>	
a)	<b>No negative impact on people because of their Protected Characteristics - continue with the activity and monitor progress on implementation</b>

<b>Performance Management</b>	
<b>Date of the next review of the EIA</b>	June 2016
<b>How often will the EIA action plan be reviewed?</b>	Annually
<b>Who will carry out this review?</b>	Preventing Homelessness Partnership

