Ending homelessness in Newcastle – a partnership between Newcastle City Council and Crisis

Introduction

Background to the partnership to end homelessness

On 20 June 2019 Newcastle City Council and Crisis announced a formal partnership focused on ending homelessness in Newcastle.

Heriot-Watt University's recent study of homelessness prevention in Newcastle in the context of welfare reform and austerity[1] found that *"the headline story in Newcastle is of a city facing an extremely challenging context, but managing to maintain extremely low and stable levels of homelessness"*. This partnership will enable us to move from this strong record of preventing and relieving homelessness, to ending it altogether. In doing so, the partnership will build on Newcastle's Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer and Active Inclusion Newcastle partnership approach and will seek to actualise Crisis' plan to end homelessness: Everybody In – How to end homelessness in Great Britain.

The partnership commits us to an ambitious place-based programme, underpinned by a collective understanding of what causes homelessness, how we currently respond, and how we maximise the value of our collective investment to end homelessness. In doing so, we will consider the role of structures, systems and services as well as the organisational and professional values and behaviours they produce. We will work with a range of stakeholders to understand their perspective on homelessness in Newcastle and the role they play in ending it. The review will help us to start to form this collective understanding, but we will also need to learn and develop as we go on. To do so, we will build on the Active Inclusion approach of periodically reviewing and improving[2].

The evidence review will inform the development of a strategy to end homelessness in Newcastle over ten years, which in turn creates a realistic and exciting opportunity to unite the city, enabling us to align our resources to do what's right by making homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring in Newcastle. We define 'ending homelessness' as:

- No one sleeping rough
- No one forced to live in transient or dangerous accommodation such as tents, squats and non-residential buildings
- No one living in emergency accommodation, such as shelters and hostels, without a plan for rapid rehousing into affordable, suitable and sustainable accommodation

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[1] Watts, B., Bramley, G., Blenkinsopp, J., McIntyre, J. (2019) *Homelessness prevention in Newcastle: Examining the role of the 'local state' in the context of austerity and welfare reform*. I-SPHERE/ Heriot Watt University

[2] More details on Newcastle's quarterly review processes can be found here - https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/housing/housing-advice-and-homelessness/information-professionals/newcastle-homelessness

- No one homeless due to leaving a state institution such as prison or the care system
- Everyone who is immediately threatened with homelessness gets the help that prevents it from happening
- Everyone known to be at greater risk of homelessness due to affordability or vulnerabilities in proactively targeted with advice and support to reduce the possibility that they become threatened with homelessness at an earlier opportunity than 56 days

Background to the review

To inform the development of the partnership's strategy for ending homelessness in Newcastle, we will conduct a review of homelessness in the city. The review is intended to help us to better understand the scale and nature of homelessness within Newcastle, the effectiveness of our responses, what drives organisational and professional behaviour, and what needs to be done differently to end homelessness. The views of residents who are homeless or at risk of homelessness will be central to this work, as will the views of those who work closely with residents who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The review will need to be more than just a report. It should help us to better understand how we can end homelessness in Newcastle, informing how we make a material difference to the reality of resident's lives in the city. It will also build on Heriot-Watt University's recent study of homelessness prevention in Newcastle, which examined the role of the 'local state' in preventing homelessness in the context of austerity and welfare reforms.

The review will consist of six distinct research elements, three of which will be commissioned to external organisations and three of which will be completed by the Integrated Team, appointed to work across the formal partnership focused on ending homelessness in Newcastle:

Element 1 – analysis of how homelessness provision and associated services currently operate in Newcastle, exploring their contribution to preventing and relieving homelessness

Element 2 – peer research with residents who have lived experience of homelessness or the risk of homelessness, exploring their personal experiences and priorities

Element 3 – analysis of the current expenditure on homelessness provision and associated services. This element will then help us to better estimate the costs associated to implementing a new housing led model, as well as the transitional arrangements needed

This review will also include several pieces of work conducted by the Integrated Team delivering the programme, which are:

Element 4 – Analysis of the levels, types and causes of homelessness in Newcastle (using the partnership's definition of ending homelessness). This element will start by

improving the way data is collected and utilised in order to accurately understand these areas of data of the course of the ten-year partnership.

Element 4 – analysis of the causes, levels, and types of homelessness in Newcastle (using the partnership's definition of ending homelessness). This element will go on to explore how we can improve data collection and analysis over the course of the ten-year partnership

Element 5 – analysis national government's policies that relate to homelessness (or the risk of homelessness) in Newcastle. This element will go on explore how we can influence these policies so that they better align with the goal of ending homelessness. We will also investigate what a human rights based approach to homelessness and a right to housing would look like in Newcastle.

Element 6 – the final element of the review will focus on the public perceptions of homelessness among residents in Newcastle, as well as their views on whether they believe homelessness can be ended in the city. Examining the public perceptions of homelessness in Newcastle will help us to better understand how to develop public support for solutions to end homelessness. This element of the review will take place at a later date, once the first five elements have been completed.

Triangulating findings across each element of the review

These research elements form the first stage of the review, allowing us to better understand the current situation of homelessness in Newcastle, as well as the views on how the system can be improved. In turn, it will form the foundations of an iterative, place based approach focused on ending homelessness in Newcastle.

We aim to manage these research projects using a flexible approach, focusing on regular, structured collaboration between those conducting the research. There will be regular joint meetings held between the commissioned contractors, the internal project leads from the Integrated Team, the national Research and Evaluation Manager from Crisis and relevant staff from Newcastle City Council in order to encourage shared learning and understanding across the research projects.

We are also interested in maximising the usability of insights produced from the evidence review, by ensuring the findings from each element can be analysed together. Doing so will help to develop a fuller picture of how we can end homelessness in Newcastle. To triangulate findings across each of the individual elements, we will develop a standardised coding framework. This framework will be used to categorise findings across each of the elements of the review. It also help to provide a flexible set of data to support our understanding as we begin to implement the strategy. A key output from each element will be a dataset of findings and insights coded by the standardised framework.
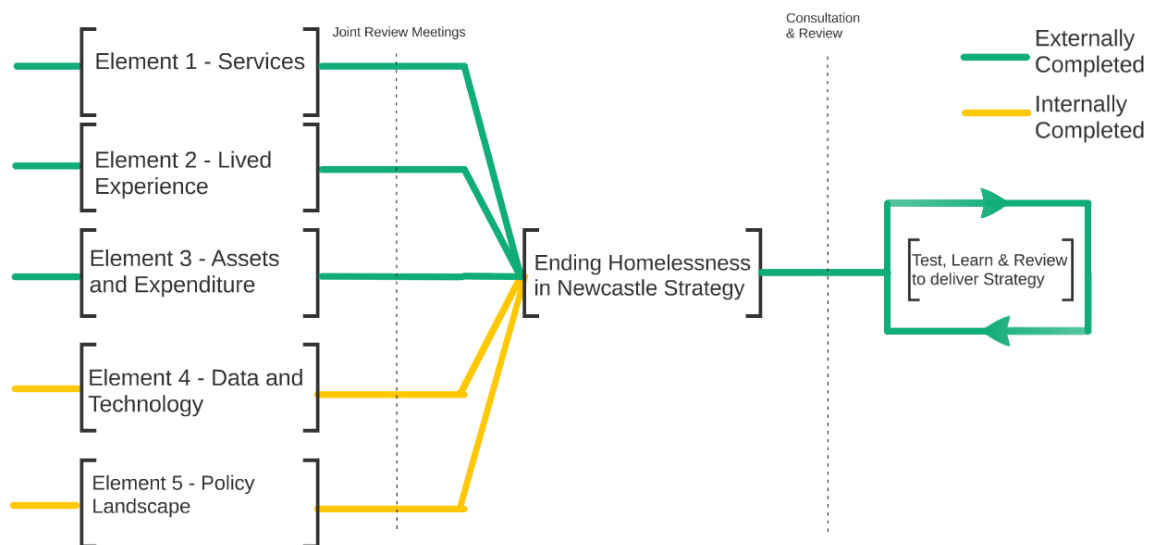
Standardised coding framework

The standardised coding framework will not be exhaustive and will initially focus on three areas: stage of homelessness (coding according to stages of prevention and relief), type of homelessness (coding according to cause, current living situation,

demographic and length of experience), and service type (coding according to the primary focus and purpose(s) of each service, and scale of provision).

Prior to its use, this framework will be reviewed with each of the external contractors and members of the Integrated Team who are conducting the research, as well as the Advisory Group. It will also be reviewed at joint project meetings through the course of the review to identify any areas for improvement.

The below diagram provides an overview of the process for developing the partnership's review and strategy. More detail on the development of a strategy to end homelessness in Newcastle can be found in the final section of this document.

Newcastle Homelessness Review

Element 1 - Services

Element 2 - Lived Experience

Element 3 - Assets and Expenditure

Element 4 - Data and Technology

Element 5 - Policy Landscape

Joint Review Meetings

Ending Homelessness in Newcastle Strategy

Consultation & Review

Test, Learn & Review to deliver Strategy

Externally Completed

Internally Completed

Overview of each element of the review

This section gives a brief overview of each of the elements of the review, including the key activities that will take place in each. More detail is found in the specification for each element.

Research that will be completed externally

Element 1 – analysis of how homelessness provision and associated services currently operate in Newcastle, exploring their contribution to preventing and relieving homelessness

Element 1 should seek to:

- Use mixed methods to identify and categorise homelessness provision and associated services in the city. This categorisation should reflect the different roles services play in preventing and relieving homelessness, considering the type and scale of service they offer, as well as the extent to which the service fits into the wider system of response

- Use qualitative approaches to explore the views of stakeholders on the current homelessness system and what would be required to end homelessness in Newcastle, with a particular focus on frontline practitioners. The sample of stakeholders who participate should be determined by the categorisation of services described above
- Use quantitative methods to explore the impact of individual services, using measures that reflect the purpose(s) and role(s) of each service (as determined by the categorisation of services described above)

Element 2 – participatory research with residents who have lived experience of homelessness or the risk of homelessness, exploring their personal experiences and priorities

Element 2 should seek to:

- Understand through qualitative approaches, the views of residents who have lived experience of homelessness or the risk of homelessness on the current homelessness system
- Include a peer research component and should primarily focus on residents' own individual experiences, tracking their journey into, through and out of homelessness, as appropriate
- Involve those who participate in the research in data analysis and in the development of findings from the project
- Explore the views and priorities of residents with lived experience of homelessness or the risk of homelessness

Element 3 – analysis of the current expenditure on homelessness provision and associated services. This element will then help us to better estimate the costs associated to implementing a new housing led model, as well as the transitional arrangements needed

Element 3 should seek to:

- Identify current expenditure on homelessness provision and associated services across the city, segmenting this according to the source and purpose of funding, as well as any restrictions on how it can be spent
- Identify assets and buildings used in homelessness provision
- Analyse how expenditure maps across different groups and support needs: including young people; residents who are rough sleeping; residents who have 'multiple and complex' needs; residents who have recently received refugee status or EU nationals; families with dependant children
- Analyse how expenditure maps across different types of services (using the typology created through element 1)

Research that will be completed internally

There will be several pieces of work that will be conducted internally and involve monitoring throughout the course of the partnership to end homelessness. The findings produced by these will be used in conjunction with the tendered research elements to develop a strategy for ending homelessness in Newcastle.

Element 4 – analysis of the causes, levels, and types of homelessness in Newcastle (using the partnership's definition of ending homelessness). This element will also explore how we can improve data collection and analysis over the course of the ten-year partnership

Element 4 should initially seek to:

- Initially this will involve identifying opportunities to improve data collection and analysis that can be pursued over the course of the ten-year partnership
- Identify opportunities to improve data sharing between organisations to build a clearer picture of our current responses and how we can move towards ending homelessness
- Quantify the level of homelessness in the three categories: the Crisis core homelessness definition; Newcastle City Council's definition of 'threatened' with homelessness; and Newcastle City Council's definition of 'at risk of homelessness', collecting the most robust evidence available using data from the local authority and partner organisations
- Explore the primary and underlying causes of homelessness (and the risk of homelessness) in Newcastle
- Explore trends in homelessness over the last five years

Through the strategy to end homelessness, we will identify a plan for improving data collection and analysis as the partnership progresses. This plan is likely to include:

- The development of a dataset that allows us to measure progress against our shared definition of ending homelessness and can be developed over the course of the partnership and
- Linking relevant data sets and using unique identifiers to better track individual resident's journeys into, through and out of homelessness
- Combining data from statutory and non-statutory sources to give a fuller picture of homelessness in Newcastle
- Estimating the size of the current and future cohort of residents who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, their support needs and the type of support they would require

We will measure and review the levels, types and cause of homelessness on an ongoing basis to help establish the extent to which we are moving towards ending homelessness in the city and to inform service and system development.

Element 5 – analysis exploring the individual and cumulative impact of all national government's policies and statutory instruments that relate to homelessness (or the risk of homelessness) in Newcastle. This element will go on explore how we can influence these policies so that they better align with the goal of ending homelessness

Element 5 should seek to:

- Identify and assess the impact of national policies on ending homelessness in Newcastle

- Consider housing, homelessness, welfare, health, criminal justice, migration, asylum and refugee, and social care policies and potential barriers and enablers within these policies at a local and national level
  - For national policies, this will focus on the degree to which these policies affect Newcastle and seek to identify opportunities for influence
- Consider Newcastle's economic, social and political context, focusing on how this influences local policy development and the proportionate impact of national government policies
- Identify and explain where new policies or policy changes are required to achieve the aim of ending homelessness in the city on a national level. In turn, identify and explain where further development is required to improve local practice in line with existing policy

Element 6 – analysis of the public's perceptions in Newcastle of homelessness and their views on whether they believe homelessness can be ended in the city

Through element six, we aim to understand the attitudes of residents of Newcastle and their views on homelessness and ending homelessness in the city. This will cover:

- Perceptions of what homelessness is and how these perceptions are formed
- The feasibility of homelessness being ended
- Support for a housing-led approach to ending homelessness
- Why these views are held and how we can engage the public to support ending homelessness in Newcastle

We will also conduct analysis, using the gathered information, to understand which communications and messages elicit positive responses from the public in order to inform our on-going communications. In doing so, we will primarily focus on the views of those who are more likely to be at risk of homelessness.

Developing a strategy to end homelessness in Newcastle

Once the elements of the review have been completed, the findings from each will be triangulated by the Integrated Team in order to inform the development of the partnership's strategy for ending homelessness in Newcastle. The findings of the review will also be published in a single report that will be made publicly available.

At this stage, we can't predict what the new design and improvements will look like and it is important that we are guided by evidence. However, the strategy is likely to include:

- Quantifying the size of the current and future cohort of people who are experiencing homelessness, their support needs and the type of homelessness provision they will require over the next five to ten years
- Identifying the sources of the most appropriate housing supply (both social and private rented) required and how this would be accessed and managed across Newcastle

- Recommending housing and support pathways required to successfully access the new model of provision, including the strengths and limitations of each
- Estimating the costs versus potential savings over the short, medium and long term looking at public and charitable expenditure in the areas of housing, homelessness and related sectors (e.g. health and social care)

In order to implement the strategy and move towards ending homelessness, we will need to:

- Develop shared local policies that create local protocols for how we will all work to end homelessness in Newcastle
- Maximise the value of our collective investment to work towards ending homelessness
- Identify the most appropriate and affordable housing supply (social and private rented) required, considering how this would be accessed and managed
- Build proportionate partnerships and support these partnerships by building on the infrastructure provided by Active Inclusion Newcastle
- Consider wider structural issues such as poverty and debt

Once a draft strategy for ending homelessness in Newcastle has been developed, this will be collectively reviewed and further developed with stakeholders, including residents with lived experience of homelessness (or who have been at risk of homelessness), professionals working in the homelessness sector, and other professionals working in related areas (e.g. welfare benefits advice, health, migration and asylum).

This work will be overseen and supported by a Steering Group (SG) and an Advisory Group (AG), advising on research design, findings and implications for implementing the findings of the review. It is expected that the project will take approximately 12 months to complete including full consultation and six face to face meetings – three with the SG and three with the AG.

While the review will provide us with evidence to inform the development of a strategy for ending homelessness, it is unlikely to give us prescriptive solutions. We will need to use a flexible approach to test new approaches, iterating and learning throughout the ten years in order to end homelessness in Newcastle.