

MORE THAN A ROOF

A Review of Young People's Independent living and housing support needs in Alnwick, Northumberland

SUMMARY

A review, with recommendations for a local charitable-based Youth Project, of the independent living and housing support needs and requirements of young people in the Alnwick area of Northumberland, North East England

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Extract: "Local housing authorities have responsibility for preventing homelessness and providing housing options but they are rarely the first port-of-call for young people at risk - other bodies including youth services have a crucial role to play..."

Acknowledgements

Interviewees, participants, and respondents

The author would like to express gratitude to all individuals and organisations who kindly agreed to be interviewed and provided valuable input to the research.

The report is informed by over 25 semi-structured interviews, a Focus Group of young people, case studies and two Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to Northumberland County Council (NCC).

Research Steering Group

The author is particularly grateful to the Research Steering Group members who supported the author on this project and provided feedback on drafts of this report.

About the Author

Phil Toal is a sole trader consultant and project manager who is independent in his approach. This report was produced independently and followed a brief provided by Gallery Youth, Alnwick and does not represent the views of GYs donors, contributors or partners. Any errors in the report are the authors' and the authors' alone.

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1. Executive Summary

Local housing authorities have responsibility for preventing homelessness and providing housing options but they are rarely the first port-of-call for young people at risk - other bodies including youth services have a crucial role to play. This report examines and reviews the issues relating to young people, independent living, homelessness, and housing related support in Alnwick, Northumberland. It brings together evidence of young people's needs, experiences and perspectives on housing with information and input from professionals, Alnwick Town Council, Northumberland County Council and current young persons support provider organisations across the County. The report adopts the viewpoint that accessing and finding a stable and secure place to live is a critical part of any young person's transition into adulthood and independent living. It finds that, while accommodation and other support does exist across the County, there are gaps and issues in terms of independent living support provision to young people in Alnwick and its surrounding area. The Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns, restrictions, and closing of Northumberland County Council walk-in services in Alnwick have subsequently and unfortunately, compounded this issue for young people.

The continuing lack of social and genuinely affordable, available housing and the significant demand for accommodation in the area means many local young people sit on the local housing register with very few types of property that are suitable for young singles in particular becoming available to bid for through the County's housing letting system. The accommodation with support for young homeless that is available in the County is currently situated in locations far away from Alnwick and this means that those young people who are in desperate, difficult circumstances are therefore faced with the very challenging decision to move away from the communities they know. This report finds that youth homelessness and support-providing organisations in the County are continuing to meet some of the housing needs of young people and also help foster their longer term financial and psychological wellbeing. Many respondents were unable to provide costs of supporting someone through their service and there appeared significant variations in their financial circumstances. Delivering successful outcomes for these providers remains a huge challenge in the context of highly restricted budgets, heavy reliance on contributions, low-wage and insecure labour market opportunities for young people, and a complex social security system that relies heavily on sanctions, rather than a more supportive asset-based approach. It is even further challenging when young homeless people are increasingly likely to have complex and multiple needs to be met - therefore any additional, effective and efficient independent living support that can be provided is to be welcomed.

No one would disagree that much more needs to be done to tackle some of the underlying reasons why so many young people are struggling to access and sustain accommodation and become independent. With affordable rented housing becoming harder to access for vulnerable young people, as the affordability of market and private housing continues to decrease, and as private rented landlords become less willing to take on 'riskier' tenants and those in greater need of support an expansion in the supply of genuinely affordable housing and dedicated supported accommodation would be the best way to assist those young people who are homelessness initially and into secure, longer term accommodation in a household of their own in the future. These solutions are planned for in Local Authority Housing and Homelessness Strategies, corporate plans of registered housing providers, and local plans and they require substantial, significant investments of capital funding and continuation of strong political will and prioritisation amongst many competing priorities, fiscal and budgeting issues. In the meantime though, young people in Alnwick would benefit significantly from the opportunity of easier access to more readily available dedicated independent living related advice and support from a locally based organisation. This would start to fill some of the gaps this research identified particularly those concerning the degree of hidden homelessness such as young people "sofa-surfing" in Alnwick and other, less visible forms of youth homelessness. For a number of reasons, Gallery Youth appear well placed to help provide this through building back up their capacity in independent living support work. The recommendations in this report outline some of the ways that Gallery Youth, Alnwick Town Partnership and other stakeholders can take forward their role in helping young people in Alnwick make a successful move to independence and leave homelessness and insecurity behind them.

2. Recommendations

Recommendation One: **Gallery Youth should examine and understand the outcomes of Northumberland County Council's (NCC) commissioned "mixed model" framework for housing and support services for vulnerable young people aged 16-25 and NCC should widely publicise the framework and what it does** – this is due to be procured in early 2021 and will form the basis of housing support services to young people for Northumberland County for at least the next two years until 2023. Gallery Youth did not have the capacity and size to apply to this framework. NCC should widely publicise who the commissioned providers are and share key information about how the framework operates. GY should develop a comprehensive understanding of how the frameworks procedures and processes work so they can signpost and refer young people approaching GY to NCC effectively and appropriately.

Recommendation Two: **Gallery Youth should develop a proposal for submission to Northumberland County Council (NCC) Strategic Housing Services in early 2021 for grant funding to establish a part time Independent Living Support Worker in Alnwick based at GY** – if successful, this would form an initial step toward filling the gaps in housing support identified in this report and enable GY to start building up their housing issues capacity. This recommendation was encouraged by the Head of Strategic Services Housing at NCC. This proposal could be supported via the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant which the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government confirmed an allocation to NCC in late 2020. If successful this would allow for testing the viability and feasibility of such a role in 1:1 independent living support, build up contact networks and partnership working, provide more evidence and information, and help shape the development of the future approach to young people's independent living and housing support needs in the Alnwick area. This would also build on the existing well regarded reputation of GY as a provider of high quality services to young people in Alnwick.

Recommendation Three: **Gallery Youth should become an active participant on NCCs re-established Homelessness Partnership** – this will increase GYs knowledge, visibility and influence on young person's independent living and housing matters. GY have been a member of previous versions of this partnership group for many years and regular, active attendance is recommended as this will allow GY to have greater understanding of what is happening across the County, make contributions to development of youth homelessness services across the County, learn about other providers, take opportunities to agenda items at Partnership meetings, receive policy and procedural updates from NCC and others, and build a robust network of contacts. Gallery Youth should regularly request updates from NCC on the progress of key actions under their Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy particularly in relation to reducing and preventing youth homelessness this should include actions on improving the range and distribution of information on housing options for young people, on the implementation of family mediation services, and on actions to engage schools earlier. The action plan of the Strategy will be updated in the near future and making regular requests for updates will keep GY well informed, help shape approaches and services, and have a say in holding NCC to account for progress on actions.

Recommendation Four: **Gallery Youth should facilitate and enable the ways that young people in Alnwick can have a say and be supported in making informed choices regarding their independent living and housing circumstances -** young people themselves should be at the centre of any plans and services. GY could make a significant contribution to facilitating young people voices alongside the full range of partners involved in service delivery in Alnwick. Winning and earning young people's trust is key so the young person should know that they will be listened to and their voice can be properly heard in situations. The Alnwick Partnership and others should set out a comprehensive, continuing commitment to young people having their own say, and also to providing advocacy and supporting young people in self-advocacy, as appropriate. This should inform all aspects of service provision and should include ensuring young people have a say on service accessibility, what would work well for them, and ways to help young people take an active role in their communities. Working with all partners, GY should develop a methodology on how to arrange and facilitate this involvement and engagement of young people regarding their independent living and housing support needs in Alnwick.

Recommendation Five: Gallery Youth should understand the revised Joint Protocol produced by NCC for fulfilling duties and responsibilities owed towards homeless young people - the revised Joint Protocol was developed in late 2020 by NCC and sets out the how the different sections of Children's Services and Homelessness & Housing at NCC should fulfil their obligations and duties to young people. Understanding the protocols' procedures and processes will mean GY are aware of which section does what to help young people and that prior to any referrals to NCC they can explain and outline to the young person what to expect from NCC where they approach them. This information should be provided to young people, GY, and all other stakeholders in a way that is as accessible and easily understood as possible.

Recommendation Six: **Alnwick Town Partnership should commission an updated Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) and include detailed analysis of young people's housing, independent living requirements, and homelessness issues** – this will provide a refreshed, comprehensive picture of housing needs in the local area. It should combine needs for service provision as well as housing needs. The scope and brief of the assessment should be formulated in consultation with all key stakeholders including the Alnwick Forum and Partnership and provide wide opportunities for input to ensure it is comprehensive and coherent. Given the priority placed by the current Alnwick Neighbourhood Plan on supported housing, the brief for the updated HNA should include an in-depth analysis and enhanced focus and on young people's housing, homelessness, and independent living support issues in the area, with improved data on the demographics of young people affected by homelessness, by lack of affordable housing, and by lack of independent living support services. The assessment should aim to achieve a better understanding of the scale, extent and impact of types of housing crisis experienced by young people including: "Hidden Homelessness" and the extent of "sofa-surfing" by young people, age and key moments in young people's transition to adulthood at which local young people's housing, homelessness and independent living needs emerge, specific issues facing certain categories of young people at risk e.g. those experiencing domestic abuse, refreshed definitions of what constitutes 'affordable' housing for young people, young people's views on what independent living support services need to include and what kind of housing they would prefer, and the options that are available for funding to support young people's housing development.

(Note: The same or similar core questions can be addressed for other groups with independent living support needs e.g. adults with disabled, older people, which will enable the Partnership to explore how or whether to pursue generic mixed supported living or whether bespoke projects are needed for different age and target groups).

When refreshed, the Alnwick Neighbourhood Plan should subsequently be revised to reflect this analysis and update, with affordable and supported housing as main priorities.

Recommendation Seven**: Gallery Youth should develop a 3 to 5 year Action Plan of future aims and objectives for their independent living and housing support role** – this Action Plan will clearly identify aims, objectives and actions and provide GY with a structured basis for taking forward and developing their approach. It should include short, medium and longer term actions, be developed using "SMARTER" methodology, and consider option appraisals of models of supported services and accommodation provision. The plan should be aligned with GYs overall Business Plan. The Action Plan will facilitate well informed decision making about the future independent living support role(s) of stakeholders in Alnwick**.** The plan should consider incorporating the following**:**

A review of all funding sources for housing related activity and review forms of Community-Led Housing (CLH) schemes that could be developed in Alnwick – to increase awareness and understanding of potential donors, grant funded programmes and other sources. A comprehensive review and consideration of CLH schemes that have potential in Alnwick such as existing vacant properties and land sites to help meet younger person's housing needs should be carried out. Options such as offering light touch support in accommodation projects; shared accommodation models; design and build options that minimise the costs of new accommodation; and the repurposing/ refurbishment of empty buildings should be explored

Further information from current providers of young person's housing support services – the profiles of other providers and learning points of most relevance to GY & the Alnwick outlined in this report should be subjected to further investigation and examination. This could include looking at the success and key impacts of those such as Supported Lodgings schemes providers in more detail as emergency accommodation of this nature that provides young people with a room in a private "community host" home is seen to be a particularly promising approach, however there could be better evidence on the relative advantages of this provision.

Further information on how Peer Volunteer Mentor schemes operate in practice and the extent of their positive impact on young people – Peer mentoring schemes are one-to-ones with experience young people that can help inexperienced young people work towards achievable goals to help those young people to get back on track within certain aspects of their lives. Examples of peer mentoring support vary from taking part in activities in order to meet new friends and build confidence, to navigating housing issues to help accessing further education opportunities. The role of a peer mentor scheme could be both complementary and supplementary to the duties of an Independent Living Support Worker if this is re-introduced in Alnwick.

Recommendation Eight**: NCC should provide information to Alnwick stakeholders about how the Council is planning to create and enable access to services for young people in housing crisis situations for the foreseeable future particularly in light of the Covid-19 pandemic** - this should include the plans for walk-in services at Greenwell Lane offices as well as plans for face to face services, the Online Advice Wizard, emails, SMS, and telephone-based services. NCC should engage with young people to ascertain what types of access they believe would work well in Alnwick, and GY should help to facilitate young persons input. This will help ensure services can be accessed as effectively as possible and enhance understanding of how services will be delivered so young people can be signposted and advised accordingly.

3. Introduction & Context of the report

All young people will face a time when they feel they want, as well as potentially need, to make the transition to living independently. A key societal challenge we face is to provide appropriate housing and support options that meet the individual needs of young people, to plan early and to develop pathways to successful independent living. This report has defined young people as being between 16 and 24 years old (however, it should be noted that the age ranges are a continuing matter for debate for some people with suggestions that definitions should take maturity into account). Young people may find themselves in a situation due to challenging circumstances where they are unfortunately homeless or threatened with homelessness. Homelessness can include anyone lacking a physical, social, or legal domain. In England, there are primarily three forms of homelessness:

- **Statutory homelessness:** where an individual approaches their local authority for support, and is accepted as being unintentionally homeless, having a local connection and being a 'priority need', and is therefore given support.
- **Non-statutory homelessness**: those who have approached their local authority but do not meet the criteria for statutory homelessness.
- **Hidden homelessness:** individuals who have not approached their local authority for support and therefore do not fit into either of the above categories. The hidden homeless are likely to be rough sleepers, sofa-surfers, hostel dwellers or those living in overcrowded accommodation.

For many, youth homelessness is a critical issue for our communities as it has long-term consequences for individuals, families and wider society. Preventing and bringing youth homelessness to an end and ensuring that young people have the appropriate access to housing and the support they need is crucial and many perceive it as our duty as a fair and modern society. Tackling this issue contributes to the shape of our future communities and the main aim of housing related support is to provide vulnerable young people with the support, tools and skills they need to achieve independence. At a national level in England it has been demonstrated that Young people are at particular risk of experiencing homelessness. It was estimated that 103,000 young people presented to their local housing authority as homeless, with less than half receiving "meaningful" support. The human costs of youth homelessness are devastating, with lasting implications for mental health, educational attainment, and employment prospects. *(Centrepoint, 'Youth Homelessness: The Effects', Centrepoint, 2019)*

At a national level, no single factor is the cause of youth homelessness as various factors interact overtime and the risk factors often "kick in" well before young people reach crisis point. The most common reason why young people become homeless are that parents are no longer willing or able to accommodate young people**.** Relationship breakdown is often the trigger for young people becoming homeless, but this does not happen without warning signs. A rapid and skilled response to these challenges abuse, difficult behaviour, breakdown of support networks, substance abuse, and mental health problems could help reduce the risk that events culminate in homelessness.

According to the *Sage Foundation report "A Place to call Home" (2018)* the national story is startling as the 16-24 year olds who are accepted as statutorily homeless, make up just 12% (16,000) of the total number of young people that approach their local authority for support; nearly double that number will be turned away (22%, 30,000). These figures also fail to account for the 'hidden homeless'; those who are living on the streets or just getting by on couch surfing with no guarantee of where they will sleep each night. Recent studies of hidden youth homelessness across the nation have suggested that each night over 215,000 young people are sofa-surfing. Combined with the estimated figures on rough sleeping this amounts to 255,000 young people experiencing hidden homelessness every night. This estimate is roughly 20 times larger than government figures for statutorily homeless young people.

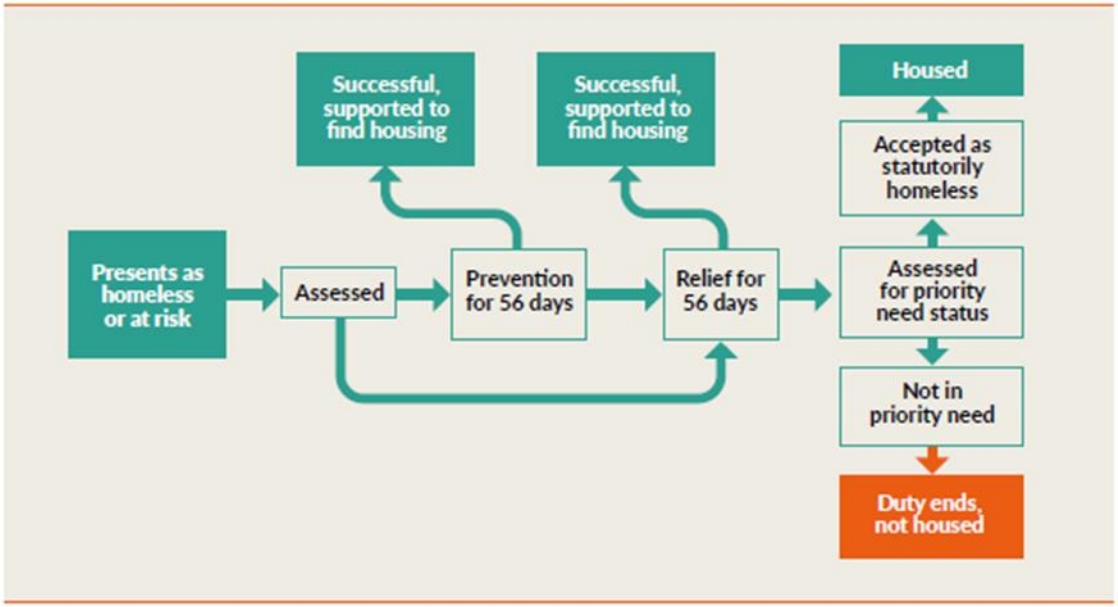
It is well understood that youth homelessness is rarely just a housing issue, and so recognising and responding to the early warning signs of homelessness requires a coordinated response from across public services and other stakeholders. Youth homelessness can often be predictable, enabling interventions to be put in place before young people are in crisis. However, the current legal landscape appears geared towards crisis point. Local housing authorities have been given responsibility for preventing homelessness but they are rarely the first port-of-call for young people at risk. For early intervention to be effective, other public, commissioned and voluntary bodies including schools, youth projects, charitable organisations and leaving care teams have a crucial role to play. Significant cuts to preventative and early access services for young people and families – like youth services and family support workers – mean that more and more households risk reaching breaking point. A lack of places offering advice and support also means that many young people facing homelessness do not know where to turn for assistance before a situation becomes a crisis.

Gallery Youth commissioned this report to examine the situation for young people in their area of Northumberland in more depth and carry out this research to provide a starting point for exploring how they, as a local charitable-based youth project, could play a more enhanced role in supporting young people into successful independent living.

4. Young people, Homelessness and Housing with support: legislative and national context

From a legal perspective in England, since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 in 2018, all young people who are homeless or at risk should be able to follow the pathway of support for homeless young people illustrated in the graphic below. They can expect to receive prevention or relief support regardless of whether they are in priority need or are deemed intentionally homeless. Single homeless young people who may not have previously received support should now all receive up to 56 days of both prevention and relief support. The changes are particularly significant for those young people who are at risk, but not yet at the point of crisis as previously they may not have received support, as they are less likely to be priority need. If the prevention and relief work is unsuccessful then young people are assessed to determine if they are owed a full housing duty.

According to Homeless Link, even though the legislation means that all people seeking homelessness advice and support should receive it, a lack of resources and critically of affordable accommodation means that young people still risk being turned away. In their view "The reality of youth homelessness today means that across the country, thousands of young people are faced with staying in an abusive or unsafe household, forced into exploitative and dangerous situations, or having nowhere to stay at all…"



Source: Homeless Link

The key elements of the legislation and associated guidance

Below is an outline of the key elements of the legislation relevant to homelessness, particularly youth homelessness, which helps to set the legal context, duties and scope of obligations that are primarily placed on Local Authorities. It is not intended in any way to be a definite guide to the legislation and should be viewed of the objectives of this research on behalf of Gallery Youth.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is the most significant change to legislation relating to homelessness in over 40 years. It has transformed the way homelessness services are expected to be delivered and introduced new duties. The definition of homelessness has changed and extends the number of days someone is deemed to be threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56. It also prescribes that when a person receives a valid notice under section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 and it is due to expire within 56 days, then they should be treated as threatened with homelessness. All Local Authorities are now required to provide or secure services to give people free information and advice on:

• Preventing homelessness; • Securing accommodation if homeless; • Housing Rights; and• Help that is available to resolve their housing crisis and how to access that help

Services need to be designed to meet the needs of specific groups of people who are deemed to be more likely to become homeless. These groups include care leavers, victims of domestic abuse, people leaving the armed forces, people leaving prison or those who suffer with a mental illness or impairment.

There is a new duty to assess all applicants and agree a personal plan, which must be provided to the client in writing and outline the steps that they and the Authority will need to take to ensure accommodation is either retained or alternative accommodation secured. There are two new duties, the 'prevention' duty for those threatened with homelessness and the 'relief' duty for those who are already homeless. For these duties, the applicant must be 'eligible' and either at risk of becoming homeless within 56 days, or already homeless. There is no need to satisfy 'priority need' criteria and whether homelessness is threatened or occurred due to the client's own actions (intentionality) is not considered at this stage either. Local authorities must take 'reasonable steps' to prevent or relieve homelessness and these must be written down in a personalised plan, which must be regularly reviewed and updated. The duties can be discharged if accommodation is secured and has a reasonable prospect of being available for the next six months. Applicants will be encouraged to follow the steps set out in their personalised plan as failure to do so could result in the Councils discharging their duties if it is deemed an applicant has 'deliberately and unreasonably refused' to work with them.

- **Where a young person approaches NCC Housing Services for accommodation, or help with obtaining accommodation, housing services should treat this as an application for assistance** - if housing services have reason to believe the young person may be homeless, or threatened with homelessness, they must make inquiries to determine what duties, if any, are owed to them.
- **If the young person is eligible and is (or may be) homeless and, by virtue of being 16-17 years old may have a priority need, the housing authority will have an immediate duty to secure interim accommodation)** - In considering the suitability of accommodation authorities should bear in mind that 16 and 17 year olds who are homeless and estranged from their family will be particularly vulnerable and in need of support. The following have a priority need for accommodation:

    a. A child aged 16 or 17 who is not a relevant child for the purposes of section 23A of the Children Act 1989 and is not owed a duty to provide accommodation under section 20 of that Act (provision of accommodation for children in need).

b. A person (other than a relevant student) who;

i. is under twenty-one, and;

ii. at any time after reaching the age of sixteen, but while still under eighteen, was, but is no longer, looked after, accommodated or fostered.

- Prevention and Relief Duties - These include duties to undertake assessments; develop personalised housing plans; and take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness (for applicants who are threatened with homelessness) or relieve homelessness (for applicants who are already homeless).

Young people who are eligible and homeless, or threatened with homelessness, must have an assessment of their needs - This must include the circumstances that have caused them to be homeless or threatened with homelessness; their housing needs, and what accommodation would be suitable for them, their household and anybody who might reasonably be expected to live with them; the support that would be necessary for them, and anybody who will be living with them, to have and sustain suitable accommodation. If a young person who applies or is referred to a housing authority is not homeless, but is threatened with homelessness within 56 days, a prevention duty will be owed irrespective of whether the young person is likely to have a priority need. A referral should be made to children's services identifying the threat of homelessness, and services should co-operate together in efforts to prevent the young person from becoming homeless.

A Personalised Housing Plan - must be developed with the young person, setting out the reasonable steps that the housing authority and the young person will take to try and prevent them from becoming homeless. Any steps that the young person is required to take should be proportionate to the age, understanding and assessed capability of the young person to undertake the actions. Other relevant people, for example parents or social workers, may also be requested to take actions as appropriate. If a young person is already homeless when they seek help, or they become homeless despite efforts to prevent it, housing services must attempt to relieve their homelessness by ensuring that suitable accommodation is made available to them.

Intentional homelessness - Housing services should take particular care when assessing whether 16-17 year olds are to be considered intentionally homeless from their family home or from accommodation provided for them. For an applicant to be intentionally homeless the actions or omissions that led to their becoming homeless must have been deliberate. Housing authorities will need to be mindful that a homeless 16-17 year old might not have the ability to understand the full consequences of their actions and choices that would be expected of an adult. Housing services cannot consider someone to have become homeless intentionally because of failing to take up an offer of accommodation; homelessness is only capable of being 'intentional' where the applicant has ceased to occupy accommodation that it would have been reasonable for them to continue to occupy. For a young person to be considered intentionally homeless from accommodation provided during the prevention or relief stages the accommodation must have been provided under the reasonable steps provisions and not as interim accommodation. If the young person still does not wish to be accommodated and is judged to have the capacity to make that decision, if it is necessary to safeguard and promote the welfare of the young person who is in need, they should be offered accommodation until they no longer require accommodation or they reach the age of 18. In such cases children's services and housing services will need to work together with the young person to ensure that they are not placed at risk of homelessness as they approach age 18. Examples of accommodation for use in emergencies include Night stop-type or short- term supported lodgings in the homes of trained and vetted hosts, emergency beds in specialist young peoples' supported accommodation services, other specifically designed crash pad services with on-site support and, for looked after children, emergency foster placements.

16 and 17 year olds are still children - it will not usually be appropriate for them to be placed in temporary accommodation without on-site support. Accommodation with visiting support may be suitable for some young people; where this is considered authorities should put in place arrangements so that young people can contact support services out of hours. Whether accommodation is provided by children's or housing services, arrangements should be in place so that young people have the support that they will need to make a positive transition towards independence. This might include, for example, the provision of supported accommodation or supported lodgings where young people can remain beyond the age of 18 and develop the skills they will need to manage the transition to adulthood. This kind of accommodation and support might be jointly commissioned or provided by children's services and housing services and will help children's services to meet their duties to secure sufficient accommodation for looked after children and care leavers in their area.

There is a clear legal framework for co-operation between children's services and housing services to meet the needs of children and young people - The Children Act 2004 broadened and strengthened the statutory framework requiring co-operation between relevant statutory services to improve outcomes for children and young people. Core legal requirements are set out in *Working Together to Safeguard* Children, making it clear what individuals and organisations should do and what they can expect of one another. The details of local working arrangements regarding 16 or 17 year olds who are threatened with, or who are homeless, are a matter for each area. But when a 16 or 17 year old is threatened with homelessness they are first and foremost a child and therefore children's services have the primary duty to them.

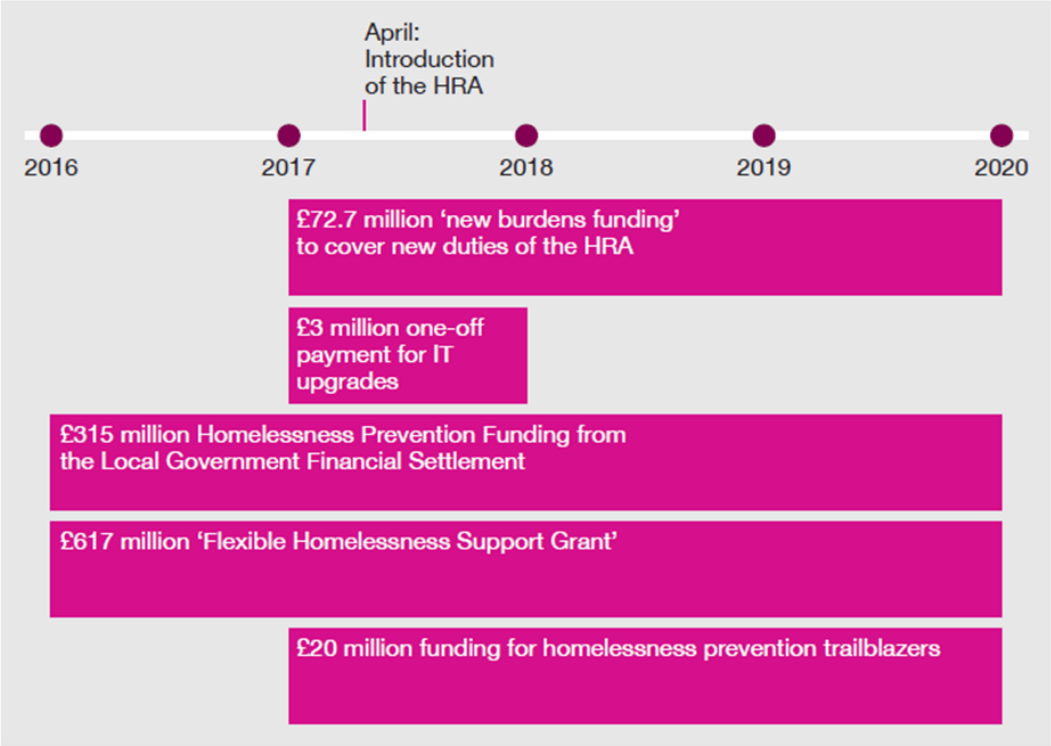
Provision of general advice and information - In order to help prevent homelessness, children's and housing services may want to consider collaborating to provide relevant information and advice to young people and their families regarding support services available in the area, available housing options for young people, their rights, and how to request further assistance. Children's services can provide these services for children in need and their families. It is the general duty of every local authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need; and so far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs.

Housing authorities have a duty to provide advisory services to any person in their area and a duty to do so specifically for groups at high risk of homelessness Information and advice provided should cover -preventing homelessness; securing accommodation when homeless; the rights of persons who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and the duties of the authority, any help that is available from the authority or anyone else, whether under this Part or otherwise, for persons in the authority's district who are homeless or may become homeless (whether or not they are threatened with homelessness); and how to access that help.

Operational joint working - joint protocols: It is essential that services for 16-17 year olds are underpinned by written joint protocols which set clear and practical arrangements for the provision of services. An effective joint protocol will set out a mutually agreed vision, objectives, systems and processes to ensure effective action to prevent youth homelessness and, where homelessness has occurred and cannot be relieved through a safe return to a family home or to suitable friends, to ensure 16 or 17 year olds have accommodation which meets their needs. It should include for arrangements for provision of advice and information to teenagers, including 16 or 17 year olds and their families, in relation to the help available to families with older teenagers, the available housing options for young people within the local area, their rights and how to access help. It also sets out arrangements for identifying longer term risk of homelessness where an assessment finds the young person is not homelessness or threatened with homelessness, and making arrangements to address risk factors and prevent future homelessness. *(Note: Northumberland County Council has refreshed their Joint Protocol as at December 2020)*

Strategic joint working - children's services should be linked to housing authorities' strategic housing function. The anticipated accommodation and support needs of vulnerable young people, including homeless 16 and 17 year olds and care leavers, should be represented in relevant strategies and plans including homelessness strategies, supported housing strategies or commissioning plans, sufficiency strategies, and plans or strategies to coordinate multi-agency working to safeguard children locally and monitor and challenge the effectiveness of local arrangements. Consideration should be given to developing collaboration between children's services and commissioners of housing and support services to meet the housing needs of young people in the area including providing suitable accommodation placements for looked after children aged 16 and 17. Services jointly planned and secured might include supported accommodation, floating support, supported lodgings, and more specialist housing provision for particularly vulnerable young people.

Funding for Homeless Prevention to LAs - Funding from central government to each LA with homelessness duties comes from a variety of grants, but these are only guaranteed for short periods of time. The timeline graph below shows the funding streams up until 2020.



Source: Homeless Link

5. Northumberland County, Alnwick and its surrounding area: key County level information

According to NorthumberlandInfo, a data and information service hosted by Northumberland County Council, key contextual facts about the County include:



- 320,300 residents with 155,000 dwellings
- Covers an area of 5013 km² : 97% of which is classed as rural with 46% of the population living in rural areas
- Sparsely populated with a density of 64 people per km² and 51% of the population live in 3% of the area (South East).
- 12% of the population live in one of the 10% most deprived areas of England
- Life expectancy at birth for males 79.4 and females 82.7
- People aged 65 and over set to increase by 43.2%
- Average house price is £160,901 , higher than the region, £132,769 and lower than England, £250,677 (UKHPI all property types
- Unemployment is higher than the national level (5.1% compared to 4.1%), 3.3% claim out of work benefits. North East rate of 4.4% (Oct 19).
- All of the LSOAs in the most deprived 10% in Northumberland are located in the South-East of the County with the exception of one located in Amble ward. There was a rate of 1.4 (per 1000 households), classed as homeless in Northumberland compared to a rate of 2.5 for England.

In this context, the rural nature of the County gives rise to a number of particular housing and accommodation issues. According to a recent national report on rural recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic commissioned by the CPRE, England Rural, and the Rural Services Network some of the key housing challenges faced by all rural areas in England are highlighted here. (*Source: "Rural Recovery & Revitalisation " Pragmatix Advisory, Oct 2020).*The community development organisation for Northumberland, Community Action Northumberland (CAN) has stated that housing is the core issue for all rural areas. This is due to a variety of reasons including:

Rural challenges
Economic vulnerability. Commercial activity concentrated in relatively few sectors.
Homebuilding rate per head of population lower in rural than in urban areas.
Second homes increase pressure on housing availability and push up prices.
Rural wages are lower than those earned in urban areas.
Lower-income families face house price-to-income ratio of almost 9.5.
Farms employ 70,000 seasonal workers each year, mostly EU nationals, and will now need to recruit more locally.

- House prices are often beyond the reach of many people, particularly those on lower incomes. According to the Land Registry, rural house prices have risen 82% in 10 years.
- The maintenance of sustainable communities and the very environment which attracts people to live in rural areas are issues which are close to people's hearts.
- Demand from second home buyers and holiday lets can have a strong influence on the availability and value of housing
- The social rented and "affordable" rented housing sectors are relatively small and continue to shrink.
- Building affordable homes can be difficult due to relatively high development costs per unit and the availability of suitable sites. 'Rural exception sites' are an important mechanism for delivering affordable homes in rural areas. These are Greenfield sites adjacent to villages where development would not usually be allowed but planning authorities may exceptionally grant planning permission, usually with a written agreement that the homes will be used to meet local need.

In the Northumberland Housing Strategy 2019 -21 rural Housing is a priority as it sees the provision of affordable and accessible homes in rural areas as a growing issue in the county. It highlights that the lack of affordable housing can lead to ***rural flight, where younger and less affluent households leave rural areas because they are unable to afford to live in them***. This can impact on the sustainability of rural communities which can become less diverse, increasing pressure on the viability of local services and facilities.

Key Strategies for the County of Northumberland

A number of significant plans and strategies provide the framework of the delivery of housing and housing related support services for young people in Northumberland. These are led by the relevant Strategic Partnership and are co-ordinated by County Council. The key ones for this review are outlined below.

- **The Housing Strategy**
- **Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy & Action Plan**
- **The Children's and Young people's Plan**

The Housing Strategy Northumberland 2019-2021

The Housing Strategy for Northumberland 2019-2021 defines how the Council, working with partners, sets out the Council's ambitious plans for meeting people's housing needs through the delivery of new affordable housing, improvements to existing housing stock and the provision of housing support to those who need it.

The Housing Strategy for Northumberland 2019-2021 states: *"Having a decent roof over your head is fundamental to this health and well-being. None of you should be forced to live on the streets, or in a "home" that is a health hazard or physically impedes independence…"*

The strategy sets out the substantial challenges ahead in the County - the demand for affordable housing continues to outstrip supply, which needs to be met by new houses and by bringing back into use empty properties; our ageing population has significant implications for the design of new homes and the support available to help people to live independently for as long as possible; the age and quality of some of the current social housing stock means that ongoing investment is required to ensure energy efficiency; there is an increased demand on housing and housing-related support services, including those that deal with homelessness.

Northumberland Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy & Action Plan 2019-2021

The Strategy sets out how the Council will work with partners to deliver services to households in Northumberland who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. It sets out the key challenges that exist in Northumberland, and is informed and influenced by a number of other Council documents particularly the Northumberland Local Plan, the Northumberland Housing Strategy, and the Northumberland Private Sector Housing Strategy. The strategy states that domestic violence accounted for 41% of all homeless acceptances, with the second highest reason for homelessness being the loss of tenancy in the private rented sector at 22%. Female lone parents are the largest priority need group accounting for 42% of all households. Within this group 43% were made homeless due to domestic violence and 23% due to loss of private rented tenancy. There are substantial challenges ahead including where increasing demand for affordable suitable homes for vulnerable residents continues to outstrip supply. These needs can be met by providing new houses and by bringing empty properties back into use.

Also, it highlights the need to deal with an increased demand on housing and housing-related support services, for residents with more complex needs who are also homeless. Six priority areas are established to meet these challenges, these are:

1. Develop services for rough sleepers
2. Prevent homelessness by improving support to vulnerable client groups – as there is no consistent way of identifying vulnerable households that may be a risk of homelessness before they reach crisis point and that there are limited support services that can be delivered on a countywide basis
3. Increase options for, and ensure access to, suitable temporary accommodation
4. Support people through Welfare Reform, particularly the impact of Universal Credit
5. Remove barriers to permanent accommodation

6. Prevent youth homelessness

The Strategy and its consultation exercises affirmed that youth homelessness remains a priority for Northumberland. Young people aged 16 to 25 are Northumberland's second highest priority need group accounting for 20% of all homeless cases. Although the threat of restrictions to 18-25 year old housing benefit has been removed, this age group, and up to 35 year olds, still find it difficult to rent in the private rented sector due to the Single Room Rate of the Local Housing Allowance rate.

Key issues and challenges of Youth Homeless that are identified in the Strategy:

- Limited availability of supported and permanent accommodation for young people aged 18-25 years
- Lack of shared accommodation prohibits many young people accessing permanent accommodation
- 19% of all homelessness acceptances are aged 18-25 years.
- The main reason (42%) for homelessness within this group is exclusion from the family home

To prevent youth homelessness, the Council has prioritised actions including:

- Review the joint protocols between Strategic Housing Service and Children's Services and implement changes or develop new procedures;
- Develop a range of information aimed specifically at young people with regard to their housing options and the implications of Welfare Reform;
- Review permanent housing options for young people including move-on from temporary accommodation or supported housing;
- Identify opportunities to work with young people at an earlier age i.e. schools; and
- Identify mediation training courses for staff to work between the family and the young person

The Children's and Young people's Plan 2019-2022

This 2019-2022 Northumberland Children and Young People's Plan sets out the partnership's hopes and ambitions for children and young people in Northumberland.. Objective 5 is the most relevant in the context of this review, the key aspirations and priorities are:

1. Children and young people know that their voice will influence decisions that affect them

2. Children and young people have the best start in life

3. Ensure all services work together towards tackling any form of disadvantage

4. Children and young people have access to the best quality education to prepare them for adult life

5. **Children and young people feel safe and supported and are able to cope with life's ups and downs** - Our young people want to know how to be able to get help, support and advice. They say that they value having safe spaces to go. If they have a problem, they talk, in the first instance, to parents, friends or someone at school. Children would like help to know how to be safe from drug and alcohol problems, bullying and risks online. Children and young people emphasised that 'help in making the right choices' is practical support that helps them to feel safe, while still being able to enjoy themselves. There are a range of services in Northumberland working together to provide the right service when it is needed for children and families. When children and young people are at higher risk and may be unsafe, services such as education, health, social care and the police work closely together to respond quickly and efficiently. Parents who argue a lot without being able to sort things out can make life harder for their child. NCC state they "do need to better support the local community and voluntary services where children and young people are".

6. Promoting and supporting children and young people to be healthy

Northumberland Adolescent Service

Northumberland Adolescent Service (NAS) is part of children's social care at the County Council they provide the following:

- Sorted - Substance Misuse Service for under 18s
- Youth Offending Service including the Liaison and Diversion Service
- 14+ Looked After Children, Care Leavers & CIN Social Work Team
- Accommodation Service
- Participation and Programmes
- Youth Service

The Accommodation Service, based within the Northumberland Adolescent Service, currently oversees the accommodation and support options for young people leaving care, and homeless 16/17 year olds. The service is responsible for ensuring that young people are provided with tailored advice and guidance about accommodation. They examine the support options available to young people as they transition towards independence. The service oversees referrals to the commissioned Accommodation Framework provider(s) – Berwick Youth Project, Barnabas Safe & Sound (Morpeth) and PfP Living + (Blyth). They liaise with providers to ensure that young people have access to suitable and appropriate accommodation in a timely fashion. NAS accommodation service supports young people in several ways. They offer:

- advice about accessing supported accommodation
- advice about independent accommodation, via Homefinder
- practical help
- Accompaniment to appointments/accommodation interviews, where necessary.

The accommodation support workers attend care team meetings and look-after reviews to discuss potential accommodation and support options available, and most suitable, for the young person they are working alongside.

Number of people accepted as homeless (Northumberland)

The annual averages in overall homelessness in the County across **all age ranges** are:

Homeless decisions and acceptances 2010/11 to 2016/17

Year	**Decisions made**	**Accepted as homeless**
2010/11	424	189
2011/12	540	229
2012/13	593	227
2013/14	390	184
2014/15	331	194
2015/16	359	188
2016/17	367	207
Total	3,004	1,418
Annual Average	429	203

These longer-term trends in decisions and acceptances of homeless households across the County indicates that an annual average of 203 households have been accepted as homeless in Northumberland. It should be noted that these published figures only include statutory homelessness, and exclude non-statutory and hidden homelessness – therefore they do not fully represent the full extent of homelessness issues. In addition, a report by the *Sage Foundation in 2018* found that reductions in services for young homeless people have made tracking cases of homelessness ever more difficult. It said the lack of an "absolute measure of all instances" of homelessness creates difficulties when tracking services' impact. In the report one sector expert suggested that the gap between the number of young people seeking support and the number who are accepted as statutorily homeless is increasing. The report concluded that in more and more cases "young people don't live independently unless there's a need to. So they're not leaving home just on a whim… they've exhausted everything else, so they've maybe fallen out with their parents, have gone to live with grandparents…They've maybe been staying at one friend's one night and another friend's… they don't actually hit services until they've exhausted everything else."

This is very relevant for Northumberland and this Alnwick review as this research revealed a high number of participants concern about the extent of sofa-surfing and hidden youth homelessness in the County. Given that there are currently no official statistics on the number of homeless people sofa-surfing these young people will often be unmonitored by local authorities and unlikely to be offered the appropriate support. Sofa-surfing intensifies the chaotic nature of homelessness as it does not provide stability and can lead to rough sleeping. Sofa-surfing can occur where young people move fluidly between parents' homes without a fixed abode. Many explained that the instability of sofa-surfing creates practical and logistical issues that make it difficult for young people to access support and benefits. Vulnerable young people who depend on government funded support can be at a further risk of homelessness when services do not, or cannot, provide sufficient support. For example, many young people struggle to make sense of the complex benefit systems and can receive little or no support in attempting to do so.

Previous Information Requests and responses: Northumberland County area

In November 2019 Centrepoint, the Youth Homelessness Charity, asked a number of questions under the Freedom of Information Act to NCC which are of relevance to this review. The main questions and responses are outlined below.

Q. Please provide a list of every young person's housing support provider operating in your LA area

Barnabas Safe & Sound
Berwick Youth Project
Places for People Living Plus
StopGap (Hexham)
Horizons NE
Holy Eagle Property Mgt
Changing Lives
Tyne Housing

Q. A list of every supported accommodation (for young homeless) provider who operates under your local authority.

Barnabas Safe & Sound
Berwick Youth Project
Places for People Living Plus
StopGap (Hexham)
Horizons NE
Holy Eagle Property Mgt
Changing Lives
Tyne Housing

Q. What is the procedure for getting referrals? These can be in the form of a framework, spot contract and/or advertisement

A. Referrals are made by the homelessness and housing options officers (usually via an electronic form) for young people 18-25 via an accommodation framework.

Q. Homelessness presentations, assessments and eligibility in 2018-2019 - within your local authority in 2018-2019, how many 16-24 year olds:
- Presented themselves as homeless, or at risk of homelessness*

- Were assessed under the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017
- Received an initial decision of being owed: Prevention duty under HRA or Relief duty under HRA
- Prevention duty ended: With accommodation secured, Leading to relief duty or Any other reason
- Relief ended: With accommodation secured or for any other reason (not including those who progress to an assessment under the Housing Act 1996)
- Were assessed under the Housing Act 1996
- Were accepted as statutorily homeless and owed a duty

(**This does not include general housing advice. By presenting we mean all who presented themselves as homeless even if they were not subsequently assessed, for example: Presented before 56 days of becoming as homeless, or at risk of homelessness, believed they were homeless but did not meet requirements and/or Presented but had no recourse to public funds)*

Youth Homelessness presentations, assessments and eligibility in 2018-2019

Year	Quarter	Age group	1) Presented themselves as homeless or at risk of homelessness*	2) Were assessed under the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017	3) Received an initial decision of being owed:		4) Prevention duty ended:			5) Relief duty ended:		6) Were subsequently assessed under the Housing Act 1996	7) Were subsequently accepted as statutorily homeless and owed a duty
					a) Prevention duty under HRA	b) Relief duty under HRA	a) With accommodation secured	b) Leading to relief duty	c) Any other reason	a) With accommodation secured	b) For any other reason (not including those who progress to an assessment under the Housing Act 1996		
2018	April - June	16-24	116	57	22	16	22	0	0	14			
2018	July - September	16-24	47	47	13	11	13	0	0	0			
2018	October - December	16-24	53	53	13	14	13	0	0	12		1	1
2019	January - March	16-24	49	49	10	8	10	0	0	8			
2018-2019	N/A - annual total	16-24	265	265	58	49	58	0	0	34		1	1

Gallery Youth in context: Gallery Youth is Alnwick Young Peoples Association which is a registered charity and based in the town centre of Alnwick. Its main aim is to offer advice information and support to young people as well as engage young people in projects that encourage self-esteem, health and well-being and confidence building. Its uses the trading name Gallery Youth and is well established within the town. They currently employ a manager, young people's development worker and three youth workers. They are responsible for the delivery of development and support work with young people.

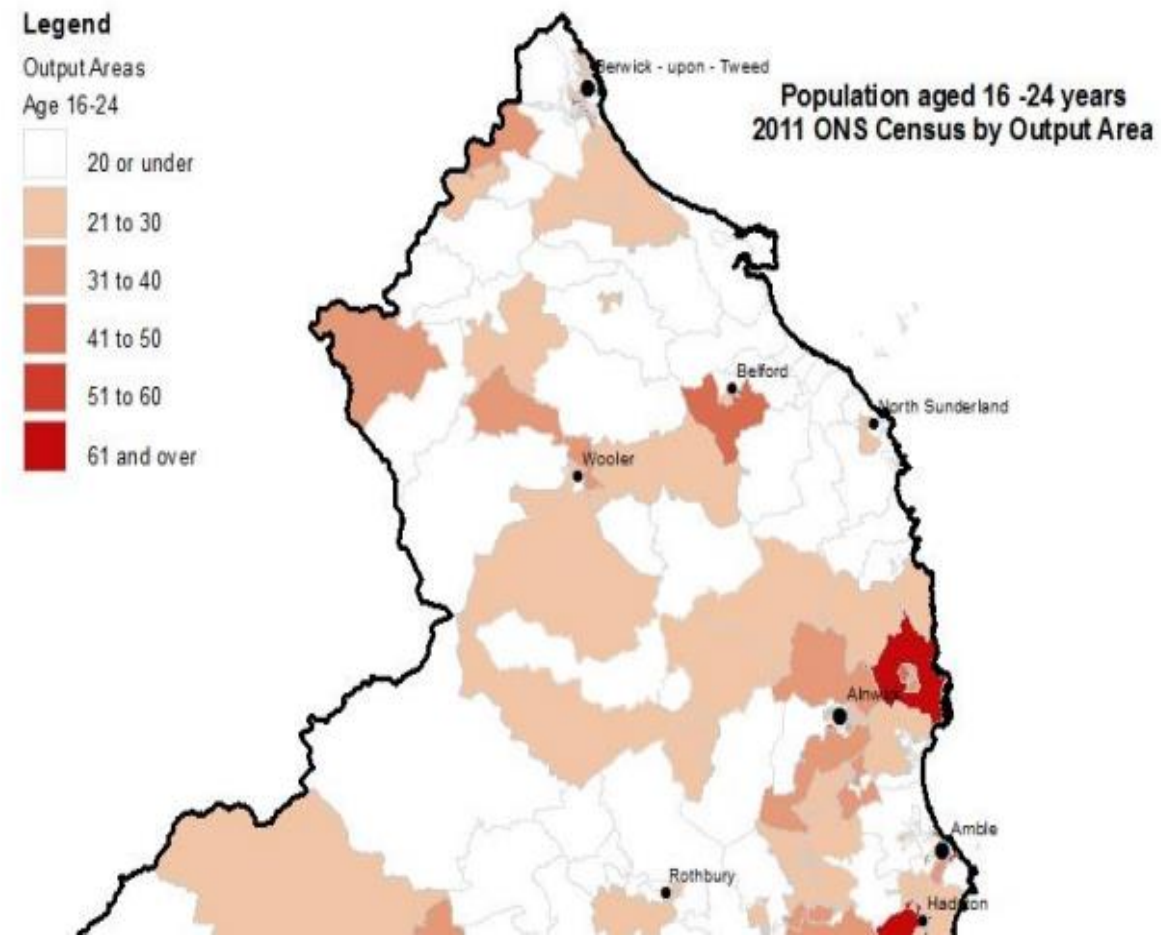
Housing and homelessness were major issues that Gallery Youth tackled over a 12 year period with support from the Supporting People budget through Northumberland County Council. They previously provided floating support to up to 8 young people per year living in their own tenancies at any one time. This was delivered through a partnership with social landlords. When Gallery Youth had a housing role, young people were supported by a dedicated worker through individual support plans, which reflected the young people's personal needs. In addition to this Gallery Youth offered housing related advice and support to young people in and around Alnwick through advice and information sessions. The floating support service was withdrawn due to the re-allocation of the Supporting People budget by the local authority and were no longer able to sustain a worker due to the supporting people grant ceasing. The service was withdrawn over a six-month period and the young people kept their tenancies. Gallery Youth ran a two bedroomed unit for young people with higher support needs for two years. This included the management of a tenancy from the local authority, and additional weekend on-call support. This service was also withdrawn at the same time as the floating support.

Since 2017 Gallery Youth have become aware that the requests for support relating to young people's housing needs have increased. This is via more approaches for help with issues ranging from application form-filling, benefits advice, food parcels, to rent arrears (many linked to universal credit payments taking weeks to process). They have also become aware of increased numbers of young people that are "sofa surfing" with relatives or friends and are finding it difficult to obtain a tenancy as they are "not seen as priority" need.

The number of housing and homelessness enquiries to Gallery youth through self-referral, social services, community development organisations and other youth work providers has been increasing and these are a mix of very simple issues as well as more complex ones that need referring to more specialist agencies. However, Gallery Youth now only offer a basic service and signpost them to NCC Housing advice officers, help with form filling, and obtain food parcels. Referrals to GYs services are not essential as they operate an open door policy where young people have direct access. Gallery Youth have recognised that these young people need additional longer-term support including help with budgeting, employment and training, managing relationships, and key life skills to ensure that they can go on to independent living when ready and sustain a tenancy and household of their own.

Note: The Supporting People programme introduced in 2003 was revolutionary in bringing about a key change in how support services for homeless people were funded and delivered. Supporting People ring-fenced a range of funding streams into one pot to ensure support services were delivered to vulnerable people. In 2010, the ring-fence was removed and is now part of the Formula Grant with decisions about how it will be spent at the discretion of local authorities. For example, between 2010/11 and 2017/18 spending on the grant fell by 59 per cent in real terms. The decline of Supporting People has had wide-ranging effects on local authorities' homelessness services, including the loss of non-statutory services, poor staff retention, and lower-quality performance monitoring (Source: Reform report "Preventing Youth Homelessness" May 2019)

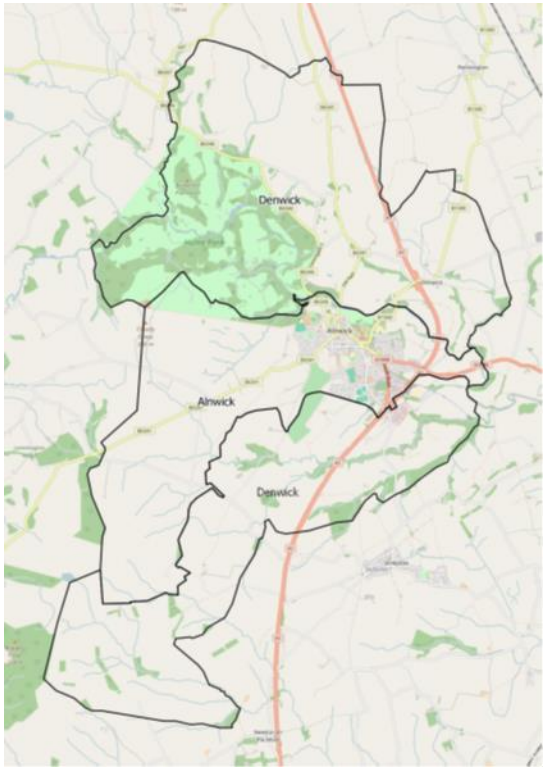
6. Young people, housing and homelessness in the Alnwick area: Key local data



According to the 2011 census there were 30,847 young people aged 16 to 24 who were resident in Northumberland. This was 9.7% of the county's total population and compares to 12.4% in the North East and 11.9% in England. 51% of this age group was male and 49% was female. The percentage of the population in the 16 to 24 age cohort is significantly lower than that for the North East and England, possibly due to the number of young people leaving the county for further education. As can be seen on the map opposite there is a main cluster of young people to the **east of Alnwick (**Other clusters are between Hexham and Corbridge, in the South East around Cramlington and Seaton Delaval and around Hadston).

According to Public Health England data the population by age group in Northumberland and in Alnwick (Ward 2018) is:

Indicators	Alnwick(Ward only)	Northumberland(LTLA 2013)
Population aged 0 to 15 years	**1415**	**52204**
Population aged 16 to 24 years	**801**	**27738**



A Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) specifically for the Alnwick & Denwick wards was conducted by arc4 in 2016 and is now considered to be in need of a revisit and review. As the HNA provides parish-level data analysis it can inform planning and housing policies at a more local level. It was recommended that the baseline information had a shelf-life of three to five years. In particular, the HNA provides the evidence to assist in the formation and implementation of housing policies contained in the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan and the Northumberland Local Plan. The 2016 HNAs most relevant findings in relation to young people (defined at the time as 15-24 year olds) included the following:

A total of 391 households in housing need - representing 9.8% of all households across Alnwick and Denwick. Total newly arising need is calculated to be 52 households pa.

A gross annual imbalance of 87 dwellings - but because there is a good supply of affordable lettings, the net annual imbalance is 7 affordable dwellings.

Of Household Survey respondents 42.2% felt that homes for young people and 24.9% felt that homes for first-time buyers were particularly required

A strong need for affordable housing - In terms of the size of affordable housing required, the gross need is split by smaller general needs one/two bedrooms (68.8%), general needs three or more bedroom (24.7%) and older person two bedrooms (6.5%).

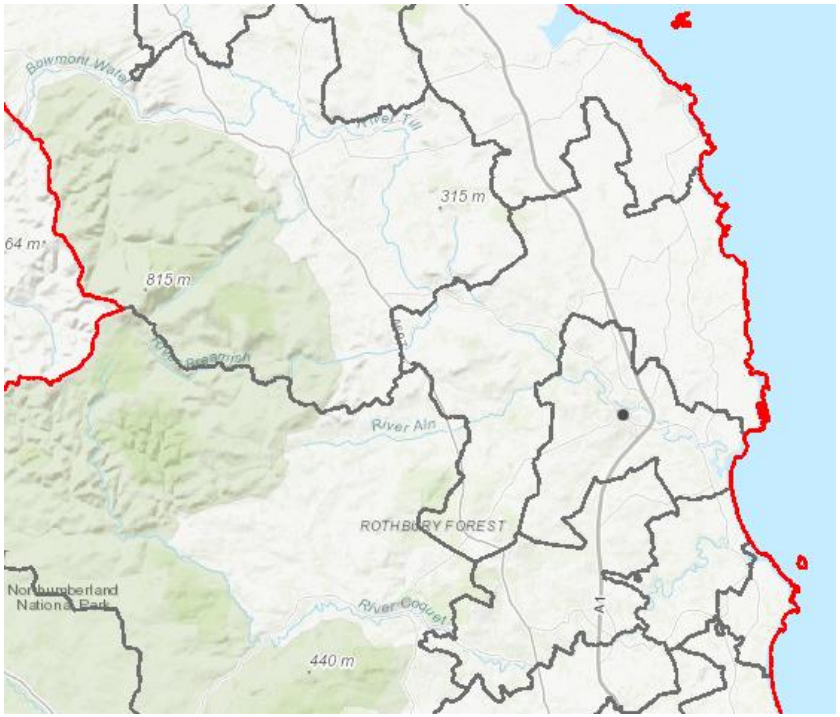
The continued delivery of affordable housing should reflect underlying need. Stakeholders in the HNA identified the following main drivers of housing demand:

- Ageing population and the in-migration of older people, with a range of needs and aspirations in terms of housing and other services
- Holiday homes and second homes;
- Economic growth of Alnwick as a service centre;
- Limited availability of affordable, rental accommodation for young people and families
- Lack of emergency accommodation and supported accommodation for young people.

These last two drivers are very relevant to this review as they are just as, if not more, of a key challenge into 2021 and beyond.

Service- based Stakeholders also commented that:

- they were experiencing increased demand from both young people and older people
- Funding changes had resulted in the loss of supported accommodation units and the difficulties they face in trying to find accommodation for younger people with who wish to live independently but remain local to the Alnwick community.



Understanding young people's Housing and homelessness needs in Alnwick

Desktop analysis for this review included Northumberland Knowledge, a website maintained by NCC. It contains statistics about groups of children and young people with specific health and care needs and could have helped provide the context and key messages for children and young people in Northumberland alongside detailed data tables and statistical profiles. Unfortunately many of the pages and statistical tables were not available via the website throughout the course of this research and certain maps such as the Interactive Area profiles are still in development. Statements from young people that do appear on the Northumberland Knowledge website that are of relevance to this review are limited to "young people said their priorities were to live safely and to learn how to be independent. They have said they want to achieve as well as they can, be happy and healthy, living in places that have a strong spirit of community".

This report gathered data on homelessness applications and housing registrations to Homefinder (the Councils common housing lettings and allocation system in partnership with other Registered Providers in the area) from amongst young people as at December 2020. The Alnwick area and surrounding electoral divisions and postcodes used for two Freedom of Information Act requests to Northumberland County Council were Alnwick(NE66),Lesbury(NE66),Longhoughton,(NE66),Bamburgh(NE69),Shilbottle (NE65),Amble(NE65), Amble West/Warkworth(NE65),Rothbury(NE65), and Wooler(NE71).

Freedom of Information requests and responses from NCC: December 2020

Two Freedom of Information requests were submitted to NCC as part of this review.

The first was focussed on gathering data on homelessness and registrations for the Alnwick area identified.

The second was focussed on the proposed mixed model framework (with ITT issued in September 2020) for the provision of support and supported accommodation to young homeless persons across the County (more detail on this proposed framework is provided in Section 7).

The questions and responses are outlined below.

Between October 2018 and October 2020 how many 16-24-year olds in the Alnwick area were involved in the following? :

Question	Answer
No. of overall homelessness presentations & applications	**35**
No. of homeless applications that were referrals via the Duty to Refer	**0**
Assessed as being homeless or threatened with homelessness in 56 days	**35**
Not homeless nor at risk of homelessness in 56 days	**0**
Outcome of homeless applications: **-Advice and information only** **-secured alternative accommodation or assisted to remain in their current home** **-lost contact** **-found to be intentionally homeless**	 **1** **16** **11** **0**
Estimated extent of hidden homeless amongst young persons	**They are hidden - so NCC "wouldn't know how many" as they only deal with people who contact the service**
No. of Housing registrations accepted onto the Housing Register and active as at 30 October 2020	**118**

Q. In the Councils view, how effective has the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the Duty to Refer introduced in 2018 on other public authorities been in helping to identify, prevent and alleviate young person's homelessness in the County of Northumberland?

Answer: Prevention duty - There is no real difference as NCC were already preventing people from becoming homeless - the duties start earlier which is a benefit to both client and officer as it gives more time to work on the prevention of homelessness

Relief duty - No difference NCC was already dealing with people who were already homeless

Main duty - Not many people go through to main duty as they are dealt with under prevention or relief stages

Gallery Youth, Youth project, Alnwick: recorded contacts

According to Gallery Youth they indicated the following from their records. It must be noted that from the first and subsequent pandemic lockdowns and Tier restrictions from March 2020 onwards that all walk in services had to close therefore data is difficult to quantify and the number of young people approaching Gallery Youth if this had not had to happen would in all likelihood be much higher.

No. of young people approaching GY since October 2019 for advice or assistance on housing	**6** *(note: Covid -19 lockdowns and stopping drop –ins to GY during 2020 had significant impacts on access)*
No. of referrals/advice given to young persons made since October 2019 in relation to homelessness/threatened with homelessness to NCC	**3** advised to make applications to NCC *(note: Covid -19 lockdowns and stopping drop –ins to GY during 2020 had significant impacts on access)*
Main housing and housing-related issues raised where advice provided	Sleeping at friends' houses/sofa surfing Relationship issues & Family breakdown Poverty ,Finance, Budgeting & Benefits Access to Employment and Training Substance Misuse Mental health
No. of young people in housing need who said to GY staff that their mental health suffered during the lockdown period and they felt isolated	2

Employment Support Hub, Alnwick: Housing issues raised *(appointment only based during pandemic)*

According to the Employment Support Hub, who were approached to gain insight as to whether young people seeking employment were raising housing issues with them, the following was reported. It should be noted this information is taken from the case load (current active caseload at December 2020 total of 47) of one Employment support worker only which is split between Alnwick down and across to Amble and up to Berwick. Only Alnwick and surrounding areas cases were extracted and anonymised.

No. of young people who stated, whilst receiving employment support that they want to leave parents' home, but limited support available.	3

Source: Case worker Community Action Northumberland (CAN) & Bridge project Northumberland

Data issues and Hidden Homelessness

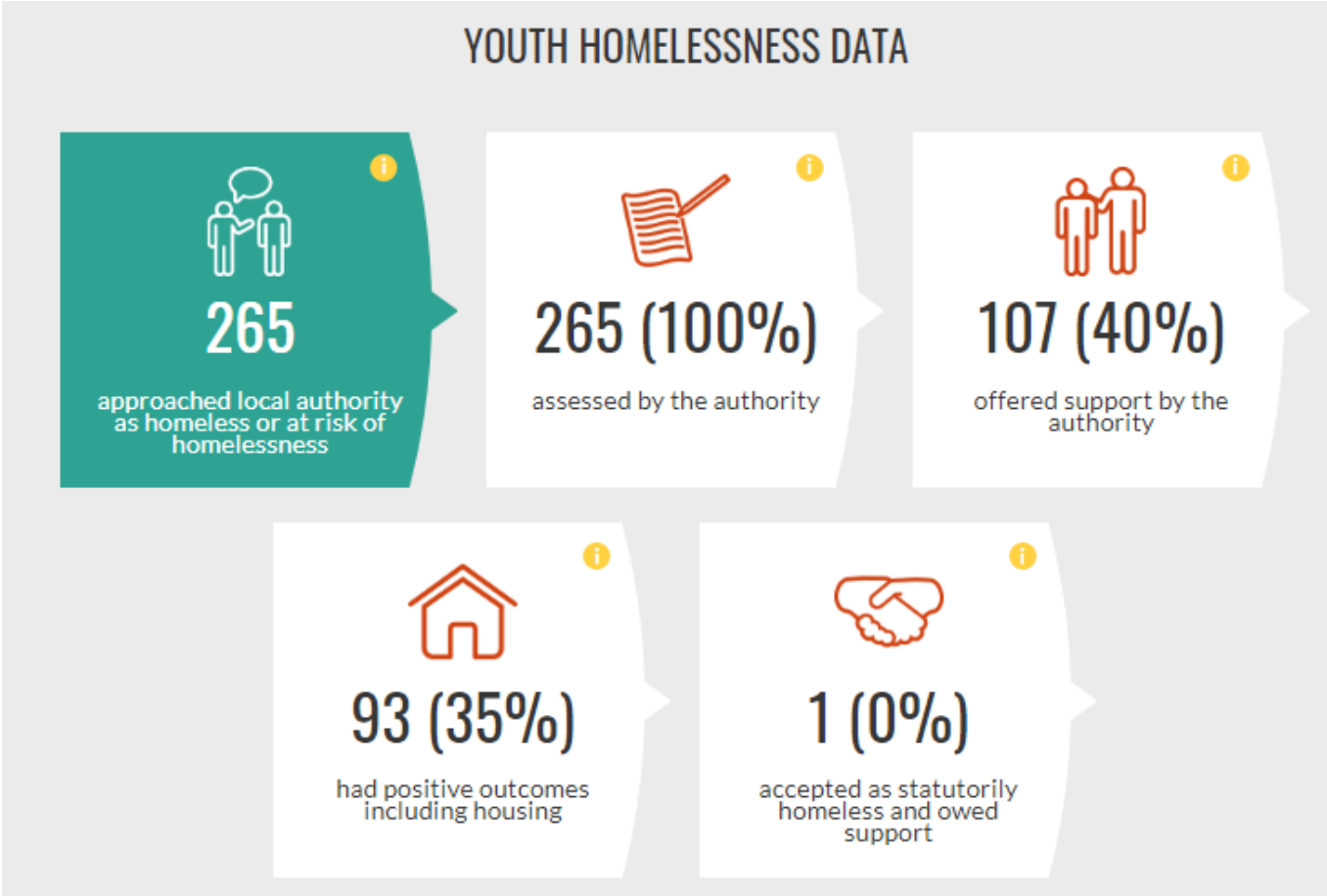
Centrepoint and Homeless Link have stated that official data seems to mask the extent of the issue of youth homelessness – particularly what is termed "Hidden Homelessness" for example, where young single people are "sofa –surfing" within friends or relations homes. The figures related to support provided by NCC above only show part of the picture when it comes to youth homelessness in the area. Many young people without a stable place to live are in all likelihood not appearing in these statistics, due to being 'hidden'. Nationally, it is estimated that almost two thirds of single people experiencing homelessness are 'hidden' and so do not show up in official statistics (Source: Homeless Link 2019). Young people are particularly likely to experience hidden homelessness – which is why it is so important that these hidden experiences are highlighted and the right support is put in place so that no young person has to live through it. Homelessness Case Level Information Collection (H-CLIC) returns were introduced with the Homelessness Reduction Act and records local authorities' statutory homelessness actions and replaces the former data return, known as P1E, which was no longer suitable. Prior to the HRA, local authorities were only obligated to collect data on statutory youth homelessness, which is an unsuitable measure to capture the scale of the problem. H-CLIC captures more detailed information such as a person's employment and benefit status, their support needs, such as for mental health or substance misuse issues, and information about the people in the household of the main applicant. With the new insights that H-CLIC can enable into the prevalence and characteristics of youth homelessness in a local area, local authorities must now make use of the data that is available to them to create appropriate, targeted interventions. The table below is extracted from the H-CLIC returns for 2020(so far) for Northumberland as a County.

Households initially assessed as threatened with homelessness (owed prevention duty) or homeless (owed relief duty) England, April to June 2020 Northumberland last reported quarter (whole county)

CATEGORY	No.	*% of cases*
Young person aged 18-25 years requiring support to manage independently	**5**	***3.4%***
Care leaver aged 21+ years	**1**	***0.7%***
Care leaver aged 18-20 years	**3**	***2.1%***
Young person aged 16-17 years	**2**	***1.4%***
Young parent requiring support to manage independently	**3**	***2.1%***

To better understand the housing and support needs of young people, effective data collection and analysis is needed to inform policy decisions at a local and national level. MHCLG has said that good-quality data "is essential for developing strategies, monitoring progress against action plans, designing service provision and interventions, and evaluating what does and does not work".

In addition, Centrepoint has established the Youth Homelessness Databank which brings together data from across both local and national government, as well from support providers. Over time the Databank will look to provide crucial insight into the scale and nature of youth homelessness both now and in the future. The data for the most available recent year for Northumberland as a whole extracted from the Databank is highlighted in the graphic opposite.



7. Young people and Housing Support issues in the Alnwick area: Qualitative information

a.Current arrangements and proposed mixed model framework for young person's housing and support provision

Under current arrangements, accommodation and associated support for assessed priority young people is commissioned by NCC from 3 key providers in the County. These are Berwick Youth Project, Barnabas Safe & Sound (Morpeth) and Places for People Living Plus (Blyth). NCC has a responsibility to pay accommodation and support costs for those young people who are LAC and care leavers aged under 18. NCC commissions these services to cover those instances where NCC has assessed a level of need and have committed to meet this need by purchasing a service from these providers.

Proposed arrangements: a new mixed model commissioning Framework

During the course of this review (September to December 2020) Northumberland County Council had invited tenders from interested providers with the intention of creating a revised "mixed model framework" to develop housing and support services for vulnerable young people aged 16-25. To prevent youth homelessness and a planned pathway to independent living, there is a specific focus on 16-21-year-old care leavers and young people aged 16/17 who are homeless and deemed to be children in need.

The proposed Framework components are:

- **Provide single occupancy accommodation for young people at risk that consists of two providers providing a minimum (or core offer) of 10 hours per week floating support** - that may be supplemented with additional floating support depending on need
- **Additional provision of single occupancy accommodation capacity, group accommodation, floating support and access to supported lodgings**

The Framework is being set up to enable NCC to commission integrated services to provide a clear pathway of support - with access to accommodation and services that will provide an opportunity for progression for young people, enabling them to achieve greater capability of independent living. Providers will be working towards developing or sustaining a Young Person's capacity to live independently within the community and avoid unnecessary use of more intensive forms of care and support. NCC state that demand is weighted towards young people displaying complex needs and providers should be skilled at supporting young people who display significant levels of support needs.

Northumberland County Council (NCC) Adolescent Services (NAS) has responsibility for the provision of services that meet the needs of homeless sixteen and seventeen year olds or those deemed to be Children In need; looked after children (LAC) who are fourteen years of age or older; care leavers, children and young people who have entered, or at risk of entering the Youth Justice System (YJS).

In order to meet the needs of young people, a Joint Housing Protocol has been developed for homeless 16/17 yr. olds and a Care Leavers Accommodation & Support Protocol for young people leaving care. Both protocols have a shared vision of ensuring young people receive the appropriate support to meet their accommodation and support needs and underpin the practice of both Housing Services and Children Services within NCC going forward.

These services are required as part of a range of statutory requirements for young people aged 16 and over who have left school and can include provision for:

- Looked After young people and Care leavers under the Children Act 1989;
- Young people presenting as homeless and needing accommodation in line with the Statutory Guidance - Provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds who may be homeless and/or require accommodation;
- Separated children (formally known as unaccompanied asylum seeking children);
- Young people who require support after the age of 18 in line with the Staying Put agenda; and
- Other young people aged 16 and above who are beyond school leaving age who may require provision under this Service as and when they meet varying NCC thresholds.

When young people become more independent and need less support, it would be expected that, where appropriate, a package of support may taper down in order to reflect their increased independence and therefore reduced need for support. Services will be available to young people aged between 16 (having left statutory education - Year 11) and 25 who are assessed as being eligible by NCC and who will have a range of needs. This framework therefore has a significant impact on this review and the recommendations it makes to Gallery Youth and the Alnwick Town Partnership.

The five primary components of the model are:

Single Occupancy Accommodation for Complex Young People at Risk Two providers that offer access to two properties which are supported by a guaranteed minimum of 10 hours of floating support per week for each package of care (Please note that although support hours may be required at any time it is likely that need will be weighted towards evening and weekends.). The Council will purchase access to one property and the associated support.
Single Occupancy Accommodation for Young People at Risk with a Range of Needs - Where demand for services exceeds the provision supplied via the above component the Council wishes to enable access to accommodation with an appropriate level of support. The aim is to create the maximum amount of flexibility in order to manage supply and demand.

Group Supported Accommodation - Group accommodation is required in all areas of Northumberland County for young people aged 16-25. It will provide accommodation and support for young people who are at significant risk or who are homeless and will consist of individual rooms/flats with shared communal kitchen, bathroom and living room in an accommodation block, which must be fully furnished and well-appointed with a schedule of maintenance to ensure the quality of accommodation.
Floating Support - Floating support may be purchased at an hourly rate to supplement the provision of accommodation above or support eligible young people residing in property owned or rented by either themselves or the council. The support provided to eligible young people will be dependent upon individual needs. Floating support workers will help young people to understand what it means to live independently and support them in achieving this. This may include support with housing issues, help with budgeting, education and training, debt advice, health advice and other areas as needed. Each young person is an individual and will have their own plan of action agreed with their worker. When specialist support is required the worker will link the young person into the relevant agencies locally.
Supported Lodgings - This service is required in all areas of Northumberland. It will provide those ready to leave care settings or those at risk with a safe and supported environment and the opportunity to develop necessary skills for a successful and independent life. Supported lodgings will provide young people with a room in a home environment and the support and guidance of an adult(s) living there. Support and guidance can cover a huge range of areas, from helping young people develop life skills, through to simply allowing them to experience the ups and downs of living in a family group. All support and guidance should have the focus on enabling the young person to gain the skills necessary to live independently. Support may be required on either a long term basis e.g. for care leavers, or a short term basis to provide support to young people in crisis by providing emergency accommodation for those at immediate risk of homelessness.

In December 2020 a Freedom of Information (FoI) request was sent to NCC asking a number of questions about the above proposed Framework including NCCs view on the provision of young persons housing support in the Alnwick area. The responses are outlined below, and many were not able to be answered due to the restrictions on communication during the procurement exercise being undertaken by NCC at the time. Once the outcome of the procurement exercise becomes known and it will be beneficial for Gallery Youth to re-submit the FoI requests at an appropriate time.

Q. As at November 2020, in view of the ongoing restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, please describe the ways in which Northumberland Adolescent Services (NAS) operates to assist young persons with accommodation and support where they are from the Alnwick area and surrounding electoral divisions?

A. Within NAS there is an Accommodation Service that accept referrals for young people in need of accommodation, who are homeless and unable to remain within the family home. The accommodation service is able to:

- To Provide advice and guidance around accommodation options
- Support referrals to supported accommodation
- Support with referrals to Northumberland Homefinder for independent tenancies where appropriate
- Liaise with providers and external agencies to promote the accommodation and support needs of young people

Q. Supported accommodation services have been commissioned by NCC under a Framework Agreement to address the needs of chaotic single homeless people and for young people with support needs.

A. Please note, the tender process itself is ongoing and remains subject to restrictions in terms of communication. We anticipate that all aspects of the process will be complete by the end of December after which a new framework will be created

Q. How effectively and efficiently does Northumberland Adolescent Services believe the commissioned services are meeting young person's housing support needs?

A. The accommodation and support needs of young people are routinely reviewed to ensure that young people are suitably placed in accommodation that meets their needs. Services have been commissioned under the accommodation framework to meet existing needs. At present we are in the process of tendering for future services which will reflect the current identified accommodation and support needs.

Q. What works well under the current, commissioned Framework?

A. Frameworks provide a structured approach to working with providers which establish clearly the needs and requirements of the Council against which service delivery and outcomes can be measured.

Q. What works not so well under the current, commissioned Framework?

A. Any areas of concern regarding service delivery would be raised with existing providers and are considered commercially sensitive.

Q.Does NCCs Northumberland Adolescent Services (NAS) have any planned service developments or improvements? If so, what are these?

A. At this moment in time the service is currently in the tendering process for a new accommodation framework

Q.Please describe any gaps you can see in the provision of young person's housing support services in the Alnwick area and provide views in relation to how easy or complicated is it for young people to navigate housing and adolescent services in the County

The tender process itself is ongoing and remains subject to restrictions in terms of communication. We anticipate that all aspects of the process will be complete by the end of December 2020 after which a new framework will be created.

Q. What does Northumberland Adolescent Services (NAS) see as the opportunities for young people to live independently with ongoing support in the Alnwick area?

A. Where it has been deemed that a young person is ready for their own tenancy, the accommodation service will support the young person to make an application to Homefinder for independent accommodation. For the young people accessing their own tenancy, support around the following will be considered:

- Tenancy viewings
- Grant applications for furniture and white goods where appropriate.
- Provide a period of floating support to get a young person settled into their tenancy

Q.The Council issued an ITT to procure and create a mixed model Framework for the commissioning and delivery young person's housing support services over the next 2 years. Please describe the evidence base of this mixed model Framework – what consultation, information and evidence was used to develop this proposed mixed model Framework for young person's housing support services across the County?

A. The tender process itself is ongoing and remains subject to restrictions in terms of communication. We anticipate that all aspects of the process will be complete by the end of December 2020 after which a new framework will be created.

This proposed framework will play a primary, essential role in addressing many of the issues identified in this review for Gallery Youth. As the framework moves into operation and implementation Gallery Youth will need to prepare by developing a strong understanding of the new Framework, the providers who are commissioned, and how it operates in practice.

This will hopefully mean young person's approaching GY can be advised, assisted and referred effectively to NCC but also will build capacity and knowledge within GY and help with any forthcoming strategic reviews, considerations and decisions in relation to GYs housing and housing support role in the future (this is especially important given that the proposed framework, if established in early 2021, is initially to be commissioned for a period of two years).

b. Young people views and experiences

A number of exercises were undertaken to gain valuable input and direct opinions from young people in the area themselves including a focus group session of six young people at GYs offices(with some participating via Zoom) and 1:1 discussion case studies. This was important give a voice to the young people in Alnwick - by explaining their views, experiences and requirements it informed, influenced and shaped many of the recommendations in this review. All gave their informed consent to having their views and experiences portrayed in this report but all comments were anonymised.

These exercise focussed upon the following questions:

Q. Please tell us what your housing and support needs are?

Q. Where would you go for advice and information on housing and support issues?

Q. Do you know about the County Councils housing, homelessness and Adolescent services in the County? If you do know about them, do you use them and do you know how to use them?

Q. If you have used Northumberland County Council's Homelessness and Housing Options and/or Northumberland Adolescent Services staff teams how did you find this experience? What worked well and not so well?

Q. Are there any opportunities for young people to access housing with support in Alnwick?

Q. Are there any problems for young people accessing housing with support in Alnwick? If so what are those problems? Can you explain what the gaps are?

Q. What would a young person's housing support service look like? Please explain what would work well

Q. What role do you think Gallery Youth could play in the future of housing and support to help young people?

Q What impact has the COVID-19 pandemic has had on you and the support services you require?

Q. Any further issues you wish to highlight that could assist with this project?

A number of key points were raised by the participants and these are outlined below.

Identifying my housing needs – some were having difficulty in knowing "where to start" with housing concerns and issues especially those who had never lived independently outside of the parental home. Talking about "housing needs" is not a common occurrence in that identifying and assessing these things is just not thought about until their situation changes. If they were to leave their current parental home they would need help to find a starting point and identify what their needs are. For one participant explaining housing needs is not easy and accommodation needs can is often one component in a wider set of needs and requirements for that individual.

Understanding basic support needs and independent living skills – some participants commented that many young people don't consider their needs /required skills until they actually are into their new situation. The realisation around the need to budget and pay bills , general money management, make benefits claims, getting furniture and white goods etc. can often come once in the new environment. One participant said "You don't know until you're in it….". If earlier, consistent and high quality support could be provided this could be "built-in" to the development of the young person and aid with sustainment of their household

Accessing information about housing with support – some had never encountered this requirement to seek out information about their housing options. For one it job searching and employment advice had been the main driver for seeking information and accessing it. For two participants they encountered major difficulties in finding appropriate information about housing at all and stated that NCC Social services department had been particularly "unhelpful" in this regard. There were barriers to finding useful information (especially on "Assisted Living"or"Housing with Support") and also barriers due to ineffective, unhelpful responses from the LA officials handling their case. The young person reported they found this whole experience "discouraging and disheartening"

Lack of housing options in the Alnwick and surrounding area – Four participants thought they was a lack of available housing options generally in Alnwick and for younger people specifically with no dedicated housing with associated support to promote and maintain early stage independent living. Housing generally in Alnwick was perceived as being out of reach of the majority of young people as there was a lack of "affordable " accommodation for them to consider. The ratio of house prices to income is well in excess of 8:1 and for the majority of the population housing is simply not affordable to buy. The affordability problem is resulting in difficulties in retaining the younger economically active population. As the Neighbourhood Plan and Local Plan for Northumberland highlights there is a healthy demand for housing from outside the area as well as demand from an anticipated growth in the number of households locally. This demand for housing historically has not been fully met by supply of new homes. This has led to an affordability problem in the plan area since the early 2000's. An expanded range of options and a better mix of housing and housing with support would address these issues. Indeed, one of the key objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan is to provide an enhanced "choice of sizes, types and tenure of quality housing particularly creating opportunities for young people and the elderly".

Respondents thought that a starting point could be the provision of a Young person's Floating support service for the Alnwick area (along the lines of the service Gallery Youth historically was able to provide) and consideration of the provision of a Foyer style scheme and /or a project with Community-Led Housing principles at its core for Alnwick was mentioned as a potential for the longer term.

Current support services are minimal in Alnwick – Some members were aware of the general Homeless Temporary Accommodation scheme in Alnwick but they were not aware or sure if what support, if any, is being provided to people (and any young people) residing in the scheme to enable their move on. The scheme is not specific to meeting young people's needs requirements and often young people assessed as homeless are offered/referred to temporary accommodation in one of the County's commissioned provider's schemes in Berwick, Morpeth (Barnabas) or Blyth (PfPL+). Many young people are "terrified" of having to move away from what they know and the communities they are part of, many have refused to travel that far away from Alnwick. There was acknowledgement that in some cases (such as abuse or fleeing a violent situation) that moving to a more distant locale was required but in a number of instances more localised offer would be more appropriate where that is the most suitable solution.

One participant mentioned that she had had four different Social Workers assisting her with entering independent living (that was in a poor condition privately rented home). These multiple changes in staff assigned to her had led to inconsistencies and a lack of continuity in the level of support she received. Community Liaison Officers operated by the Housing department of NCC were mentioned as being present but the scope of their role was seen as "enormous" with many community liaison tasks and actions to fulfil on the assigned "patch". An Autism Floating Support Service (County- wide) was referenced as being but this is only for certain people with that need.

Communication with NCC LA Officers and getting helpful advice – two respondents stated that officers of the LA had an over-reliance on phone call correspondence and as they had memory problems they requested written records of their communications via email. In one instance Social Services officers were reported as "flat-out unwilling" to provide emails to the individual concerned. In addition as no face-to –face communications were being held then subsequently the lack of trust in the information being provided was increased. The closure of NCCs Greenwell Lane offices during the pandemic lockdowns has contributed significantly to this issue. One participant highlight that "a lot of assumptions" are made by LA officials about individual circumstances and she received conflicting opinions from differing officials on occasion, often leaving her with a high degree of frustration about the best way to proceed in the absence of "solid answers" and "concrete advice". At that point the young person approached Gallery Youth and other non-statutory agencies to see if they could help and support her in view of this – GY were more approachable and they provided what they could but "only so far" as currently the services offered by them are limited to signposting and enabling the navigation of the LA processes.

The Covid-19 pandemic impact - was viewed by all participants as having a huge impact on Council services accessibility – it had compounded and exacerbated the accessibility difficulties the young people were reporting they had experienced prior to the pandemic and local Greenwell Lane office closure. This has led to feelings that services have been "lost" to Alnwick residents as the walk-in service was no longer available and people are less able to access general advice never mind housing-specific advice. The closure of the office and the fact that NCC staff roles had changed and were working from home had meant contact and correspondence had become more difficult and inconsistent.

Reaching "Crisis" point is the primary "trigger" for statutory services – many respondents agreed that their circumstances had to be severe and at near crisis point before they felt they were "taken seriously" by authorities.

Citizens Advice Bureau is limited - one participant had approached CAB for housing advice but found that they are clearly "not housing advice focussed" and offered only limited assistance. CAB were reported as "trying their best" but their scope is too broad to provide specific advice and could not offer individual, tailored housing support.

Home finder Housing registration and Homeless application process is complex – one participant with a disability who had experienced the application process for housing found the forms used complicated and unwieldy and the overall process was drawn out over a relatively lengthy period (especially in view of her disability and when wanting to update a change in circumstances). The same participant said that the actual accommodation becoming available via Homefinder was often not detailed, the bidding and expressions of Interest procedures were not particularly helpful and properties offered for viewings often lacked some of the key information to help with decision making such as poor quality inside photographs and typical average running costs beyond the rental charges. It was stated that the updating of applicant details seems to take far too long to process and the young person felt they were missing out on potential properties being offered during this updating period. It was felt by two respondents that the application process should recognise and assess support needs at this early stage so that the young persons support needs (of all types) could be identified, planned for, and provided appropriately to match those needs. One respondent stated that this applies just as much, if not more, to receiving support with

navigating the complex Housing Benefits & Universal Credit systems that are aligned to people housing circumstances where they may be entitled to this form of state support. Help and support from an established agency such as Gallery Youth through a dedicated Housing Support worker in understanding and working with these procedures and processes for Homefinder was seen as beneficial especially where the young person doesn't have parental and family support available.

NCCs Housing Options & Homelessness service is not well known or understood – many participants stated they had little or no knowledge of this service of the Council and would like to know more. One participant said that Homelessness was "not unusual " in Alnwick but that the young people's perceptions and perspective on being " Homeless" did not align with the legal definitions, duties, and decision making processes required by the Council. On this basis it was seen as a significant help in building and aiding understanding if clearer explanations and information on "Priority need" groups and "Intentionally homeless" interpretations and rationale could be shared by NCC Officers. No participant referenced the Online Housing Advice Wizard on NCCs Website and it was acknowledged that statutory requirements are outlined in NCC Strategy documents for example but these could be more accessible and simply explained.

The language, terminology and descriptors related to housing options are confusing – for example, one respondent stated that they enquired about "Assisted Living" however, that was primarily seen as an older persons supported housing option. More clarity around the terminology would be helpful to explore the accommodation routes available to young people.

Retaining young people in Alnwick and contributing to sustainable communities – two participants believed there was a focus on the older generation (people over 55 years of age) in retaining local people in the Alnwick area rather than also aiming to incentivise local young people to stay. Young people's aspirations and community links appeared not to be well considered in local plans and schemes. This was aligned with the perspective above that supported housing and assisted living were primarily seen as focused on meeting the requirements of older people(for example extra care schemes or sheltered-style accommodation)

Age range of young people – limiting the defining age range of young people for housing to between 16 and 24 years of age was stated by one participant as being a barrier in itself as there are occasions when people beyond 24 still require some element of support to ensure their accommodation pathway and independent living is sustained effectively. Clearer identification of ongoing vulnerability and needs as young vulnerable people transition into vulnerable adults is required so that effective, tailored support can be provided.

Other forms of support – a number of participants referenced issues such as Furniture & White goods packages that were available, to help those young people that were setting up in their own household, from organisations such as Karbon. In their experience these had proved expensive, with limited choice and generally of poor quality compared to the long term cost. It had impacted quite severely on their household budget and whilst it was seen as generally a "good incentive" to be offered such a package they wouldn't advise other young people to take up the packages on the basis of cost and quality.

Potential for experienced young householders to become "Peer Mentors" to other young people – one respondent referenced the possibility of young people with first-hand experience of setting up on their own to help and support other inexperienced young people as a "Peer Mentor". This is not a new idea and is part of the Governments 'Every Child Matters' agenda. Youth mentoring has experienced exponential growth in the UK and when done well (with consistent, long-term commitment from suitable mentors including but not limited to Peer Mentors), high quality mentoring can be an effective tool for some specific groups of young people. It is not,

however, a straightforward panacea for the problems experienced by young people. One example is in Liverpool's AIMS (Accommodation Intense Mentoring and Skills) service where volunteers are peer mentors for other young people. The AIMS service is part of a Hub that offers an 'everything in one place' style delivery within a friendly atmosphere and a comprehensive skills programme including employability and work skills, tenancy readiness via a Resettlement Passport course, a personal development programme and individual mentoring. Further examination and investigation of the applicability and potential of this mentoring approach aligned with dedicated Support provision within Alnwick and Northumberland more generally may prove beneficial.

c. Young people housing and support: Case Studies in Alnwick

These case studies outline the situations and needs of people who have approached Gallery Youth in the past. Names have been changed to protect identities. The case studies provide real examples of housing need in the Alnwick area and provide concrete information that allow others to gain an understanding of how a system or process has operated and highlight how effective and efficient, or not, a service can be.

Young couple homelessness – Tammy and John

Tammy and John presented as homeless at NCC's Alnwick Housing Office & Information Centre, Greenwell Lane and were given an appointment for a Homelessness Assessment in 8 days' time. They subsequently visited Alnwick Job Centre Plus to make claim for benefits – the JC advisor referred them to Gallery Youth for housing support and advice. The Housing Support Worker at Gallery Youth (at the time, no longer in post) explained how Gallery Youth's housing service works and took basic details. Tammy's local connection was North Northumberland and John's was Birmingham and they both had a connection with Gateshead. They said they had given up their private rented tenancy in Durham since they couldn't afford the rent as their claim for Housing Benefit was not approved. They had then moved to Ireland to stay with John's brother but this hadn't worked out well – therefore, they had come back to the North East with the hope of staying with Tammy's family but when they arrived they were told this was not possible. The Housing Support Worker at Gallery Youth asked Tammy and John if they had any other family or friends they could stay with, which they did not and had spent the last three nights sleeping on the streets. The Housing Support Worker at Gallery Youth discussed their housing options with them and explained there weren't any direct assess hostels and that hostels outside of North Northumberland did not take young married couples without children, so they may have to be split up. Gallery Youth contacted the NCC Homelessness Team, NightStop North East (an Emergency Lodgings service), and some Bed & Breakfasts in Blyth and North Tyneside and Tammy and John discussed these options with each other. They chose to be referred to NightStop and would be prepared to be split up as long as they were not too far apart. Gallery Youth contacted NightStop and they said they would accept them but they could only accommodate them until the following Monday. Gallery Youth accompanied Tammy and John to meet NightStop and after Monday GY offered to house them in their local supported accommodation since this would prevent them from becoming street homeless and sleeping rough again. On Monday, NightStop gave them the bus fares to get back to Alnwick. Tammy and John moved later moved into GY's supported longer term communal facility accommodation (in Kings Street, Alnwick, no longer available) and helped the staff to clean and tidy the flat and met the other young people they were sharing with. Their case was raised at the Area Homeless Forum later and a formal complaint was made by GY regarding the delay in assessment of 8 days and assessment not being carried out on the day they presented at the Greenwell Lane Housing Office. This was acknowledged by NCC as"a mistake" and it wouldn't happen again. Whilst at GY accommodation, they conformed to the rules and were supported to claim Housing Benefit, registering with the Local surgery and other services. Tammy and John were very happy with their room and said it was really nice to be able to be together again.

Young single female "intentional homeless" - name withheld

'I left Alnwick when I was 17 to go to college in York but, it didn't work out and I came back to Alnwick and was then classed as 'intentionally' homeless by Northumberland Council. I didn't get on with my parents and couldn't stay with them, it was unbearable. So I slept on different people's floors for six months and felt like a scruff' as I was living out of other people's cupboards. I was really low, and started drinking… I couldn't get any regular work, or benefits because I always had to move about. I was offered a room through the Youth project and started to pull myself round after a few months. I got back into work, and then decided to go to University to become a nurse. I work at Wansbeck Hospital now helping people with mental health problems... That's the difference the youth projects support made to me...". This young woman is currently living and working in Ashington.

"Sofa surfing hidden homeless" single female - Pam

Pam, 18 was in full-time education when she was threatened with homelessness due to constant arguments with her parents. Pam contacted Gallery Youth and after an initial interview Gallery Youth agreed to assess her for supported housing scheme and undertook a series of independent living skills sessions with her. During this time Pam's relationship with her parents completely broke down, she was forced to leave home and she ended up "sofa surfing".

Gallery Youth supported Pam to make a new claim for benefits and undertook mediation work with her family but after 4 weeks of sofa surfing Pam ran out of places to stay. It was vital that she remained in Alnwick so that she could continue with her education, there were no vacancies in supported accommodation and Pam was unable to access social rented housing. Pam's only option was to consider the private rented sector and GY managed to identify a property Pam could afford, the private landlord was quite reluctant at first to take a young person but, after meeting with Gallery Youth and with Pam, they agreed. Gallery Youth helped Pam move into her new flat and supported her with money, benefits, budgeting, bills and emotional issues. The Housing Support worker at Gallery Youth worked very closely with Pam's school who also gave her lots of help and support. It wasn't easy but Pam has since started rebuilding her relationship with her family, had worked really hard to progress at school, and was then successful in gaining a place at University.

d. Interviewees insights and key points

One to One interviews based on semi-structured questionnaires (sent in advance to respondents) were held with a range of stakeholders including Town Councillors, Trustees of Alnwick Young Persons Association/Gallery Youth, Community workers, Northumberland County Council key officers, Northumbria Police, as well as three other Young Persons support organisations working in other parts of the County of Northumberland. Example of the questions asked are provided in the Appendices. In total there were over 25 respondents which provided a comprehensive combination of insights, local knowledge and experiences for this review. An analysis of the key points raised in responses is provided below.

Lack of affordable, available and appropriate accommodation for young people (as well as other age groups) in Alnwick – ten respondents highlighted the impact of the lack of affordable accommodation in the area. Tackling this issue is also a core objective of the Neighbourhood Plan and the Northumberland Plan. The ratio of average income to housing purchase costs is still seen as very high in Alnwick (well above 8:1) and there is a lack of supply of lower cost, more affordable accommodation. Affordable or social rented accommodation through NCC or other registered housing providers such as Karbon homes is in short supply, with a particular shortfall in single person's type accommodation that would suit younger people. This accommodation did not become available very often with low turnover in tenancies. Private rented accommodation is the area may not always be at a decent homes standard, the average rent charges are relatively high and The Housing Benefit rates are quite limited. It was commented by one respondent that NCC are in the process of refreshing and revising their current Private Sector Housing Strategy. These issues, for one respondent, cumulated in many Alnwick-based young people being "forced" to head to the south of the County or into Newcastle-upon –Tyne.

There are significant gaps in resources to offer advice and support to young people in Alnwick – services that are available were described as "sparse" and were limited to Gallery Youth and the Community Centre (CommunityNE66) especially given the recent Covid-19 pandemic closure of the NCC Greenwell Lane area office. This was seen as a major reduction in the options to access advice and receive information about housing issues (as well other issues where a walk-in response service was previously operating). Opportunities to signpost from voluntary/community organisations to the local authority have consequently reduced also.

Due to service cuts and funding changes offering targeted, individually tailored in person 1:1 support is a major gap in Alnwick – for many respondents, the previous provision(via Gallery youth) of dedicated Housing Support and Floating support including temporary accommodation and designated Support Workers is seen as big loss to Alnwick and its surrounding settlements as that was able to offer a high quality response to young person's needs and solutions to young people's requirements were able to be found following the trust that comes from the personal contact and dedication of professional housing support workers.

The extent of hidden homelessness and the amount of young people who are "sofa-surfing" in and around Alnwick is much larger than many people believe – this was highlighted by many respondents including the Police. Hidden homeless cases are extremely difficult to identify and NCCs Homelessness and Housing Options team are only able to deal with the people who contact their service and they are not required to record information about it. Sofa-surfing is not recognised as an official form of homeless by the relevant legislation. The rural location of Alnwick and surrounding areas was seen by one respondent as making "sofa-surfing" or staying with other households temporarily as "easier" and therefore, even more hard to identify its extent. Covid -19 restrictions in 2020 have also prevented young people from staying with other family households such as grandparents and this was seeing as increasing the amount of risks to young people if sofa-surfing via non-family households.

Many people underestimate the courage and confidence that is required by young people to ask for help - at least half respondents commented that they believed it must be extremely daunting and traumatic for many young people to summon up the courage and bravery to approach a statutory organisation for help and support. Many young people can feel "uneasy" and are intimidated by the Council and this in itself can be barrier to getting the help they may need. Two respondents stated issues like this means that voluntary sector organisations like Gallery Youth are so important in being approachable and accessible to young people.

Unstable housing circumstances and gaps in housing solutions have heightened the number of young persons at risk in the Alnwick area – six respondents stated that the breakdown of family relationships was, in their experience, the main cause for young people wanting to leave their parental or current housing situation (this aligns with national data on the principle cause of youth homelessness from Centrepoint and others). These breakdowns can lead to other issues for the young person such as substance abuse and mental health difficulties. Many find themselves under peer pressure with "so-called friends" and in abusive situations that can include exploitation, bullying, extortion and anti-social behaviour. Northumbria Police who must help with safeguarding of young people supported this view and reported that there a " lot of young sofa-surfers in the patch area , many of whom don't know how to manage themselves and unfortunately can end up being 'preyed upon'..". One respondent said that a positive example of support being experienced in family breakdown situation was the role and partnership working of NCCs "Early Help Families Team". The respondent stated this team had being very effective at helping families at point well before irrevocably breakdown, closely collaboration with many other agencies and building trust with all parties involved.

The current County-wide Young persons supported housing provision framework commissioned by NCC causes problems for young people faced with homelessness In Alnwick – although under re-procurement at the time of this review(December 2020) the currently commissioned providers of young person's supported accommodation are in Berwick, Morpeth and Blyth. Many respondents did not understand this current framework very well and how it operated. Those who had more knowledge and been involved with referrals to this existing system of providers commented that this provision was too distant, too far away and meant young homeless people in Alnwick were faced with "moving away from what they know for the first time" and their local community. They also had experienced delays in helping young people from Alnwick in receiving offers of placements in supported schemes and saw the commissioned framework as being fragmented and unresponsive to the urgent needs of local Alnwick young people. NCC officers acknowledged there was very limited supported accommodation available for young people in Alnwick with the main schemes being in Blyth, Hexham, Ashington, Morpeth and Berwick and that the current process via the Framework is spot purchase and referral to the commissioned providers of accommodation with support elsewhere in the County. It was noted that the use of the existing temporary homeless accommodation in Alnwick is not Young Person specific.

Young people's housing and support needs are not identified and understood at an early enough stage – four respondents expressed the view that it is only when a young person is at "crisis point" and has no other options that the "system" or "process" from a local authority point of view is then "triggered" into action. Since many needs are not seen or understood until this point it means service provision is not planned for in an efficient manner. One agency on the commissioned framework stated that the "booms and slumps" experienced in terms of referrals to their service were, and are, a major barrier to effective service plan and impact greatly on their financial efficiency.

Multiple opportunities exist to address Young people's housing issues in Alnwick – all respondents identified the opportunities that exist in Alnwick that require further examination and exploration. The key opportunities identified included:

- **Gallery Youth are a well-established, effective organisation with a good local reputation** – building on existing organisations that are best value, trusted, and "what already works well" was seen as important and being community - led continues to build local area engagement. The access to other Youth projects and services offered by GY helps young people learn other life skills and build confidence that complement living independently.
- **Revival of Floating Housing Support role in Alnwick** – this previous service offered by GY was seen as successful as many more young people were well prepared and ready to take on a household of their own or increased likelihood of continued occupation of the family /parental home was enabled where appropriate.
- **Effective Housing support can develop young people as community residents and can reduce negative impact on neighbourhoods** – Providing opportunities to share their issues and being listen to can help young people focus positively and think about what they want in future life and where they live as part of their sense of aspiration and belonging. This can also improve their health and well- being especially mental health. It can provide hope and if vulnerability of young people is reduced then this can reduce the negative impact and "problematic youth" stigma perceived by other, often older residents e.g. drugs and Anti- Social behaviour. Effective links to the High School and the Job Centre/Employment Club would also be required to ensure longer term success. Many respondents felt the High School in particular could promote and develop through the curriculum independent living skills and knowledge for final year pupils but acknowledged this was a very challenging task.
- **Local stakeholders such as the Town Council offer strong support and willingness to develop solutions for young people's housing issues** – GY are well regarded and supported by the Town Council, the local County Councillor for Alnwick & Lesbury, other organisations such as CAN (Community Action Northumberland), Community NE66, and by local residents. GYs effective services could be readily enhanced to include dedicated housing support. The Neighbourhood Plan has identified expanding young people's housing options as one of its key housing objectives. The emerging Alnwick Partnership brings together disparate viewpoints within Alnwick into a more cohesive voice for the area and collaboration-based proposals to actively address this key objective of the Plan are being developed.
- **There are a number of existing buildings and properties in Alnwick that could be explored as opportunities for young people's housing** – it was commented that that some of the existing buildings had sat unused or empty for some time and this number was growing. The Towns Regeneration Partnership group was examining these in more detail and given the priority agreed in relation to young people housing options this ought to be given significant consideration in any plans for the existing buildings.

NCCs Homelessness/Housing Options and Adolescent Services (NAS) teams acknowledged as being in difficult circumstances of budget cuts and the Covid-19 pandemic, however improvements could be made in the local authority's services provision – many respondents pointed to the closure of the Greenwell Lane NCC office and the move to a telephone only housing advice service was not often the most appropriate form of service for young people. This was expressed because this form of service does not contribute to developing trusted relationship with young people as this often takes time and is best built in 1 to 1 situations. The Employment hub project (via Bridge) was noted as continuing to offer face to face advice but by arranged appointment only. Some respondents pointed to the fear or trepidation many young people can have when considering approaching an "authority" and how having support from a more voluntary source can help them overcome this.

Two respondents felt NCCs teams could be more proactive and consultative with local communities on young person's housing and housing support issues and six respondents highlighted a lack of readily accessible information being made available by NCC to young people in the area. An action to address this is contained in the Homelessness & Housing Advice Strategy of NCC and an officer reported that no further progress had be made on the objective to improve the range and the distribution/provision of

information regarding young person's housing options. Further requests for greater information provision and subsequent monitoring of progress on this important action by NCC is recommended – for example, this could be raised by GY at the refreshed Homelessness Partnership group.

A further objective of the Homelessness and Housing Advice Strategy of NCC is to explore opportunities to work with young people at an earlier stage. This was acknowledged as a challenging objective to fulfil and an NCC officer stated it was disheartening and disappointing to not have made substantive progress on this objective. Approaches have been made by NCCs Homelessness teams to schools to open up discussions about how this could be taken forward but NCC reported very limited response to these approaches as the multiple pressures on the school education system, the suspension of usual school working practices due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and resultant changes in main service priorities by both NCC and schools themselves.

NCCs Housing Options team are open to service development suggestions and are continuing to implement actions of their Homelessness & Housing Advice Strategy – although there was limited understanding around the statutory requirements placed on NCC amongst many respondents and of progress of their agreed Action plan they are undertaking certain action which could benefit stakeholders in the Alnwick area, including:

- **NCC have developed a revised joint protocol between their Homelessness & Adolescent/Children's services teams** – this was being rolled out in a virtual training session to all relevant staff during November & December 2020 and aims to:
    - Outline and re-clarify the duties and responsibilities of NAS & Homelessness team members
    - Fulfil recently issued (October 2020) revised central government guidance for 16-17 year olds
    - Set out all detail processes and procedures that should be used by operational staff in the different NCC section for the benefit of the young person receiving assessments and services under the Protocol.
- Developing GYs and other stakeholders understanding of the revised Joint Protocols contents, roles and key processes would be beneficial when helping young persons who approach them in terms of effective "signposting" to the key responsible officers within NCC and assisting in the efficient navigation of what many young people may perceive as complex NCCs procedures.
- **NCC have refreshed and re-established a County-wide Homelessness Partnership Group** – which Gallery Youth are an invited partner and have attended in the past. One respondent stated it would be beneficial to GY to attend this refreshed Homelessness Partnership on a regular, routine basis to increase their understanding of NCC plans and actions and to gain more knowledge, currency and visibility as a proactive, engaged stakeholder in housing and homelessness issues with NCC and others in the partnership. This is particularly relevant if GY envisage having an enhanced role in providing housing support in the future. Incrementally building back GYs housing support capability and capacity prior to examination of GYs options for providing actual bricks and mortar supported accommodation was recommended by the same respondent.
- **A further objective of the Homelessness and Housing Advice Strategy of NCC is to expand and enhance the Mediation service offered in the County** – an NCC officer stated that mediation, if done well, can help prevent permanent family breakdown, which is the primary reason for youth homelessness in the County. Some trained mediators are in post within the County but it was acknowledged that these are not young persons oriented as yet and that this a planned to be developed in the near future.

- **NCC has no App or text service available for homeless cases** – they are considering this in their future service developments to provide an improved, responsive service using modern technologies in a more effective way

Funding opportunities are available from NCC to increase young person's support work and service provision across the County – When interviewed in October 2020 the Head of Strategic Housing Services stated that NCC would welcome any additional services and support provision that extend and enhance what is available to young people. The County receive an annual allocation of central government grant entitled "Flexible Homelessness Support Grant" alongside an allocation of "Homelessness Reduction Grant" which aims to help each local authorities fulfil their duties and obligations under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017(which came into force in 2018). Each authority receives their allocation based on a formula calculated by the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the allocations are made at the end of October each year. For 2020/21 FHSG element allocated to NCC was £230,260.

The Head of Strategic Housing Services actively encouraged Gallery Youth to draw up an initial proposal to develop youth housing support in the Alnwick area that could be funded and facilitated via NCCs Flexible Homelessness Support Grant. It requires more consideration however it was suggested this initial proposal to NCC be on a relatively small-scale such as employing a Part-Time dedicated Housing Floating Support Worker based at Gallery Youth at a grant funded estimated cost of approximately £10k per annum. Taking this small step approach was seen as having the following potential benefits:

- Enable Gallery Youth to build capacity and capability on housing issues
- Fill some of the gaps in meeting young person's specific housing support needs in Alnwick and its surrounding villages and settlements
- Building on their existing trusted service reputation within Alnwick by re-establish their role in the area as offering housing support to young people, and learn from their experiences
- Enable the gathering of more information and area specific data on young person's housing issues such as the extent of sofa – surfing and hidden young homeless
- Allow GY to prepare, on a considered and incremental basis, for comprehensive options appraisals on their future housing role e.g. supported accommodation provision

8. Young Persons accommodation and support providers in Northumberland: delivery profiles, outcomes and key learning points

At a national level there are a number of recognised models and options for young people before moving straight to independent living, as for many it is too big a step. A young persons may be able to make a more successful transition when there are choices such as returning home for a short time , moving to supported lodgings, or to a semi-independent option with some support, depending on the young person's needs. This section examines the approaches to service delivery of the agencies provided within Northumberland and some out with the County. It is not an exhaustive list and does not include all Registered Providers with accommodation in the County that may offer a support service to their tenants but focuses on those that provide young person specific support.

Profiles of key Young Persons Support providers in Northumberland

An overview of 11 providers of Young Persons' Housing and Support services in Northumberland is provided below. To provide a comprehensive summary of each organisation the information about each one is profiled according to a consistent set of features (where possible and available), these are:

- Name of Service Provider
- Service & Project Overview
- Principles, Service Ethos & Values
- Delivery of the Service
- Organisations development and plans
- Relevant factors & external factors affecting the organisations services
- Outcomes
- Learning points: What works well and how to sustain it
- Learning points: Challenges and avoiding duplication
- Illustrative Case Studies (where publicly available)

Name of Service Provider: Berwick Youth Project (BYP)

Service/Project Overview: Berwick Youth Project is a comprehensive and diverse support service for young people living in Berwick upon Tweed and the surrounding area. Operating from purpose built premises in the town centre, it provides Information and Support, the Beehive Youth Club, outdoor and holiday activities and Supported Accommodation. Youth support provision since 1995 and is available to all young people aged 13 – 25 years, living in the Berwick area. Offer a wide range of services providing a safe place to be and a source of practical and emotional help, challenging activities, and have 6 bedsit flat-style accommodation in the centre of Berwick with dedicated Housing support workers. Previously had 5 additional flats in management but these were handed back to Johnnie Johnson Housing Trust, Beehive Youth Club is open to all young people aged 13-19. Young people can drop in to speak to staff, get involved in games and activities or just hang out. Info & Support - providing information and support to young people aged 13-25. Outdoor Activities -opportunities for those young people with a sense of adventure. Their Supported Accommodation is for young people aged 16-25 who want support to help them move on into their own place. Six furnished bedrooms where young people can try living on their own but with the security of having a housing team who can help them on their road to independence. BYP expect residents to actively engage in the support on offer which includes: managing money, Equality & Diversity, Healthy Living, Cooking, Benefits, Health & Safety, Managing a home, Housing options, Team building events, and Ongoing one to one support.

Principles, Service Ethos & Values:

- Advancement of education for young persons between the ages of 13 to 25 years, by providing advice and guidance upon questions of housing, social welfare benefits, homelessness, unemployment and other related topics.
- Protection and preservation of the good health of young persons who are or have been the victims of sexual or drug abuses by the provision of advice and a counselling and support service.
- Provision of short term accommodation and support for young people aged 16-25 in housing need
- Provision of social educational and cultural opportunities for young people which may include overseas opportunities
- Reduce the stigmatisation associated with young person's issues
- Shape and offer a menu of services that Young People can choose from
- Regardless of financial status offer universal service based on core principles and values of support help, advice and activity provision

Delivery of the Service:

A charity providing education, training, advancement Of Health, and Accommodation/housing for Children/young People. Over 30 + funders have contributed to their operation including BBC Children in Need Awards, grants from the Northumberland Children's Trust, Ballinger Trust and the Community Foundation (serving Tyne and Wear and Northumberland). The Project was in the first tranche of awards from the FB and PFB Lough Fund, a new source of funds made possible due to the generosity of local benefactors.

Their overall staff team consists of five full-time and two part-time staff, working across three departments.

BYPs Supported Accommodation team have been providing housing for young people since 1996 and currently operate with a staff team of two full time workers: 1 team leader and 1 support worker. Recently, a Linden family grant was used to replace the kitchen facility of their supported accommodation and upgrade the showers.

Organisations development and plans:

BYP are planning to increase their accommodation provision to previous levels with an aim to refurbish an acquired, former community centre to provide six new spaces. In May 2020 they took possession of the former Community Centre in Palace Street East, acquired for ENII consideration as it was a transfer of an asset held in Trust by the County Council on behalf of the Old Grammar School Foundation. The intended use of the building is to create new supported accommodation to "wrap around" the six units in Golden Square, Berwick. This is with an aim to develop a Three-Stage* housing with support process depending on the young person's requirements:

1. Three units as a 'reception' to the Palace Street Project - with two live-in staff offering on-site support and supervision in the early months of a residency.

2. Young people will then move on to one of the 6 units at Golden Square, with a reduced level of support during evenings and weekends

3. Return to one of three independent flats at Palace Street as a final step before gaining an independent tenancy with another landlord

(This does not appear in the mixed model framework being procured by NCC and BYP have not received any feedback or views from NCC on these proposals)*

Consideration is also being given to:

- BYPs housing role outside the parameters of the NCC Young person's framework including providing accommodation and support out with young single persons households such as young couples with families
- Potential partnership with a Scottish-based Registered Housing association to provide traditional housing or even mainstream housing for general affordable letting
- Registration with the Social Housing Regulator (Homes England) to attain Registered Housing Provider status – to enable a wider general letting housing role and the application for capital grants to expand their portfolio of accommodation through programmes such as the Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme(2021-2026)

Relevant factors/external factors affecting the organisations services:

- An emerging trend is that typical residents are tending to be younger (16/17) with a lower level of independent living skills and more chaotic lifestyle. It is apparent that they need to evolve with this trend, and are seeking to deliver new options for housing with a greater level of on-site support.
- Funding/Finance factors particularly the NCC Framework YP Support procurement exercise, Donations and grants reliance, and Covid-19 impact
- Other providers – NCC Homes for Northumberland, Karbon & Bernicia are major provider of social, affordable housing in the area – BYP want to understand what those provider future plans are in relation to young person's provision and services?
- North Tyneside YMCA approach – what can BYP learn from their approach and model of provision?

Outcomes:

Work with over 704 individual young people aged 13 to 25 per year. Offer a diverse but connected service in three 'teams' —Youth Work, Supported Accommodation, and Information, Counselling and Support. The teams "specialise", but are equally committed to ensuring that young people get the best possible service.

Supported Accommodation Team deals with over 80 individuals' pa and approx. 16 are subsequently directly accommodated by BYP pa. Four moved on to their own independent tenancies, and two returned home or moved to other accommodation. BYPs occupancy rate can average £69k pa (2019/20)

Learning points: what works well and how to sustain it.

Their Flat-style, shared accommodation gives young people a sense of individual, independent living – shared communal facilities work well for some but not for everyone. Constant review of what is suitable is key.

Categorisation of support needs is difficult, can change, and can be complicated – e.g. initial needs can be categorised as "low" but once the service gets to know the person better more complex, higher needs can emerge through the trust that is built. That only comes thorough having dedicated support workers in place to understand, build that trust, and be able to respond appropriately.

Accommodation with provides a "platform" for self –assuredness and independence – enables finding and keeping a job, entering training, or sustaining educational ambitions. Ensure you provide measures and qualitative information about these success stories so people understand and value your service.

Experience (23 years) in providing housing with support – provides knowledge and understanding about owning and managing property and the processes involved. Essential to establish ownership titles and issues. Experience enables further developments and plans as a Charity to be put into action, this can be a lengthy and drawn out process. For example, the ex- Community Centre through the Community Asset Transfer process which they aim to convert into 6 bed spaces for young people took over 5 years to acquire.

Offering flexible, expedient support and services – being flexible by offering daytime, night time and on call contacts as well as other forms of contact is seen as essential so that individual needs can met promptly and efficiently. Young person's needs can be difficult to establish and define and can change rapidly therefore being flexible and adaptable is crucial.

Learning point: Challenges and avoiding duplication

Lack of dialogue and involvement with NCC – BYP aren't clear why there is not more communication, planning and information sharing via NCC e.g. the re-procurement of Young Persons Supported Housing mixed model framework was issued (October 2020) without any discussion or consultation with current framework providers such as BYP. The review of the Joint protocol working between Housing teams, NAS teams and current support providers was raised but no further communication has happened – the refreshed Homelessness Partnership may address this issue.

Funding: the NCC spot purchase framework has been a major challenge for rental income from their 6 bedsits - with reliance on NCC referrals. Donations from private trusts and funds have been crucial in remaining operational during 2020.

Reliance on rental income from bed spaces – difficult to sustain as only 6 spaces currently and at current rates 9 to 10 bed spaces are required to facilitate longer term viability of the housing element of the project (hence the plans to expand via the conversion at Palace East Street)

Nature of customers has, and continues to change - more older teenagers who are "not on the radar" of authorities are coming forward and more young people who are panic-stricken and have been maximising time out of the family house as much as possible. Walk-ins and Sofa surfing cases still occur but these were more regular in the past pre-pandemic. An ongoing, in-depth exchange of information and experiences around young people's needs is required so that services can be planned, designed and delivered accordingly.

Referrals from NCC NAS - where the young person is assessed as being ready for their own individual tenancies (as BYP don't offer these) there are previous cases where a young person is offered a tenancy with PFP Living + in Blyth. Many young people desire to stay local not to live so far away – more individual tenancies with more support in local communities is required , rather than less to facilitate the transition into independent household formation.

Services from NAS Locality teams – these are mobile-based, remote roles rather than local community –based which doesn't raise aspirations and build trust as effectively as locale-based services could.

Risk identification and management – aware that their current approach/offer may not fit well with the future mixed model framework that NCC are procuring as they can only currently deliver under the Shared accommodation lot element of the framework

How to deliver more options outside of the main urban towns and areas in the County – more provision is needed, further consideration of the needs and requirements of those Young people living in the most rural locations and settlements. It is acknowledged, however, that this is difficult to offer and make viable.

Covid-19 pandemic has brought about a number of ongoing challenges: including some residents in shared, supported accommodation with chaotic , high level needs have not been taking restrictions/lockdowns seriously enough so risks have increased, referrals system stopped operation for some time so impacted on vacant spaces levels and income received. In addition, raises issues on the future of Shared, supported accommodation esp. how behaviours within a shared household impact on young people.

Overcoming reputational and stigmatisation issues – the majority of young people would not cope well with independent living initially. Tracking and sharing stories of success is not easy as many don't like to talk about their experiences. Promoting and sending out continuous positive messages about BYPs work is essential where young people have become more skilled and equipped to tackle life's issues. BYP highlight their aim of becoming a "Transitional" housing provider to reduce the image of being a provider of housing for "problematic" young people.

Name of Service Provider: Barnabas Safe & Sound (Morpeth)

Service/Project Overview:

Barnabas Safe & Sound is a registered Charity and a Company Limited by Guarantee that aims to prevent youth homelessness in Northumberland and safeguards young people from harm through the provision of services which deliver supported accommodation, informal education, accredited life skills and personal and social development activities. They work in partnership and manage facilities for the benefit of children and young people. Barnabas Safe & Sound have been providing housing solutions to young people in Northumberland since 2001. Their housing project offers the following services to young people aged between 16 and 25 who are at risk of or are experiencing housing crisis:

- Supported accommodation – 6 bed spaces available in Morpeth and Ashington. Both properties are shared and offered to single young people.
- Tenancy Support – tailored support available to young people already living in their own home, or those who are ready to move on to independence but need help in finding, managing, and maintaining their tenancy.

Principles, Service Ethos & Values:

They exist to bring relief to young people between the ages of 16 and 25 who are in need, hardship or distress in particular through the promotion and provision of supported accommodation, and the provision of education, training, information & advice for such persons by providing facilities which will lead to self-reliance and independent living within the community.

Vision: A community that enables young people to thrive

Statement of Purpose: Barnabas-Safe & Sound exists to encourage young people to reach their full potential, and become independent and valued members of the community. They encourage, support, listen and accommodate. Provide a safe space for young people to talk openly without prejudice and to help them access the right services; to unlock potential and encourage personal growth by understanding individual needs.

Values – Trust, Courage and Independence. Staff team wholeheartedly live and work to promote these values. Work to dispel the myth that vulnerability is weakness. Everybody needs to experience vulnerability in order to be courageous. Diverse team who all have the skills and knowledge to offer a comprehensive range of services to young people aged 13–25. BS&S believe:

- All people are unique and individual, all people have rights, which should be respected. Individuals should take personal responsibility for their actions and lack thereof.
- All people should be encouraged and given opportunity to achieve their potential and barriers to opportunity should be challenged.
- By serving the needs of others we all gain mutual benefit and enjoy a safer community.
- We work with partners to achieve what we could not achieve on our own.

- We are accountable for funds received and spent, ensuring that they are used for the benefit of young people

Delivery of the Service:

Their housing project offers the following services to young people aged between 16 and 25 who are at risk of or are experiencing housing crisis:

- Supported accommodation – 6 bed spaces available in Morpeth and Ashington. Both properties are shared and offered to single young people.
- Tenancy Support – tailored support available to young people already living in their own home, or those who are ready to move on to independence but need help in finding, managing, and maintaining their tenancy.

The service addresses the immediate issue of accommodation and prevents further housing crisis through resettlement, tailored support and the provision of independent living skills sessions. The service is supported by activities and provision of facilities, which contribute towards prevention of homelessness and other social risks that threaten young people's transition to independence. Those young people who successfully complete a programme of support are enabled to access accommodation of their own and given the opportunity to live independently in the community.

They offer young people a safe place to stay but aim to be so much more than just a roof, they want the young people who stay with them to grow and flourish by offering tailored support as part of a shared agreement between our young people and their support worker.

Delivered by Two full time support workers with clear roles and responsibilities – flexible working to meet the Young person's needs is strongly encouraged and enabled at Barnabas. They don't want "silo" based working, aim to work across all issues and anywhere in any environment the young person requires. Builds trust and mutual understanding with support staff and customers.

Accommodation is offered on a licence agreement basis - with a view to moving all residents in to their own tenancy when they are ready. Support is available to help residents in all aspects of living independently and gaining confidence in managing a tenancy. As part of the licence agreement, residents will undertake AQA award units around the subjects of managing a home, their finances and other essential living skills, such as cooking, cleaning and home maintenance. Gaining accreditation via Barnabas demonstrates to other landlords and housing providers that residents can manage their tenancies.

All residents are supported to cover the cost of rent by making an application for housing benefit(where required) - where a young person is in employment, this may be different, but support staff discuss all options available during the interview and assessment process, so residents are clear on their financial responsibilities. In all cases, residents are liable to pay a weekly service charge as a contribution towards gas, electricity, water, and TV.

The service ground rules - Residents must meet with their support worker regularly to ensure they remain on track for moving to independence. The house rules form part of the licence agreement and are discussed with residents as part of their induction. Any breaches to these rules can result in a tenancy being put at risk so we ask all our potential residents to consider if shared, supported accommodation is right for them.

Floating tenancy support project - helps young people who are looking to secure independent accommodation or have perhaps already secured a tenancy and need support in learning independent living skills. Floating support is offered for a set period. This is usually determined by a needs assessment and feedback received from other professionals, who may refer into the service. The support is tailored as part of a shared agreement between the young person and their support worker. It offers support in all aspects of living independently and gaining confidence in managing a home: setting up utilities, standing orders, budgeting, cooking, cleaning, and any other issues identified through regular support sessions**.** When beginning floating support, clients will be asked to agree to the support package available. This will clearly outline both parties' responsibilities. All floating support clients must undertake AQA award units around the subjects of managing a home and living independently. Floating support rules: must engage with your support worker and ensure attend support sessions as planned. Keep up to date with AQA sessions. Floating support may be withdrawn if rules breached.

Organisations development and plans:

At Wellwood House, Morpeth - fully refurbished former office space now used as a Safe Space for young people to meet, gain information, advice and guidance and take part in training and other positive activities.

'Roots and Wings' programme developed- Embedded in this programme is independent living skills, how to stay safe and the promotion of health and wellbeing so that young people can become independent and resilient.

The level of referrals able to accept remained low during the year - Young people referred through the Northumberland Adolescent Service Accommodation Framework had high support needs, requiring higher levels of support. Have plans in hand to develop the accommodation and services that Barnabas offer.

Set up a Peer Mentoring programme - through our sessions at Wellwood House and then to the wider County.

Expansion of the current refugee project - a new dimension to supporting young people (taken on a third property in Ashington to house three refugees from Eritrea).

With regards to their housing provision and portfolio they are considering:

- Houses in Multiple Occupation acquisition options in the Morpeth area
- Further accommodation options including Leasing
- A future comprehensive Options Appraisal of their housing provision

A recent consultation exercise by Barnabas with young people in Morpeth revealed that most young people want more readily available, accessible information and advice about living independently and how to go about it, and what support and assistance they could be provided with to sustain their own household.

Left the Stobhill Centre in 2019 - as management of the Centre distracted from their Charitable Objectives and engagement within the wider community had reduced as well as continually operating in a financial deficit.

Relevant factors/external factors affecting the organisations services.

Covid -19 pandemic **–** whilst this has impacted on drop-ins the effect on service provision was not too significant as they had full occupancy at Wellwood House and were awarded Business Support grant from the LA/Govt**.**

Outcomes:

253 Young people housed in supported accommodation across 5 bed spaces in Morpeth and Ashington (2001 to April 2020) Annual occupancy average 89%.

33 Young people supported in their own tenancies via Floating support (April 2013 to April 2020)

Provided supported accommodation to 7 young people during the last year.

Provided floating support to 2 young people learning to manage their own tenancies last year.

Barnabas are reviewing their outcomes and measures of success as a service using a spreadsheet based recording system(Lamplight) focussed on 3 key areas of services - practical skills improvements, safe and sound issues, and Housing and Welfare outcomes for their supported young people.

Learning points: what works well and how to sustain it.

Housing Project centrality – sustains core costs of Barnabas overall. Barnabas is a partner provider under the current young person's housing support project of NCC. The pending re-procurement of the mixed model framework (as at December 2020) has a potential major impact on Barnabas' future role and service provision (they were considering and analysing whether to tender for the new framework when interviewed). This demonstrates that for some projects the housing accommodation and support service element is crucial to the operation of the YPs project overall**.**

Importance of supportive, empowering governance – Barnabas recently been through a change in personnel at a governance level with a new Chair and new Trustees appointed, this has facilitated greater positivity in the activity and purpose of Barnabas with improved support to the Manager and staff. This enhanced autonomy and empowerment to the Manager has given more courage to the executive staff to constructively challenge and look for more influence on the decisions and approaches in relation to young person's housing support issues of the Local Authority (NCC) and other organisations.

Provision of affordable accommodation relative to the unaffordability of many other housing options in the area – Barnabas provide access to an affordable form of accommodation in the Morpeth and wider Northumberland County where house prices and rents are well out of reach to the vast majority of young people. In Barnabas' view Morpeth is perceived and identifies more as an "Older Persons Town" and young people find it hard to remain committed and involved in their community when they cannot afford to stay or live here in their own independent household. They will retain their flat accommodation for this very purpose (whether they are part of NCC newly re-commissioned Framework or not) To sustain this they are considering accepting referrals from out with the Framework under their own terms, which could free up more access for more young people and potentially sustain the associated rental income via higher occupancy rates.

Providing an holistic, individually tailored service to young people – Barnabas have an ethos of providing a "whole service" to each client and don not wish to separate out their housing support role from youth work overall. Support workers are trained to be flexible to offer all aspects of support and for their performance to be evaluated across all aspects of their work not just certain elements. This means the service can adapt, flex and adopt an "all hands to the pump" approach as required The recording system has only been recently introduced(October 2020) but Barnabas hope it will prove valuable in being able to more effectively measure and promote the success of their service.

Learning point: Challenges and avoiding duplication

Funding - Many multiple, small donations received alongside the income from housing rents and support provision payments. There is a "patchwork quilt" of funding for projects like Barnabas as there is for many other similar charitable based projects of this nature and purpose. Core costs at Barnabas are covered by the Housing project at Wellwood House and accommodation in Lamb House, Ashington. Funding opportunities and potential sources are kept under constant review and investigation by the Manager. They have had recent success in attaining some Lottery Funding which is extremely welcome but it is difficult to forecast their financial future beyond March 2021 at present.

Upholding values and principles can prove difficult – Barnabas remain committed to their purpose and values when faced with compromising situations. E.g. as there is no minimum occupancy guarantee under the new proposed young person's housing support framework NCC expects them to retain their properties for referrals , this not viable in the medium to long term for charitable organisations like Barnabas

Unrealistic categorisation of the needs of individual young people – Barnabas saw a challenge in the general approach to categorisation of young person's needs particularly by authorities/statutory sector agencies. High versus medium versus low level needs categorisations were generally helpful in their experience as many young people move rapidly between these definitions and often can conceal other issues which only emerge once trust is established with their support worker.

Relationships with NCC – Barnabas have recently experienced difficulties in their relationships with NCC NAS Accommodation team. The Manager characterised the relationship as "strained". As a framework provider the relationship worsened after a restructure and re-organisation within the NAS accommodation team. Barnabas reported that they often are alleged to be providing "too much support" to some young people in the view of NCC and there is an unwritten expectation that when a young person reaches 18 years of age they are ready to live fully independently – whereas that is not the experience of Barnabas in the majority of cases they have supported.

Potential impact of the revised mixed model young person's housing support framework – Barnabas, like Berwick Youth Project, commented that there had been very little/next to no consultation on the revised framework with existing incumbent providers. This feels to Barnabas like a major compromise to their value of trust especially as they currently have to keep 2 bed spaces available for NCC referred clients under the existing framework. Learning from the sharing of experience of current providers is essential in Barnabas view – the revised approach appears driven by costs only rather than meeting needs and the viability of delivering a supported accommodation service. E.g. the proposed £100 per week target limit for 24hr sleep in, full presence support costs does not appear feasible and places a high degree of risk on the provider to remain solvent.

Name of Service provider: Places for People Living+ (Blyth)

Service/Project Overview: Living Plus is part of the Places for People Group, one of the largest property management, leisure, development and regeneration companies in the UK. The Group manages more than 209,000 homes across 377 local authority areas, providing services to more than half a million people each year. Offer an extensive range of housing options and associated services. Living+ is their care and support specialist. For over 50 years have provided accommodation, support and care services to help vulnerable people live independently. Provide services to a large number of commissioners, working closely with partners to help improve lives and communities. Specialists in meeting complex needs, providing support services to people across the UK.

PFP Living+ have 16 individual self-contained flats for young people in Blyth, South East Northumberland. This is not shared, communal facility based accommodation. Each young person receives 24 hour, 365 days on-call support undertaken on a support worker staff rota basis. Referrals are taken from NCC under the framework for access into the flats and floating support is offered to vulnerable young people across the area.

Principles/Service Ethos & Values:

To create innovative accommodation solutions to improve the health, well-being and long-term prospects of people with complex needs

Place customers at the heart of everything they do

Committed to providing excellent services, and giving customers the chance to have a say on how they develop and run these services.

Operate according to “SPIRIT” values what is important, underpin culture and defines their approach.

The Group aim to operate fairly and properly, building strong relationships and maintaining a good reputation. They establish and follow good processes and that aim to listen and be open with people about what they’re doing and why.

Delivery of the Service:

The support services PfPL+ offer work in two main ways:

Accommodation-based support - Schemes for young people with complex needs and accommodation for young homeless. PfP Living Plus receive the rent and service charges, and provide housing management services. PfPL+ provide specialist support, funded by local authorities or public sector bodies.

Floating support - help vulnerable young people living in the community to maintain their tenancies and independence. Support is funded by local authorities or public sector bodies. There is often a 'floating support' element included in accommodation based support contracts, to help clients secure and maintain a tenancy when they leave the supported accommodation.

For the Blyth scheme PFP Living + are sensitive about placements in the 16 individual self-contained flats as many referrals are of young people with highly chaotic lifestyles and situations. The scheme has many supporting facilities including gym & fitness suite and they promote community activities to minimise anti-social behaviour and teach good neighbour skills amongst residents. Spot purchase call –offs under the NCC NAS framework are the primary route into their properties.

Three support workers provide the 24/7/365 support to young people in their Blyth properties with structured needs assessments and Support Plans in place for each young person**.**

Organisations development and plans:

Places for People are a registered provider of housing and many other services. Their organisational plans are significant and their strategy is explained in their Corporate Plan and Annual review 2020.

Along with Berwick Youth Project and Barnabas Safe & Sound they are a commissioned provider of young persons supported accommodation in the County.

The Manager at Blyth did state they are always reviewing their service provision and how their model can be developed and they are examining the approach of North Tyneside YMCA (North Shields). This is because they seem to be expanding their role and have built an enhanced reputation for effective, efficient young people provision - they are eager to further investigate the YMCAs arrangements and organisational set-up to see what can be learned and applied to their own model.

Relevant factors/external factors affecting the organisations services:

The Group faces a number of external risks across its businesses - including housing management, development, property management, leisure management and, most recently, Covid-19

Changes in Government policy and practice - including welfare reforms, change in housing policy, and changes in tax/economic policy, could impact negatively on the products and services the Group offers and the achievement of performance targets in the Group business plan.

Brexit six key risks - borrowing costs; sales and rental values; labour constraints; cost and access to components; failure or underperformance of key suppliers; and customer hardship.

Outcomes:

It was not possible to get scheme specific outcomes and output information about the PFP Living + scheme in Blyth. The Manager was unable to provide this as, following consultation with senior colleagues, it was viewed as commercially sensitive.

Across the Group (all ages, across PfP Living Plus nationally) they have supported 10,000 people who were homeless or at risk of being homeless over the past year by providing accommodation and specialist support. Living Plus offers accommodation and specialist support for homeless people, including refugees, families and people with complex needs - young vulnerable people are just one of these groups that are helped.

The Group has retained its G1/V1 rating with the Regulator of Social Housing, it has strong customer satisfaction scores across a number of different businesses and has a broad and established supplier base for itself and third parties to which it provides a procurement channel

Learning points: what works well and how to sustain it.

Skilled teams, well resourced - offer a wide range of support services for vulnerable people with complex needs, sometimes in partnership with other specialist providers or agencies. Our aim is always to increase independence, reduce reliance on paid for services and create meaningful opportunities for our customers to manage themselves independently. We do this through a combination of specialised housing management, one-to-one support, signposting, drop-ins, group sessions and access to universal services.

Assistant support workers (called Customer Support Coordinators) provide an extra resource for the benefit of residents- PfP Living+ have recently introduced these roles to further enhance their support service and provide an additional pair of hands to the key Support Workers. Skills development and independent living preparations are further enhanced with the young resident. They offer a particularly intensive night-time support service with full CCTV in place at the properties to ensure security and safeguarding measures are in place.

Group size and Registered Provider Landlord status – as part of a large group of companies and as an RP with a strong financial margin across the Living + subsidiary the scheme in Blyth is a relatively protected , positive position when compared to the very small, charitable based organisations who are delivering similar support services for young people .

Young Persons engagement and "buy-in" to the service – like the majority of schemes the young person must agree to engage with the PfP support service offered and fulfil their obligations under their support plan for their placement to continue. This happens in the majority of cases but a few don't engage and the placement is ended often citing the lack of company/shared facilities as their reason.

Current NCC Framework commissioned provider works well – PfP stated they have been relatively happy with the operation of the NCC Framework and the level of referrals of young persons through it has been quite constant to ensure consistent rates of occupancy of their 16 flats, however they did acknowledge that this could be due in large part to the population concentration in Blyth and are based in SE Northumberland rather the more rural, isolated parts of the County.

Positive, clear and open relationships with NCC NAS 14+ Social services teams – PFP described their relations with NCC Homelessness/Housing Options & NAS Accommodation Leads as very good with open communication lines in place at all levels and strong adherence to procedures and agreed re-housing/allocation protocols.

Good relationships with Northumbria Police – these relations are very important given the often chaotic lifestyles and behaviours that many young people are experiencing. Relations were described as very "two-way", positive and flexible with joint training sessions provided to aid understanding. Overall this has helped alter young residents' perception of the police in a positive way.

Acceptance for referrals from outside SE Northumberland – PfP Living + primary accept referrals from within the South East of the County but also have helped with cases where there is a assessed major risk to the young person within their existing local community(such as violence or abuse) such as Hexham, Alnwick or Berwick.

Not within the County but it should be of note that PfP Living Plus also run and manage the Young Parents Pathway scheme in South Tyneside - this is an award winning specialist support service in South Tyneside for vulnerable young families aged between 16 and 25, with a range of complex needs and at risk of being made homeless. Many referred to this service have little or no support and may have no experience of living independently and young parents have their own self-contained two bedroomed, fully furnished flat, with a wide a range of support activities and facilities available.

Learning points: Challenges and avoiding duplication

Current NCC Framework call off issues – the Manager at PfP Living + reported that many of the referrals received under the existing framework are for urgent placements in to their properties. These urgent calls off can cause difficulties particularly around the pre-placement legal and compliance checks into the young person that need to be carried out. There have been times when the amount of referrals can be too many to offer placements to all individuals and if PfPs properties are at full occupancy there can be gaps in provision options. These significant , reoccurring " booms & slumps" in referral numbers were characterised has have a huge impact on their service provision as planning and forecasting occupancy rates and demand levels is not possible.

PfP Living + stated they can see gaps in current provision via the NCC Framework – especially in cases where the young person wants and assessed as being able to remain in their current locality- only having the options of scheme placements in Blyth, Berwick and Morpeth based agencies does not help these individuals in Alnwick or it surrounding villages (and this is compounded if there is no locally- based floating support service readily available in those localities either)

Lack of intensive, flexible Floating Support – PfP Living + commented that NCC appeared to have found it problematic to help young people who don't need continuous 24/7 support but do need intensive, flexible floating support services – the revised mixed model framework that is being procured may hit difficulties in achieving its objectives in this regard.

Illustrative YPs Case Study:

"Kerry had a lot to cope with at home, with sole responsibility falling on her young shoulders for the upbringing of her two siblings. Consequently, she couldn't go to school or college when she needed to which affected her education. And when Kerry did attend, she was bullied, which meant that her confidence and self-esteem were low. This wasn't helped by the fact that she couldn't escape and spend time outside of school with her friends as she had to look after her siblings, leaving her feeling like she'd lost her own identity. With the help of the Living Plus team, Kerry successfully completed a GROW programme (employability course) run by Connexions and is now working with them to find an apprenticeship".

Name of Service Provider: StopGap (Hexham)

Service/Project Overview: StopGap is a registered Charity that exists to support vulnerable adults both homeless and those threatened by homelessness. They provide short term supported accommodation for up to seven adults (18 years +). The project provides 24 hour support and offers the opportunity for individuals to understand the issues that contributed to their homelessness. StopGap deliver basic living skills and employability training and assist in finding long term accommodation. StopGap recognise that to have a home is not just about having a roof over one's head but is a place to feel safe and secure with a sense of stability and 'belonging'. Through providing a high standard of accommodation and individual support to each person, they help to begin the process of building self-esteem and providing a feeling of security from the moment an individual enters StopGap.

Principles/Service Ethos & Values:

To support vulnerable adults both those who are homeless and those who may be threatened with homelessness, by the provision of temporary accommodation, supported housing, support in their own home, or by such other services calculated to relieve their needs.

Believe in helping adults to help themselves.

Delivery of the Service:

Accommodation service was opened in 2001 and a terraced property in Dean Street was adapted to provide hostel-type accommodation with basic sleeping, washing and cooking facilities for up to five people and staff accommodation. In 2008 StopGap was successful in securing capital funding from the Places of Change Programme to refurbish their existing accommodation project and to expand into the adjacent property – since 2010 they now provide accommodation for up to seven people including a short term emergency bed.

The accommodation includes communal living space, training space, IT suite and catering kitchen. Three bedrooms have en-suite facilities and all are spacious, light and airy. The support needs of the people StopGap support are many and varied including mental health needs; learning disabilities; addiction such as for example alcohol, substance misuse or gambling; history of physical or emotional abuse; relationship breakdown; and property re-possession. In addition to these support needs, and often as a result of these needs, many taken on by StopGap have a history of offending. The majority have very low self-esteem and feel marginalised from their community. StopGap support people to apply for housing and provide and facilitate training and activity programmes to help develop living skills, employability training and other activities to promote self-esteem and confidence.

StopGap are not dedicated to young person's service provision but do with single homeless adults that are 18 years and above. They have on occasion accepted an individual who was under 18(but this is extremely rare). Fluctuations in their project occupancy can often result in helping more young persons by default (e.g. if the majority are between 18 and 23 at a particular period in time). As at December 2020 Stopgap were providing accommodation services to one 18 year old and the other residents ages ranged from 28 to 70. On average, the majority of residents are in their mid- 50's.

Tenant Support Workers provide tailored support and help in line with an agreed personal Support Plan.

StopGap is not “move-on“accommodation where people can go prior to full independent living therefore they can only accommodate approximately 25% of people referred to StopGap and they consistently operate a full capacity.

Organisations development and plans:

StopGap have agreed a lease with Karbon Homes to move into the former Links building, Haugh Lane, Hexham which will add significantly to provision. Karbon has committed to significantly refurbish and reconfigure its existing building, which was previously let to the Links housing charity. This will mean improved access and facilities and allow Stopgap to offer expanded training, housing advice and other services to help people get back on their feet. The new plans for the empty building will provide accommodation for 13 homeless adults, adding to the seven bedrooms at Dean Street. The new service will mean that the Dean Street will now provide “move-on” accommodation. Overall there will be increased options for the single homeless and significant expansion in capacity.

StopGap have continued to expand their grant applications and have been very successful in gaining funding from multiple sources including a 5 year award from the Big Lottery Community Fund of £233k.

Relevant factors/external factors affecting the organisations services.

Increased demand

Increased earned income to remain sustainable

Outcomes:

Since 2001 StopGap have supported over 900 homeless and vulnerable adults (approx. 40% of referrals) with 54 referrals or enquiries average per year.

36% of those in their supported accommodation have found employment and 57% moved on to a home of their own.

There are no other comparable services in West Northumberland and the project is highly regarded and valued.

Rental charges account for 76% of their income on average with the remainder from donations and grant funding.

Learning points: what works well and how to sustain it.

Providing a rural service for the homeless and changing perceptions - based in a market town (similar to Alnwick) where homelessness is not considered by many to be a need that requires addressing, it is most often not seen as high priority. StopGap demonstrate that this is far from the case and they continue to receiving far more referrals for help than their existing facilities can accommodate. They highlight that homelessness in west Northumberland has very specific difficulties, particularly around the rural nature of the area and the perception that homelessness and deprivation are “urban concerns” and not issues that require addressing in a market town like Hexham.

Learning point: Challenges and avoiding duplication.

Funding - reliance on donations and contribution from multiple sources

Contributing to the lack of "visible" homelessness and providing a local community solution – As StopGap are well-known, highly regarded and can help people sooner they prevent or reduce rough sleeping. The project reduces the risks where an already vulnerable person can become even more at risk and increasingly susceptible to beginning, or increasing, alcohol and drug misuse and becoming a victim, or perpetrator, of crime. Homeless individuals can be supported in their community, close to friends and other support networks – without StopGap many would have to leave the area e.g. to city based hostels

Illustrative Case Study (where publicly available):

"It's nearly a year later and I am doing great. My mental health has improved and I know if I need anything I can ring StopGap and they will help or advise me. It's a real help knowing that I have the support I have so long sought after."

Name of Service Provider: Depaul Housing Services

Depaul UK is a subsidiary of Depaul International, a group of charities working to support homeless and marginalised people around the world. Depaul Housing Services a subsidiary of Depaul UK. Depaul Housing Services is a Registered Provider, registered with the Regulator of Social Housing, a Charity and a Company Limited by Guarantee. Depaul are generously supported by a range of organisations - the People's Postcode Lottery is the main supporter alongside Accenture, Publicis, Deloitte and the Council of Mortgage Lenders – without these supporters Depaul's "NightStop" service for young people would be impossible.

Depaul pride themselves as being experts in care and support for young people and are commissioned by LAs to deliver services for them. These services are often commissioned both on price and quality. Sometimes with the cuts to local funding authorities will focus on price. Depaul have refused to cut back on the elements of service they consider essential to help young people to increase their resilience therefore they not able to deliver in every local authority area.

Current portfolio of services includes:

Supported housing for single people, expectant and new parents and families including young people who are leaving care.

- Staffed premises in a range of sizes and levels of support often within the same borough in a 'Pathway of Support', tend to deliver smaller more intensive support houses when they stand alone.
- Floating support into independent and shared mixed tenure housing
- Supported lodgings in the homes of community hosts who are trained and supported to have a lodger with low support needs

Emergency accommodation

- NightStop services
- Emergency beds within Depaul houses

Family mediation to support return to home or safe transitions from home/unsafe situations

High support mental health and case work in dedicated services - Specialist case management for people either directly to clients or as advisors to other professionals or as navigators to access specialist services

Prison housing advice - Advising prisoners on their accommodation options on release and assisting them to resettle effectively

Education, training and employment support

- Volunteering programmes that provide mentors, befrienders and activity programmes for young people disengaged from education or employment
- Volunteer and placement opportunities for young people in employment or community settings

- Access to accredited training to enable young people to move on

Refugee and Asylum Seekers - Commissioned services to support unaccompanied asylum seekers

They operate on the basis of "full cost recovery" - to deliver on their strategic plan they "cost all of it" therefore when they ask a local authority to commission them or a grant maker to fund them each is requested to "take their fair share of the true costs" of running Depaul.

Principles/Service Ethos & Values:

Mission: to end youth homelessness and to change the lives of those affected by it. Believe no young person should have to sleep rough and to provide the supported accommodation as an answer to homelessness. Also vital to prevent young people from becoming homeless in the first place. Every person we help has a unique situation and a unique set of needs, so Depaul focus on the individual and offer tailored support. For those with nowhere to go, they offer accommodation.

Values: we celebrate the potential in people, we take a wider role in civil society, we put our words into action, we believe in rights and responsibilities

Delivery of the Service:

"Progression Coaches" work alongside young people to empower them to live independently - Supporting young people facing homelessness to achieve their potential. When relationships break down, provide support to keep families together. Activity programmes help young people to manage mental health problems, build healthy relationships and access education, employment and training. The Nightstop network of "volunteer hosts" provides a safe place to stay for people in crisis. The Nightstop Network provides emergency overnight accommodation for young homeless people who are facing a night on the streets or sleeping in an unsafe place. Volunteer hosts, ordinary members of the community, open their homes to people offering private spare room, hot meal, shower, Laundry facilities and a listening ear

Depaul UK runs Nightstop services in London, South Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, the North East and Hertfordshire, while communities and charities run additional Nightstops around the UK, managed and accredited by the Nightstop UK team at Depaul. The nearest Nightstop North East office to Alnwick for DePaul is in Whitley Bay. This Nightstop service is run by Depaul UK and provides emergency accommodation in the homes of local volunteers for people over the age of 16 in the North East on a night-by-night basis. It is focussed on assisting the areas of Newcastle, Whitley Bay (Endeavour Centre) and North and South Tyneside. It is provided via self- referrals to Nightstop NE via initial phone call to the service(open weekdays 9-4pm) by the young person Nightstop risk assesses the young person, takes references, and contacts available volunteer hosts.

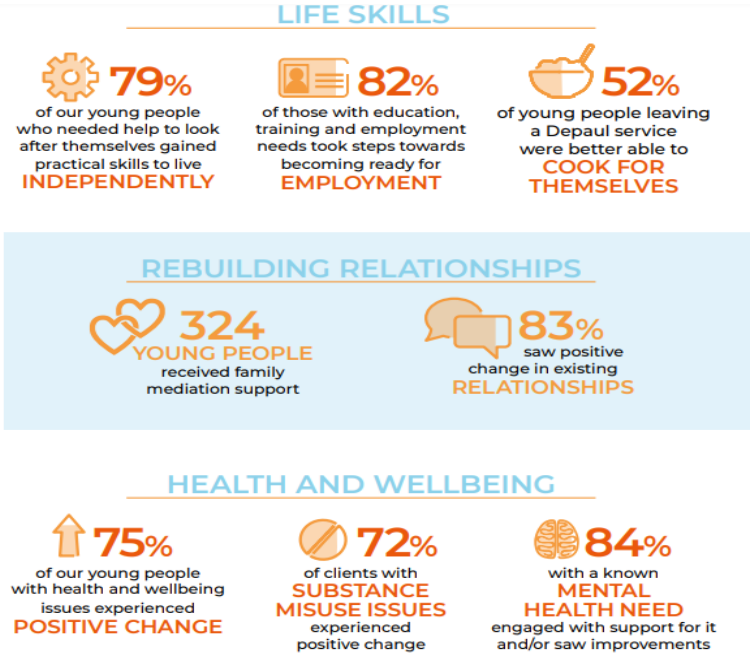
They also run supported accommodation services in the North East and across the UK including specialist services for young parents, unaccompanied asylum seeking children and those with severe mental health problems. Alongside accommodation services, DePaul offer specialist support allowing people to move on to live independently. Specialise in working in communities where poverty and long-term unemployment have resulted in generations of social exclusion and high levels of homelessness. Supported accommodation generally consists of small, shared homes where support staff work alongside young people to help them achieve independence and prevent future homelessness. Where possible, these homes are modelled on a family home with a lounge and a large kitchen for cooking, eating and working together e.g. Depaul House, in Whitley Bay, North Tyneside, provides a safe environment for young people to stay and develop skills for independent living. Each resident is supported by their own

progression coach who devises an individual plan for the young person and helps to develop their independent living skills. They also support them in accessing training, employment, education and opportunities to volunteer.

PEER –LED HOUSING - peer-led housing project is an innovative scheme designed to allow those with low-support needs to access affordable housing. These tenants pay an affordable rent, whilst learning the ropes of renting, often for the first time. One tenant in each property takes on a leadership role, coordinating with Depaul UK staff on issues like property maintenance. In return for these increased responsibilities, the lead tenant receives a contribution for a deposit on another property when they move on.

HOUSING ADVICE ROLE - provide guidance for young people in housing crisis. This includes people sleeping rough, people staying temporarily with friends and family, people facing eviction and people facing homelessness due to family breakdown. Provide one-to-one appointments with experienced advisors, who can provide advice and support for young people to find stable accommodation. This includes:

- Providing information about suitable accommodation options
- Referring young people to accommodation services
- Providing assistance with completing forms and paperwork
- Identifying and claiming benefit entitlements
- Referring to other Depaul UK services such as mediation and support to access education, training and employment
- Signposting to a range of relevant external resources and services



SUPPORTED LODGINGS SERVICE -Supported Lodgings providers offer a room in their house and support with life skills to young people facing homelessness for a period of between six and twelve months. This model helps young people facing homelessness to learn to live independently in a safe and supportive environment.

Young people accessing the Supported Lodgings scheme pay rent and learn the skills they need to live independently in their own property when the placement comes to an end. These skills include things like doing washing and learning to cook and budget.

Organisations development and plans: These are contained in their strategic and corporate plans

Outcomes: (National only)

In 2019, the Nightstop Network hosted 944 people for a total of 8,967 nights.



Learning points: what works well and how to sustain it

Depaul UK has a major research role and seeks to influence policy and decision makers on youth homelessness and related issues - they review and evaluate how their approach is working to achieve the long term aim of everyone having a place to call home. They advocate for change and create a range of ways for young people's experiences and voices to be heard by the leaders and trustees of Depaul as well as those who make decisions in local and national government.

Depaul UK called on the Government to reconsider planned changes to supported accommodation - Supported Accommodation refers to housing where accommodation and support are provided together; services which the report showed are safer for young people than informal arrangements. Funding reforms have been proposed which threaten the future of supported accommodation for people facing homelessness. Depaul UK and other organisations have been critical of the Government's proposals**.**

They believe Homelessness forums can support the reduction of homelessness and hold partners to account - They are perhaps less able to drive systems change, forums that they are involved with do not seem to have the power to do this. They are often focused on making existing systems work better.

They see statutory agencies' commissioning of providers to deliver services as a crucial aspect of partnership working – Depaul believe that the effectiveness of commissioning is currently uneven across the local area. At its best commissioning is based on robust data about need, includes providers and service users from the outset and fosters a positive relationship between commissioners and providers. They also have experience of commissioning that is chaotic, e.g. does not keep to timescales or is not properly executed and therefore has to be repeated. Some tenders are for contracts that offer insufficient funding for the stated objectives, leading to few or even no providers bidding for them. This underfunding of contracts and procedural problems with commissioning homelessness service is in no small part due to limited funding that many local authorities have available.

Learning point: Challenges and avoiding duplication.

Safeguarding young people – they examine the risks to young people's safety in services and have a whole range of actions from training and information sharing to using criminal and background checks to vet their staff and volunteers.

Health and safety challenges – they operate many services across a wide range of places and want everyone to be safe. They use training, health and safety committees, and staff representatives alongside policies and procedures to help promote a safe workplace.

Loss of income - there are multiple ways Depaul could lose income. Individuals, communities and companies could stop supporting them. One of the reasons they communicate regularly and extensively in a range of ways with supporters is to mitigate against people losing interest in their work.

Spending too much - As Depaul is a large organisation it is important to have stringent checks and balances. Every manager in Depaul has a budget which they are responsible and accountable for – they set a budget at the beginning of each year and make it everyone's business to stick to it.

Government policy changes - the way young people are supported by the government continues to change and could get even more difficult in the coming years. The government has proposed ending housing benefits for under 21 year olds and cutting support. These risks require both contingency planning and lobbying to try and prevent these changes.

Commissioners changing approach and competition for contracts - as some providers from the private sector are willing to cut staff pay to the minimum and deliver minimal support for young people they are a cheaper alternative than Depaul. Sometimes other charities would do a good job as well and they might compete with Depaul, and where possible Depaul aim to collaborate with them to see if they could deliver a service better together.

Illustrative YPs Case Studies: Maya: Maya was a student when she was referred by DePaul's Housing Advice service, after realising that her accommodation was an illegal sub-let. She says, "It's been great, it's a really quiet environment for studying. The other girls and I are close in age so we all know what everyone else is going through. We know who needs to study, who needs to get up for work and stuff. We work with each other's schedule." Project coordinator Kiran Dutt says: "The project works really well, everyone is really respectful of each other and we're careful to place housemates together who we think will get on well.

Steph: "I started out as a Nightstop host, offering my spare bedroom for a night at a time to young people facing homelessness. After I had hosted a few people, I decided to apply to be a Supported Lodgings provider. "Leanne* moved in with my son and I, and has been on the Supported Lodgings scheme for around six months. "I really enjoy providing support, it's been an interesting experience. I'm grateful to be in a place where I'm able to share some of my skills with the young person staying with us, and teach her about cooking, cleaning, budgeting and time management. "Some of the ways that I support Leanne* are less practical – I also try to help build positive values like self-respect. I provide a safe and trusted environment in which Leanne* can come to me to share her day. "I work as a team with the staff at Depaul UK, involving Leanne* in how things are run in the house. I seek her opinion and listen to her. We even spend quality time doing arts and crafts. We watch a lot of TV together – everything from the news, to Judge Judy! There is mutual respect and we have effective communication, which I think are the ingredients for success. Leanne*, my guest, has been respectful and focused on her goals – she had a great work ethic. "When Leanne* first came to live in my house, she had never done any cooking. It's an important skill for living independently, so it was one of the first things we tackled. We talked about health and safety first and food hygiene, then we went to the supermarket and shopped together, looking for healthy and economical ingredients. "Leanne* started off helping me with meals, but to my surprise she was cooking her own meals within just a few weeks – she picked it up very quickly and I was really impressed. "When she moved in, we added Leanne* to our family cleaning rota, so she's been actively involved in keeping the place clean and tidy and learning the skills she'll need to live on her own. "The transformation that I've seen in Leanne* makes it all worth it. Supported Lodgings is a really important option that helps young people at risk of homelessness to find the confidence and character they need to thrive. Working with her Depaul UK Support Worker, I've been able to help Leanne start her adult life with the right foundations. Now, when she finds a place of her own, she won't feel she's been thrown in at the deep end." **Names have been changed to protect the anonymity of the Supported Lodgings provider and the young person who stayed with them.*

Name of Service Provider: YMCA North Tyneside

Service/Project Overview: YMCA North Tyneside is a charity dedicated to strengthening people in the local community since 1879. YMCA is the largest provider of safe, supported accommodation for young people in England and Wales. They offer 39 bed spaces in North Tyneside which includes intensive supported accommodation, emergency units and a community house setting. Their holistic service provides a bed space and helps a young person gain the training, skills and confidence to go on to lead independent lives. They also provide a number of services for the public which helps sustain their charitable outcomes.

Principles/Service Ethos & Values:

YMCA enables young people to develop their full potential in mind, body, and spirit. They are inspired by, and faithful to, Christian values and aim to create supportive, inclusive and energising communities, where young people can truly belong, contribute and thrive.

They aim to advance the Christian faith by:

- Promoting a Christian environment inspired and motivated by the life, example and teaching of Jesus Christ, where people of faith and people of none can work together for the transformation of communities
- Enabling people of all ages and in particular young people to flourish through experiencing and responding to the love of God demonstrated by the life, example and teaching of Jesus Christ;
- Provide or assist in the provision in the interests of social welfare of facilities for recreation and other leisure time occupation for people of all ages with the object of improving their conditions of life;
- Provide, improve and manage residential accommodation including Social Housing for people of all ages who are in need, hardship or distress by reason of their social, physical, emotional, spiritual or economic circumstances.

YMCA have three Strategic priorities going forward: 1.Greater Reach and Impact 2. A Culture of Contributing 3. Being Financially Secure

Delivery of the Service:

YMCA NT deliver a number of successful programmes to young people residing in their 39 bed space supported accommodation projects, to help them learn and develop new skills in different environments. These include:

The North Tyneside Pathway programme - in partnership with DePaul UK and Karbon Homes to provide nine commissioned bed spaces and One Crisis Bed space.

Youth Homeless Parliament - to give young people, who have experienced homelessness, an opportunity to influence national and regional policy and services and attend Houses of Parliament.

YMCA Room Sponsor Scheme - Three young people's experiences of homelessness, supported accommodation and positive move on to independent living have been chosen by YMCA England as national examples of the benefit of YMCA's supported accommodation services

University Research Group - A number of young people worked with Newcastle and Northumbria University Ph.D. researchers; providing invaluable feedback on surveys, helping them with important research.

Working Roots -to develop employability skills using a balance of academic and practical learning to engage with people who struggle to learn solely through classroom learning.

YMCA Gym - Whilst providing open access facilities for the general community to participate in, YMCA Gym targets young people and people with more complex health needs. Over 400 young people use YMCA Gym on a regular basis and gym instructors work with them, encouraging healthy habits like maintaining a structured exercise regime and balanced diet.

Core building on Church Way, North Shields transformation - offers more welcoming and versatile spaces for the whole community to enjoy, including:

- A new café - As well as offering healthy food and drinks, the café features a training kitchen enabling local people to gain catering and hospitality qualifications.
- A redeveloped gym - Now enabling more local people to access the fantastic facilities, including older people and those with disabilities.
- More housing - Supported Accommodation provision has expanded including semi-independent 'move-on' options plus a community house.
- A new 65 place day nursery - Giving local families access to crucial early-years education and childcare in the heart of North Shields. Building confidence, creativity and community for children ages 0 - 5 years.
- 2014 YMCA North Tyneside starts work to become a registered provider of social housing. This leads to the construction of 18 flats which are named St James Knott House incorporating a third of the Church Way building. Community House in Milton Terrace is established. 3 emergency bed spaces are added in 2016.
- 2017 - A further 6 flats are added to St James Knott House, utilising the top floor of the Church Way building. Start partnership of West Percy Street move on accommodation. Patterdale estate starts creating a business plan to add new accommodation at the site.

Strong, dedicated "Housing team" of Support Workers - caring for some of the most vulnerable young people (typically aged 16 to 20 years old) in the borough of North Tyneside. Their staff team grew by another third towards the end of the 2019/20 year and active volunteers were maintained at 50.

Whilst headquartered in North Tyneside they are working all around the North East region.
They also deliver the provision of holiday accommodation through its wholly owned subsidiary Patterdale Hall Estates Ltd in Glenridding, Cumbria.

Organisations development and plans:

YMCA North Tyneside are planning to triple their Housing provision to meet identified needs and to replicate effective services and programmes in Teesdale and County Durham as well as other North East local authority areas

They are planning improved financial understanding of the sustainable services that support their charitable outcomes - his will allow them to reinvest more effectively and make better informed decisions around financial risk, with the aim of operating at a surplus. They set achievable financial targets and are planning to grow the returns from their key income bases which are:

- Housing and Accommodation - expanding their housing stock to achieve economies of scale
- YMCA Day Nursery
- Patterdale Hall Estate Ltd.

They are considering mergers and acquisitions to enable growth of both impact and surplus creation, and seeking partnerships with organisations that share their cause driven approach.

They are researching the potential for business acquisition to further develop their “mixed income model” approach

They are aiming to create an internal grant programme from surpluses generated

Decision processes will become increasingly data-informed – YMCA NT are developing Quality data systems to achieve greater understanding of their businesses, enhance the management of their finances, run more effective projects, and make the right decisions. They aim to:

- Enhance data collection and reporting systems as well as creating a Supporter Database to help build better relationships
- Maximise the returns from the development of their Impact Assessment Framework



Outcomes:

Their partnership approach has provided a reliable and stable pathway of support to vulnerable young people in North Tyneside. They have been able to:

- House young people in housing crisis at very short notice through the emergency bed provision
- Increase the number of positive move-ons achieved for young people
- Reduce the number of young people needing to be evicted from supported accommodation placements —not least due to the wide variety of accommodation on offer within the pathway partnership, which matches people to the best environment for them
- Deliver a wide range of additional value support that helps young people feel a part of their community and become financially independent
- Increase the number of young people engaging with wider support services such as for mental health, substance misuse, physical health services

Housing achieved a 94% occupancy across the year and:

- they house nearly 40 young people every night
- In 2019 they housed 67 young people in total.
- The North Tyneside Pathway programme in partnership with DePaul UK and Karbon Homes delivered 9 commissioned bed spaces and One Crisis Bed space.
- Experienced 27 positive move-ons - where residential youngsters have 'flown the nest' to live independent lives beyond YMCA.
- Engagement of residents in education, training, employment and volunteering is at an exceptionally high level with 39% of young people gaining qualifications in the past year, helping to set them up for success in life.

In 2019 YMCA NT worked closely with Northumberland County Council around housing young people in crisis, in care or coming out of care - This has proved to be a very successful and rewarding partnership for both the YMCA and young people. Many young people continue to have a "volunteer mentor" who helps them work towards their goals.

Over 55% of young people have regularly attended gym and health and wellbeing services. YMCA delivered healthy eating cooking activities in partnership with a number of community partners. 78% of young people supported by the YMCA regularly engaged with internal training or experience sessions, such as supporting Youth Homeless North East with their mental health and loneliness project. Also worked with YMCA England & Wales National on their Room Sponsor scheme. During the past year some other notable housing performances affecting young people include:

Area	Outcome (%)
Percentage of positive planned move on	73% to independent living 89% to independent living & internal move to transitional
Percentage accessing life-skill programmes	97%
Percentage taking part in job search and employment programme	88%
Percentage of people in work, training or education	81%
Residents who have a support plan in place within 4 weeks of residence	96%

Source: Annual report 2019/20

Learning points: what works well and how to sustain it

Measurement of impact reporting – measurement and management of their impact is now part of everyday culture – to fully understand why they do what they do and the 'so what?' effect. They see this as a "strengths based Impact Management model" so they can focus on making a bigger impact, use people and pounds as effectively as possible, and therefore produce the maximum amount of positive change to young people's lives. Funded by the Impact Access Fund progress is monitored against 36 identified strength indicators - identified as a model of good practice by a number of other YMCAs, local partners and also commissioners as they can more clearly assess and explain the effectiveness of their work. Rather than just examine "Outputs" managing Impact is an aggregate of Outcomes.

Voted the best Supported Accommodation Project in the National Youth Matters Award - this recognises their very well respected and worthy housing project that works with hard to reach and vulnerable 16-25 year olds.

Investing in Staff and Volunteers – they recognise the impact of YMCA comes from the skill and commitment of their staff and volunteers. Central to their resourcing strategy is placing significant value on, and continued investment in, staff and volunteers. Their staff team grew by over 30% last year and their active volunteers are approx. 50 people.

Housing Support worker success during the pandemic and positive habits forming – YMCA reported that in their Supported Accommodation many young people are continuing with positive new habits formed during lockdown, such as cooking healthy meals, keeping their flats clean and tidy and engaging in online learning. For some others, the new found freedom is a strong calling and these young people require more intensive support work to help them make healthy decisions and focus on their positive futures. The Housing Support Work Team members report feeling a little "shell shocked" by the whole lockdown experience, but are quick to point out the positives from it. YMCA NT are incredibly proud of the way these frontline workers demonstrated YMCA values: a strength and depth in conviction to help our troubled and vulnerable young people to grow, develop and ultimately thrive.

Governance strength and appraisal - their Board Annual Reviews and structured two-way annual review process of each board member is seen as crucial and has resulted in clear training, learning and development needs for each board member and the board as a whole. This process is now embedded annually. Their Governance working group and Board of Trustees undergo a thorough Board Self-Assessment which resulted in a revised Board Action Plan and Skills Matrix being produced and implemented.

Forging, growing and maintaining Corporate Partnerships – YMCA NT aim to ensure all corporate partnerships are engaging, motivating and fun for all involved. The much needed money raised and time given is focussed on supporting the most vulnerable young people. Partnerships are mutually beneficial and they are continually exploring a number of diverse opportunities to offer. Key corporate partnership in 2019/20 were with Virgin Money; Warburton's; Nandos; Aldi; Sage UK; and Accenture.

Learning points: Challenges and avoiding duplication.

Value for Money – the challenge of getting the maximum benefit for the resources available, and getting the balance right between cost and quality. It means spending well and spending wisely. YMCA make Value for Money a collective objective for all employees- and employees understand that Value for Money and Expenditure Control is as much about the quality as it is about the cost and is applied to day to day decision making. They work to three key VfM principles:

- What we do is relevant and leads to benefits for our beneficiaries.
- How we work is efficient and effective so we don't waste time or money.
- We get a good return from what we spend and invest in and make wise choices

Financial management, reserves and Restricted Funds - These are funds subject to specific trusts for restricted purposes that are still within the wider Objects of the Charity. Trustees are under a duty to balance the needs of current and future beneficiaries of the charity. A charity needs to have sufficient reserves to allow it to cover known liabilities and contingencies, absorb setbacks and take advantage of change and opportunities. At the same time recognising that Charity law requires any income received by a charity to be spent within a reasonable period of receipt. The Trustees have agreed a reserves policy that takes into account the charity's financial circumstances and

other relevant factors. The trustees aim to maintain free reserves in unrestricted funds at a level which equates to approximately three months operating costs being £500k. At this level, the trustees feel that they would be able to continue the current activities of the charity in the event of a significant drop in funding. At the 31st March 2020 free reserves were -£453k. To achieve the target level of reserves will form part of a longer, 10 year plan, initially seeking to return the free reserves to zero, before beginning to build reserves as defined in the Strategic Plan. YMCA North Tyneside does have fixed assets of £7m, some of which could be used as collateral or liquidated within a 6-24 month period. The deficit for the year was £79k however the auditor reported that performance is satisfactory and in line with budget. Strong performances were demonstrated in the Families and Communities category as they established the Healthy Habits initiative and improved the HQ income functions as well as improved overhead cost control.

Significant impact of Covid-19 on YMCA - some activities had to be suspended as a result of the national lockdown during the 2020 financial year however others such as their Housing projects and Nursery provided critical services. The national government and local government financial support through the Job Retention Scheme, the coronavirus Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund, and the Coronavirus rates relief for Hospitality, along with the support of their funders and supporters has enabled working capital to be maintained through the crisis. In August, YMCA England and Wales released Back on Track a report outlining the effects of lockdown on young people across the nation and how YMCA's have adapted their services to continue helping young people during the pandemic. The key findings from this report showed that:

- Young people were feeling more isolated than ever before
- Relying on virtual communication was becoming tiring and simply wasn't the same as having face to face interactions with others.
- Young people are having doubts about their aspirations for the future with school closures causing them to fall behind on their education.

Housing Support Workers are challenged everyday - caring for some of the most vulnerable young people (typically aged 16 to 20 years old) in the borough of North Tyneside they have to spend a lot more time giving emotional and mental health support in their housing projects during lockdowns, but due to that, they have built stronger relationships. One worker stated "the harder experiences have been weighing on people's minds..this is not only hard for the young people, but it is a real challenge for us as support workers. We carry that knowledge with us and it can be really hard to process."

Illustrative YPs Case Study: Oli's story - Oli was an emergency referral to YMCA from Children's Services. He was 16 and in foster care, but his placement had broken down following an argument with his carers. Oli's mum had been unable to care for him due to poor mental health and consequently he had been in the care system since the age of 11. Oli's own mental health had deteriorated during this time, leading to poor relationships and aggressive behaviour. He was skipping college and was facing homelessness. When Oli arrived at YMCA he was very quiet. He'd never lived by himself before and required a lot of support to develop basic independent living skills such as cooking, cleaning, budgeting and getting along with others. YMCA supported Oli; helping him register with a GP and making sure he received mental health support from an in-house Counsellor. We worked with his college tutors to get him to re-engage with his course and our volunteers offered support to help him catch up on his missed work. Oli has flourished, is on target to pass his course and is hoping to be accepted on Foundation Degree course next year. He aspires to study at University and has already begun to take steps towards this with the support of his workers at YMCA.

Name of Service Provider: Horizons North East

Service/Project Overview

Horizons North East (Community Interest Company) is based in Blyth, SE Northumberland and provides a flexible housing support service from the point of crisis, through to maintaining and sustaining a tenancy with longer term support. They aim to enable clients to lead as fulfilling and independent a life as possible and tailor our support service to meet the specific needs of each individual and work alongside the appropriate external agencies to ensure their support needs are best provided for. They are not young person focussed but do accept people 17 years and older. They have over 12 years of direct experience in providing shared accommodation to an extensive range of individuals, they have an established reputation of dealing with clients who have vulnerabilities, including complex and challenging needs.

Principles/Service Ethos & Values:

Horizons North East was established as a Community Interest Company to provide a much broader and personalised package of bespoke support services at a level more appropriate for the rapidly growing number of increasingly challenging clients who are relying upon services such as this in order to achieve and sustain a positive life path.

Horizons North East believes that everyone has the potential to develop the motivation and competence to lead a fulfilling life if they are provided with the appropriate support and opportunities. They aim to create the right support environment and to assist each individual in gaining a realistic perspective on how to integrate into the community. They believe:

- Each individual is a deserving person with their own, unique needs.
- They must respect their dignity and give them the opportunity to be themselves in a setting where they can feel safe and encouraged to lead full and active lives.
- the ability to establish and maintain relationships is the key to social inclusion – they not only embrace material needs but all aspects of a person's life, taking into account social, educational and vocational skills, as well as recreational and leisure activities.

Delivery of the Service:

Service delivery predominately focused upon the provision of accommodation to individuals facing imminent homelessness. They have seen an increase in the number of individuals facing deprivation, and the reasons for this broadening to include people who previously may not have reached such acute levels of crisis. Horizons NE Shared accommodation is for any Individual who need support with issues which have led to a threat of homelessness. These issues may include examples such as a problematic relationship with alcohol, drug dependency or a range of mental health issues.

They currently offer shared supported accommodation across Northumberland with properties located in Blyth, Cramlington and Ashington. All accommodation is provided in well-specified and maintained shared accommodation homes within the community. Referrals are accepted directly and through other agencies. Referrals consist of a telephone interview, police check and a meeting before any decision is made. Clients are guided by a support team as they take the step towards independent living and learn the importance of taking responsibility for their actions and plans for the future. A support worker is allocated to each client, regular one to one support meetings as

well as group support interventions covering mental health, managing money and tenancy, health, well-being, drugs and alcohol etc. In addition to individual work, much focus is placed around managing and sustaining tenancies this includes:

- Providing advice on how to maintain and sustain a tenancy and encouraging Independence
- Support with decision making and employment and education skills
- Tailoring our support service to adequately provide for the support needs of each individual
- Providing advice on how to maintain and contribute towards a shared household
- Assistance with budgeting and managing money
- Assisting with correspondence and external agencies
- Liaise with external agencies to ensure the individual attends and fully engages so they are receiving the best possible service
- Supporting household tasks like laundry, ironing and cleaning
- Providing advice to clients to ensure they keep themselves safe

Organisations development and plans: Not available Outcomes: Not available

Learning points: what works well and how to sustain it.

Overall Well-Being focus – they believe that well-being is a multifaceted term that describes the healthy, contented and prosperous condition we all aspire to. It can be used to describe a person, a community or a workplace and is applicable to both our physical and mental condition. As well as representing the most effective way of ensuring positive outcomes in our lives, it could be argued that well-being is one of the goals of human endeavour. Ultimately, well-being is important for ourselves, our family and friends and is a vital component that allows us all to flourish in all aspects of life.

Experienced Support Workers in place – One support worker to each client, weekly support meetings as well as group support work covering mental health, managing money and tenancy, health, well-being, drugs and alcohol issues. Each person's needs are determined in consultation with Welfare and Support Mentors. Support programmes are entirely flexible. They provide a range of packages to meet the unique needs and objectives of the individual, always placing priority upon retaining a 'roof over their head'. They believe that companionship is key to a trusted relationship with our Support Workers. Support Workers provide one-on-one attention and develop an individualised support plan. Daily Living One-to-one support is provided and all clients are encouraged to make their own decisions and gain daily living skills, such as cooking, cleaning, budgeting and shopping.

Learning point: Challenges and avoiding duplication

Rooms and charges total spaces: Clients are expected to contribute £20.00 per week, in addition to their entitlement to the rent being paid through Housing Benefit. Single fully furnished rooms, all bills and broadband included. **Client group served** - Single people who need support with issues around homelessness, alcohol, drug dependency or mental health issues. Will not accept people with a history of arson or sex offences. Minimum age accepted is 17 Years old. There are a range of rules which will be discussed with the client at the time of the pre-acceptance meeting.

Name of Service Provider: Azure Charitable Enterprises

Service/Project Overview: Azure is a Registered Charity that aim to support clients with disabilities to achieve autonomy, exercise their personal freedoms and make choices about the lives they lead and they are registered with the Care Quality Commission to provide personal care. Services are tailored to individual needs and are delivered in a flexible, personalised way to support all our clients including 24/7 if required. Work with each clients to understand and support their personal aspirations, their interests and their active participation in not only leisure and recreational activities but also employment opportunities. They are committed to delivering high quality care and support that affords clients with a sense of continuity and accountability for all working practices. Azure is committed to providing highly trained professional staff to support people with a disability to live in homes appropriate to their needs and to support them to live as independently as they are able. The charity works closely with local authorities and partner organisations that provide homes for people with a disability whilst also providing an enabling service for clients to better access the community/community facilities and public amenities.

Principles/Service Ethos & Values:

The overarching mission of the Charity is to "improve the lives of people who are disabled or disadvantaged". Maximising independence, personal development and achievement are fundamental aims. Azure's focus, given the nature of clients' disabilities, is "distance travelled" rather than absolute outcomes (such as formal qualifications) and which understands that clients achieve progress on their own terms and which is not readily measured against rigid educational frameworks or, indeed, across 'academic' terms or years. These aims are achieved in a variety of ways - many of which are complementary - with many of clients accessing more than one type of service

Everyone has a right to the best life possible and that includes people with learning disabilities. But people with learning and/or physical disabilities face obstacles that are hard to imagine – their challenges can be complex and lifelong.

Even so, with the right care, support and encouragement, we believe everyone with a learning disability can find more enjoyment, comfort and satisfaction in their lives. Azure's model of Person-Centred Active Support (APCAS) ensures that we focus on the specific needs of each individual, being creative about the kind of personal care and support Azure offer.

- We work hard to understand our Client's changing needs and provide services and support that make a real difference to their lives.
- Providing person-centred support requires us to understand the people we support. Person-centred support requires an understanding of what is important to each Client and what they want for their future. Everything we do is based on their view of what a 'best possible life' looks like.
- Our Support Staff work with Clients to express their preferences, identify their personal interests, strengths and also what they may find challenging.
- Our approach ensures that our Client's exercise more control over their lives and exercise their personal choices and experience greater levels of independence.

Delivery of the Service

The key services operating in Northumberland are:

Tynedale Supported Housing - The Tynedale service offers a rural environment with good access to Carlisle and Newcastle, made up of a number of independent houses in the Tyne Valley; these are in Prudhoe, Corbridge, Hexham and the outlying villages. Within this service a number of the houses are shared tenancies with vacancies occurring when someone opts to move on. Within these shared households tenants have private bedrooms and access to communal areas. The local staff have a strong commitment to supporting tenants and by utilising their regional knowledge, can help these tenants make the most of their environment. Tynedale can support individuals in obtaining their own tenancy and provide the ongoing support they require to live independently. Staff are available on a flexible basis to meet the needs of the tenant, this can range from a few hours a day through to a twenty four hour service.

Cramlington Supported Housing - This service is unique in that it comprises of a row of eleven houses, ten of which have four bedrooms and the other, two. Whilst people can choose to live quietly there is also the benefit of shared activities and a strong sense of community. All tenants have an assured short hold tenancy in houses that can cater for either mixed or single sex households. Each resident has a private bedroom with access to communal areas. Staff are available on a flexible basis to meet tenant's needs during the hours of 7.30am until 11pm. There is also a member of staff available throughout the night, should an emergency arise. Whilst Cramlington Supported Housing is a specific service, staff can provide outreach support to people who choose to move into the Cramlington area in their own tenancies. This support would be tailored to meet the individual's needs.

In addition, the charity has established and operate a number of businesses, including supported businesses to generate income and to provide sustainable paid employment and real 'on the job' learning and training opportunities for people with a disability and which include horticultural nurseries, trade and retail garden centre, grounds maintenance and landscaping business Azure Business Centre further supports the aims of the charity by employing people with a disability where possible.

Organisation development and plans

The Charity has no plans at the present to radically alter the mix of ongoing activity, nor to change the focus of the Charity. It is envisaged that the difficult economic conditions will continue with the potential to affect all departments. An organisation wide costs control strategy exists with close scrutiny of all discretionary spending.

Outcomes: In 2019/20 78 residents were being supported in their homes at Cramlington, Washington, Tynedale and via Supported Living, in Newcastle and Tynedale.

86 other service users were receiving support through the Community Access enabling service. Support Services continues its residential based work in the various housing departments in Cramlington, Washington, Tynedale and Newcastle —as well as providing a substantial volume of enabling support activity around the North East. The quality of all of these activities is regularly verified by third party inspections.

Learning points: what works well and how to sustain it.

Working more closely with commissioning organisations, other care providers and third party housing providers - to broaden reach to ensure they are meeting the needs of all who would benefit from our care and create greater equity of service.

Education and Training - extended the nature and character of Skills builder provision (including geographic reach) for children and young people with SEND and introduced Supported Internships, as a progression for skills builder learners, with the support of Northumberland County Council. Azure has also been admitted to the Register of Apprenticeship Training Provider so that it might deliver apprenticeship training that provides

Partnership working with smaller, grass roots organisations to support those who have reduced or no funding so as to extend the depth and breadth of our reach - Education Services and Employment Services Departments continue to work with and support other organisations including local schools**.**

Remaining open to opportunities for future sector consolidations i.e. strategic partnerships and/or merger - for example, now working with the North East Autism Society to provide employment services across the region, Azure have determined to concentrate on consolidating the Charity's financial position as a pre-cursor to any subsequent expansion, acquisition or merger.

Fundraising - to fundraise in compliant and innovative ways to both support charitable services (targeting grant-making organisations and corporate sponsors) and investment in Azure's businesses - the charity has again benefited from grants received from the Recce Foundation and Molitor Trust.

Advocacy - Azure to continue to be a strong advocate for those they support and their families, challenging inequality and to make concerted effort to shape policy (national and local) by working more collaboratively with other services providers particularly as regards 'strategic commissioning' and budget setting (for the provision of support services) in/by Local Authorities. The charity has engaged other providers of services to Northumberland County Council, local Councillors and MPs in debate and discussion as to the fee rates paid by Northumberland County Council to service providers which Azure and fellow providers consider to be inadequate.

Ambassadors - The charity has and continues to enjoy the support of key stakeholders and their support will be increasingly critical to Azure's future. They must leverage this support but also recognise and celebrate the contribution other organisations make to their work. Ambassador organisations are Karbon Homes, Coca Cola European Partners, Miller UK, the Woodhorn Colliery Museum and Anchor Housing.

Learning point: Challenges and avoiding duplication.

The challenges facing the learning and physical disability social care sector are still very real and their financial position has become more acute - as the charity's underlying finances deteriorated over a number of years and during which time the charity had posted significant operating deficits. Their funding stream mix is both complex and variable**. Local Authority fees continue to be cut In real terms -** the failure by local authorities to prepare budgets to reflect, in real terms the increases in pay costs across the sector has prompted increasing numbers of service providers to hand back services or otherwise decline to provide these services**.** Azure believe it is incumbent upon the charity to work more effectively as an advocate for client care and client rights. During the course of the financial year, sought to reduce recourse to Agency Staff - a requirement that has, on occasion, been prompted by inability to recruit/replace staff largely as a consequence of the pay and conditions (i.e. the hourly rates payable by Local Authorities) for commissioned services. It remains the case, as reported last year that Azure, like many other service providers, may find itself in a position where it Is forced to decline to provide Support Services where Commissioning Organisations (Local Authorities) fail to budget for the delivery of services at a cost that we consider to be economically viable.

Name of Service Provider: Barnardos

Service/Project Overview: The largest national children's charity in the UK Barnardos helps improve the lives of more than 240,000 vulnerable children, young people and their families – focus on helping children including those who have been sexually exploited, young people leaving care, children with a parent in prison and provide early intervention for families struggling to cope. They find adoptive homes and foster placements for children in care and campaign to change policy.

They provide individual targeted holistic support and group engagement programmes for vulnerable young people and care leavers aged 13-25 who have a range of needs including mental health/emotional well-being, relationship issues, housing/homelessness and are assessed as being at risk. They work collaboratively with a wide range of partners including schools, Council Children's Services, Young People and Learning services, Health services/professionals, voluntary sector together with parents/carers. The closest service office to Northumberland is the BASE Young Peoples Centre in Whitley Bay.

Principles/Service Ethos & Values:

Mission: Everybody should have a safe place to live. It's a basic human right, yet thousands of children and young people are homeless in Britain today. We work with young people and families to help them to find and keep a home. We work with young people who are homeless and those living in places that aren't safe or don't have a proper tenancy. We help them get somewhere to live that's right for them, and we support them in their tenancies.

Six priority areas of service: • Early Support. • Family Support Services. • Mental Health. • Child Abuse and Exploitation. • Looked After Children (e.g. family placements) • Leaving Care/Accommodation Support

Delivery of the Service:

Operate more than 1,000 services across the UK, many commissioned by partners. Operate more than 700 retail shops, and able to draw on a highly motivated and dedicated army of more than 20,000 volunteers. The services provide cover many aspects of established and developing young people's vulnerability including:

- children and young people who have suffered sexual abuse and exploitation; with
- Children who are in care, those who are leaving care, and those caring for others. We provide
- early intervention for children, parents and carers through our work in children's centres
- Support children who care for a sick or disabled relative, focussing on their emotional health and wellbeing. We work with
- Children who have been trafficked, who have suffered through domestic abuse and children who are living with a disability. We
- Find loving and supportive foster placements and adoptive homes for children in care.

Barnardos outreach teams on the streets actively look for homeless young people and provide a friendly ear as well as referring them to the right people and organisations who can help them.

In terms of housing related support they offer a Supported Lodgings North East service - This is delivered by Barnardo's Young People Support Team from the Cowgate Community Family Centre in Newcastle. The service provides supported lodgings for young people, who are leaving care of the local authority or have been assessed as homeless, including in Northumberland in the homes of individuals. This aims to help a young person adapt to adulthood and it protects anyone who is leaving a local council's care or who is at risk of homelessness. Barnados provide the following to the Supported Lodgings placements:

- a placement worker to expertly match a young person to the place
- weekly payments to cover the costs of hosting a young person
- ongoing training and support for the duration of the placement

Organisations development and plans:

Barnardo's long-term Strategy to have at least doubled net fundraising and retail income from £23m to £50m by 2025 - already increased net fundraising and retail income by 16% to over £26m, and will now continue to build on this by 2025.

Move towards becoming a health and social care children's charity– want to enable transformative change for vulnerable children, and have set ambitious new goals to help them achieve this and this reflects the changing commissioning climate

Becoming a more digital, diverse and learning organisation - have embraced digital technology to develop new services and fundraising tools, have enhanced website, and are equipping employees/volunteers people with new tools so they can spend more time directly supporting children.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is at the core of the charity - improving systems and data to better understand service users' needs, whilst benchmarking and validating progress independently through Stonewall, MIND and Business in the Community

Relevant factors/external factors affecting the organisations services.

Increased public awareness about some of the most serious challenges facing children and young people - More than 4m children are living in poverty; one in eight children have a mental health condition; and youth violence, including gangs and knife crime, has reached a new peak.

Whilst new technologies have created fantastic new opportunities for children to learn, play and socialise, they also create new dangers – such as cyber-bullying, gaming addiction and online grooming and sexual abuse. Spoke out against child sexual abuse in the 1990s when few others dared and have been leading calls for regulation of social media companies, and a legal "duty of care" towards children, so that the industry is required to keep children safe online.

Outcomes (National only):

Helped improve the lives of more than 294,300 children and young people, parents and carers.

- Helped 40,100 children, young people, parents and carers through our mental health services;
- Supported 3,500 care leavers and we worked with more than 7,700 children who are looked after in the care system.
- Worked with 3,500 people through our Child Sexual Exploitation services. Leaving Care/Accommodation Support •
- Supported 5,000 people in Leaving Care/Accommodation Support services -included 3,100 in Leaving Care services and 1,900 in Housing and Homelessness services.

Learning points: what works well and how to sustain it.

Size, strength and significant corporate partnerships – They focus partnership working on "co-creation" that brings together our experts to overcome a specific challenge affecting children and young people For example on housing provision with Saint-Gobain they focused on areas of real importance to both Saint-Gobain and Barnardo's. They supported young care leavers by helping develop high-quality homes to transition from care to independent living and providing facilities for young people to train and develop new skills. Both of these programmes were funded by colleagues' fundraising.

Measurement of impact - measure progress against strategy to inform their decision making and provide holistic intelligence on the performance of Barnardo's. They have developed their Contract Performance Tool, which is used to measure the effectiveness of Barnardo's work. Their Directorate of Impact and Learning is finding smarter ways to measure accurately what they do and how successful they are, what works and what doesn't. This is a vital ingredient in sharing best practice and knowledge, which sits at the heart of their way of working.

Policy and Communications team influences and informs politicians, decision makers, the media and many other key stakeholders - Seven of their policy calls passed into law in 2017/18. Government listened to Barnardos by not making a policy change on the child protection system, as they advised it might not help children.

Developing digital initiatives and exploit digital opportunities continues to make Barnardo's more efficient and agile – they are better able to direct resources to frontline services. For example they are to strengthen their learning offer and set the standard in the sector by creating a Barnardo's Corporate University at the heart of a refreshed organisational learning offer that informs their own work and that of others who can make a difference to vulnerable children and young people.

Learning point: Challenges and avoiding duplication.

Continuing to be both impressive and unapologetic to fundraisers and changing attitudes towards charities- a tough fundraising environment, always put fundraising at the front of minds and embed it in every part of their work. There is greater competition and a fall in public trust in charities. Continue to innovate in our service delivery, so we continue to innovate in our income generation e.g. new eBay online hub **Continuing economic and political uncertainty and Different markets for commissioning young people's services** – in particular the expected acceleration of integrated commissioning of health and social care services

Increased demand for Barnardo's services - New risks and threats to the wellbeing of vulnerable individuals and communities means demand continues to increase, and know that children and young people's needs are becoming ever more complex. The current "system" of delivering services to vulnerable children and young people across the UK is too often incoherent, ineffective and insufficiently child-focused.

Name of Service provider: Changing Lives

Service project Overview: Changing Lives has been helping the most vulnerable and socially excluded for nearly 50 years. They began as a small charity in the North East called Tyneside Cyrenians, and later The Cyrenians, helping people who were experiencing homelessness through our hostels and day centres. Changing Lives is a registered Charity and a company limited by guarantee and is the trading name of the Cyrenians Ltd.

Principles/Service Ethos & Values: Changing Lives believe that everyone deserves a safe home, a rewarding job and a life free from addiction or abuse. Also believe that, given the right support, anyone can change their life for the better. By focusing on their strengths, potential and opportunities, they help over 14,000 people overcome their problems and live safe, successful, independent lives each year. They have developed a Theory of Change which underpins all they do.



Delivery of the Service:

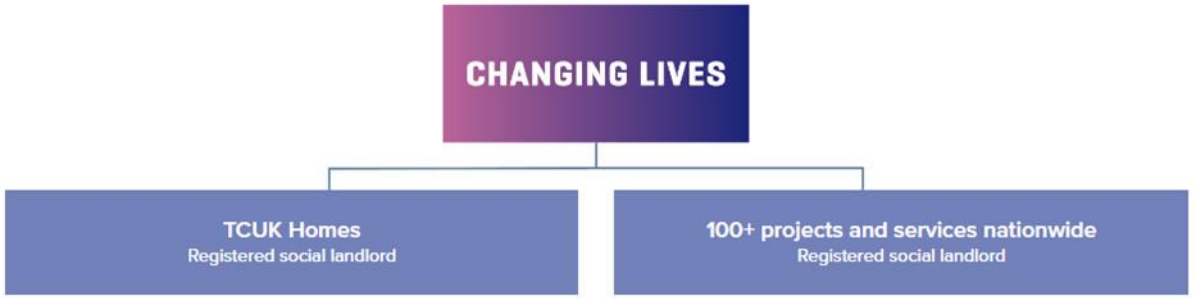
100 projects in England staffed by 600 dedicated staff to help people experiencing homelessness, domestic violence, addiction, long-term unemployment and more, to make positive change. All projects provide safe, secure living environments. Also offer outreach and "drop- in" services, help with practical issues and provide strength-based support. 56 accommodation projects across the North East and the City of York making 579 beds available each night to people who would otherwise be homeless.



Offer specialist accommodation and support for the following vulnerable groups:

- **Veterans –** accommodation dedicated to former service men and women, with specialist support to help them with issues such as PTSD, family reconciliation and addictions
- **Young people –** accommodation for people aged 16-25, with support to build life-skills, access education and find employment. **For Northumberland,** their Northumberland temporary accommodation service (NTAS) is situated throughout Northumberland and offers a range of supported accommodation for males and females 18 and over who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Referral for accommodation is through Northumberland county council (homelessness team).
- **People with experience of domestic violence –** refuges for people who have left an abusive relationship, and their children
- **Women in recovery and their children –** specialist women and children's accommodation that provides support for women addressing their addictions whilst aiming to maintain or rebuild contact with their families

STRUCTURE



TCUK Homes is a subsidiary company of Changing Lives – it is registered housing provider, established to provide affordable quality homes for people in housing need. They provide homes for people who might otherwise struggle to access private rented or social housing tenancies due to a lack of availability or affordability. As a landlord, they are able to improve living conditions for vulnerable people by offering a secure long-term tenancy as well as providing a quality home. Have around 140 affordable rental homes in Northumberland, Newcastle, Gateshead, North Tyneside, South Tyneside, Sunderland and Durham. Properties are let at below market rent, to provide truly affordable homes to people that need them**.**

Changing Lives Floating Support - Their Floating Support services help people living in their own homes to tackle all kinds of issues; from rent arrears and benefits issues to activities that reduce social isolation .This support enables people to sustain their tenancies, find the services they need and build a better life for themselves within their community.

Organisations development, plans and relevant factors affecting the organisations services.

Changing Lives has embraced new thinking about how the public and voluntary sector most effectively meet the needs of people with multiple deprivation – this is a shift away from the 'public management model' replacing it with trust-based and relational commissioning and co-production.

They anticipate increasing demand for services and are planning further investment in fundraising – as they see increased levels of poverty, low quality employment, increased reporting of domestic abuse and sexual exploitation, modern day slavery, and a prison population in crisis.

Continue to explore partnerships for growth where our values align with others – Business Development team focus on retention of core business as many priority contracts come up for retender, as well as continuing to develop justice and health services.

To improve brand recognition significantly - through the creation of a new marketing and communications team.

Quality, Insights and Performance team focused on effective data and intelligence - see learning as the engine for performance improvement. And embed this culture by ensuring that everything they do is developed through the lens of learning and curiosity.

Treating the well-being of its people using our services, volunteers and its staff as its top priority

Outcomes:

Delivered support to 17,001 people across our 91 projects throughout the year.

Supported 2,200 people per year with stable accommodation.

320 volunteers gave 30,427 hours to help change lives

Group turnover reached £20.9m, an increase of 5% on the previous year.

Housing and Homelessness: 56 accommodation projects making 579 beds available each night to people who would otherwise be homeless.

Accommodation services provided support to 1,880 people through both supported accommodation, and specialist housing for women, young people, families and veterans.

19% of those in supported accommodation services work with an Asset Coach, who focus on an individual's strength to help them realise their goals. This type of support significantly improves the outcomes for the individual. For example, those working with an Asset coach are 10% more likely to achieve their own tenancy. This service won The Homeless Link 'Excellent in Supporting People' Award.

Two-thirds of those who received accommodation support (64%) left with a positive outcome and 441 achieved their own tenancies.

Outreach support to over 1,000 people helping them to avoid eviction and sustain their tenancies, through a mix of financial and benefit advice, and life skills development.

300 adults and children now live in their rental properties, providing secure, affordable accommodation for people who struggle to access social housing or the private rented sector.

Provided targeted support for those experiencing homelessness, including a Homeless Veterans service in Northumberland that has supported over 100 individuals with a multitude of previously unmet needs, including PTSD. In the past year our outreach team in Newcastle engaged with over 150 rough sleepers each quarter, and we are working in collaboration on the Street Zero strategy, an initiative which aims to eradicate homelessness in Newcastle by 2022.

Learning points: what works well and how to sustain it.

Size and scope - continue to view scale as an important means to meet increasing demand for services.

Continued to innovate – their Theory of Change model is based on achieving lasting change via their support services. They are the lead organisation in the National Lottery Community funded Fulfilling Lives project in Newcastle and Gateshead and are a key member of Northern Inclusion Consortium.

Continued to connect – aim to make sure hidden needs are addressed and gaps in services are responded to. Their "Too Complex for Complex Needs" research demonstrates this powerfully - how mainstream services can so often focus on the more visible issues like drug and alcohol addiction, missing the critical impact of underlying trauma.

Continued to collaborate - through their Modern Day Slavery work, a close partnership with the May Day Trust, and securing funding from the Government Equalities Office to help women who experience domestic abuse and other needs get back to work. They are always seeking opportunities.

Registered provider landlord status - Being a registered provider has many benefits, including reassuring investors and a wide range of other stakeholders in their activities as they are regulated and have a meet high standards on financial viability and governance. They can also apply for Investment partner status to receive grants under the Homes England programmes to build more affordable homes, more supported housing schemes and refurbish empty building for housing use.

Youth homelessness Supported scheme experience - they recognise the importance of tailored support and are experienced in working with Durham County Council and Children's Services Durham to provide a seven bedroom supported residency. It is available for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness, young people are encouraged to develop in other areas of their lives with guidance on how to secure training, employment and education. In addition, many care leavers are often placed outside of the area they're used to and struggle to cope without a support network. Together with Durham County Council, they have developed a service for those who were not in employment, education or training by providing housing and strength based coaching in the community.

Grass roots strategic partnerships focus - Changing Lives is committed to supporting grass roots organisations and maintaining vital services. They value the richness and diversity of the voluntary sector. They can offer back office support, advice and guidance, support through supply chains and, where appropriate, through merger. They have successfully merged with a number of charities over the years.

Learning points: Challenges and avoiding duplication

CL want to provide an increasingly effective platform for the voices of those who often go unheard and increase their voice – will rise to this challenge by focusing on impact and implementing effective processes to demonstrate the effects of their interventions for people, services and the organisational as a whole. This will include providing outcomes which are meaningful, consistent, and most importantly deliver lasting change**.** They aim to be in the best position to amplify the experiences and insights of the people they work with and for. This will include contributing to a wide range of debates at national, regional and local levels

Embracing complexity – the systems their staff and clients work and live in are intricate and complicated. They take a 'whole system' approach, which take a holistic view of people's experiences so that the interconnections and interdependencies between issues can be understood.

Build up their strong learning culture - this creates trusted relationships with the people who use our services, stakeholders and staff.

Name of Service provider: Holy Eagle Property Management Ltd

Service Overview: Holy Eagle Property Management and Serviced Accommodation is a Private limited company. It is a provider of Self-catering Accommodation in Northumberland. They cater to people coming to work in the area as well as manage for other property owners providing a similar service. Buy to let, and HMO-shared accommodation and have been used to house homeless single people by Northumberland County Council (according to a FoI response in 2019). Based in Lyne mouth they have properties in Lynemouth, Alnwick, Blyth, Morpeth, and Ashington. There are property type details on their website. As this is a small private letting company they will contribute to accommodation provision of young people in Northumberland on an infrequent basis and do not offer a young person's support service or equivalent and no further profile information is available.

9.CONCLUSIONS

Young people in Alnwick have housing needs but the actual scale of youth homelessness is difficult to quantify beyond the official figures of those approaching or presenting to Northumberland County Council as many contributors to this report stated Hidden Homelessness particularly “sofa-surfing” is more prevalent and less visible in the area. In line with national trends, the principal cause of youth homelessness is the majority of people becoming homeless because parents, other family members, or care-givers are unable or unwilling to provide accommodation and that homelessness often results from a cumulative impact of a number of factors.

The lack of availability of suitable housing is a continuing challenge and the lack of a range of housing options in the local area of Alnwick is an ongoing concern. Despite the various services in place to assist, young people experience difficulties when trying to understand and navigate the systems, receive appropriately effective advice, start out on a pathway of support, and in accessing housing. The current young persons supported accommodation providers commissioned by the Council are in locations a considerable distance away which can force young people into moving away from their local community. The outcomes of the new “Mixed-model Framework” of young person’s housing support being procured by Northumberland County Council in early 2021 need to be understood once implemented and will provide the formal basis for young person’s requiring support in the County until 2023.

The loss of walk-in advice services at Greenwell Lane due to the Covid-19 pandemic has a major, ongoing impact on the how young people can access housing advice and assistance from the Council. Improvements to the amount and range of information available to young people on their housing options planned as part of NCC Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy has yet to be progressed. Many contributors recognised the importance that services for young people should be distinct, with a ‘youth work’ approach often seen as best placed for the kind of advice, information, and support provided to young people. In particular, it was felt that the “fear of authority” expressed by many young people towards Local Authorities meant they were often not seen to be in the best position to provide the specific support required by young people when they present as homeless. In particular, the skills required to speak to young people and creating an environment in which young people are able to disclose and build trust was often thought to be better suited to youth-specific services than to the Council.

Prevention of homelessness and housing crisis situations including through effective independent living advice and support from a dedicated professional worker can be an early intervention approach that starts to address problems before a young person reaches that crisis point – this is particularly important in helping the Council meet its duties to prevent and reduce homelessness and act against any further difficulties, hardships or adversities being experienced by the young person. The improvements in signposting towards information, advice and guidance which appear necessary in Alnwick can provide support and ensure assistance with many related issues such as mental health, substance abuse or family breakdown. Signposting can work well where readily available and provided in a timely manner but information and advice in Alnwick is lacking with little available. Effective advice and support from a dedicated professional independent living worker can also be flexible and personalised**.** A key success factor reported by other agencies in the study was in supporting people in homelessness situations by providing services that are flexible and highly personalised. This enabled services to provide a safe place for service users to stabilise and to take steps into independent living and education, training or employment. For many providers participating in this research, personalisation was about recognising individual difference and tailoring support to enable each individual to take the next step. Also critical to the success of interventions is the quality and skills of support staff and the relationships between staff and service users. Engagement of service users is vital, and having highly skilled, dedicated staff who can build positive and trusting relationship with service users is key.

Although operating within a challenging environment of overall funding cuts, fiscal changes and high levels of demand, this report found that Northumberland County Council and a number service providers do continue to offer a range of services and options to meet the diverse needs of young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness but more opportunities to work strategically and collaboratively to ensure the best possible outcomes for young people can be taken. For example, opportunities to engage on the use of funds such as NCCs Flexible Homeless Grant and membership of NCCs refreshed Homelessness Partnership.

Many services highlighted partnership and joint working with local stakeholders as critical in the success of interventions. Many services had built strong and high trust partnership relationships with a range of stakeholders including NCC Homelessness & Housing Options, Northumberland Adolescent Services, Adult and Children's Social Care, Housing Associations & Registered Providers, private landlords, health and mental health services, drug and alcohol services, and Northumbria Police. It was identified that these relationships take time to develop, meaning that services often become more successful over time.

Instability of funding was a common theme among the providers that were researched and profiled in this report, and many organisations anticipated this getting even more challenging. These concerns over sustainability of funding have led to some organisations deciding to grow and build their services outside of traditional funding streams including private investment and social enterprise funds. The majority of services secured funding from a large range of sources. The cost of services varies significantly and many respondents were unable to provide a figure of how much it cost to support an individual through their service. There was a sense among these organisations that in the face of cuts to traditional funding streams they had to think more creatively and seek solutions in partnership with others. These funding shifts can, where successful, free organisations from funding cycles and the changing priorities of funders. However, challenges remain - for example some successful models may be threatened if they rely on return on investment in property and so, in the long term, on a buoyant housing market.

In view of the challenges (even more challenging when young homeless people are increasingly likely to have complex and multiple needs compounded by a pandemic) and issues identified in the research the report concludes that Gallery Youth should focus on taking initial steps to building up its independent living support capacity as any additional, effective and efficient support that can be provided to young people in Alnwick is to be welcomed.

10.Appendices

Methodology

The report brings together findings from four primary strands of research:

- a review of literature, legislation and national guidance
- collation of relevant area statistical information and data via responses to FoIs by NCC
- a series of interviews/semi-structured Questionnaires with other Young person's support Agencies, local Trustees, Town Councillors, professionals and practitioners
- detailed participatory research with a group of 6 young people and individual participants

Summary of Questionnaires

Questionnaires were used to provide a semi-structured basis to all interviewed participants. These were tailored depending on the role of the interviewee, their organisation and/or who they were representing. A summary of the types of key questions posed at the interviewees is provided below. Questions posed to the young people participants are not included below as they are provided in Section 7 of the report.

QUESTIONS:

How would you describe your understanding of young person's accommodation and support needs in the area you serve? Please explain, particularly those with low level support requirements

Please describe your understanding of the framework for the delivery of young person's housing support providers in the County and how you relate to the current providers

What do you see as the main barriers and opportunities for young people accessing housing with support in your area?

How should a young person's housing support service provided in Alnwick operate to be effective? Please explain what you think would work well for young people in the Alnwick area

Please explain your views on young people being able to access the appropriate advice, support and assistance to the services they need in Alnwick and explain where you feel the gaps are/where and what services are more difficult to access

Describe your understanding of Northumberland County Council's (NCC) Homelessness & Housing options teams' responsibilities and duties to young persons and their housing issues?

How would you characterise and describe your relationships to NCCs teams – both Homelessness and Housing options and Children's Services teams and explain what works well and not so well in your view at NCC?

How, in your view, would young people benefit from (and in what ways) the appropriate level of support from a dedicated service provided in Alnwick?

What do you see as the role of NCC, Alnwick Town Council & Partnership in enabling, facilitating, and supporting such initiatives to enhance young person's housing support services in Alnwick and surrounding areas?

Please comment on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has had and is having on young persons and the services they require

In view of the ongoing restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic please describe the current ways in which the homelessness and housing options service operates to carry out homelessness assessments of young people with housing needs

The Housing Strategy and Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy for Northumberland defines how the Council, working with partners, will deliver its statutory duty and requirements including the provision of housing support to those who need it. How do you think the housing support needs of young people in Alnwick are met effectively?

Supported accommodation services have been commissioned by NCC to address the needs of chaotic single homeless people and for young people with low support needs. How effective and efficient do you feel the commissioned services meeting young person's housing support needs?

What do you see as the opportunities for young people to live independently with ongoing support in the Alnwick area?

Please describe any gaps you can see in the provision of young person's housing support services in the Alnwick area and how easy/complicated is it for young people to navigate housing and adolescent services in the County?

Please describe any barriers you see to young people gaining individual tenancies in the Alnwick area?

Please describe the primary issues arising with young people being housed without appropriate, dedicated support this could include rent arrears, ASB, or failed tenancies.

In your view, how important are appropriate, dedicated housing support services in sustaining young person's tenancies and overcoming these issues and barriers?

Please describe how your young person's housing support service model works. What are the key features and elements of your approach?

How is your support service funded and financed?

What are the primary funding challenges and issues you organisation is facing in continuing to provide your support service to young people?

What are the key benefits, opportunities, and outcomes for young people of your housing support service?

How is your support service model changing or due to change in the future? Please outline the main reasons for these changes and the probable impact on young person's accessing your service

From a Policing perspective how, in your view, would young people benefit from (and in what ways) the appropriate level of support from a dedicated service provided in Alnwick?

Please describe your views on how crime and anti-social behaviour issues could be reduced by the introduction of a dedicated housing support service in the Alnwick area?

What do you see as the role of Northumbria Police and Community Support services in supporting initiatives to enhance young person's housing support services in Alnwick and surrounding areas?

What do you see as the role of CAN and community development organisations in enabling, facilitating, and supporting such initiatives to enhance young person's housing support services in Alnwick and surrounding areas?