

Housing Health and Wellbeing

Areas of responsibility within the Housing, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio

Housing and Council Tax benefits
(Transition to Universal Credit)

Liaison with Public Health and
Nottingham North & East Clinical
Commissioning Group (CCG)

Homelessness
and Housing
Needs

The
Bonnington
Theatre and
Cinema

Health
Promotion and
Development

Leisure Centres
and Sports
Development

L1046 Households who considered themselves homeless, who approached the Council and when housing advice resolved their situation.



Question could you elaborate on the prevention methods?

The Housing Needs Team seeks to engage with people and intervene at an early stage. This means taking action when for example a tenant faces a 2 month termination notice or when a young person faces being thrown out by parents. This includes negotiation to prevent homelessness or seeking to expand the timescale to save a tenancy, or failing that give the Housing Needs Team more time to find a suitable alternative.

The Housing Needs Team also has an Homeless Prevention Fund which has historically been used to clear arrears or arrange for a clean up of a property if a tenant has had a problem with hoarding. It has also been used for deposits and bonds for new tenancies.

The team works closely with Housing Benefits and if a person is at risk of losing their home and is in receipt of Housing Benefit. Then the Benefits Team can often assist via the discretionary housing benefit scheme to help with either additional financial help towards the rent for a time limited period, or help with a bond, or rent in advance for a new tenancy.

The Housing Needs Team can access supported housing at Elizabeth House, domestic violence refuges and shared accommodation. The team also work closely with applicants to ensure that they are in receipt of the correct benefits and signposts to specialist services such as CAB if there are issues with debt. In addition to support services for applicants who are experiencing problems with addiction and or mental health.

The Housing Needs Service is promoted in Contacts Magazine and we are looking to run an advertising campaign on the side of refuse lorries, all with the objective of encouraging people to contact Housing Needs as soon as they start to experience problems with housing. As this gives the team the best chance of resolving housing situations at an early stage.

The Homeless Reduction Bill

The Homeless Reduction Bill will significantly extend the number of people to whom the Council has a duty to assist and also looks to extend the timescales both for when the Council should start to work with someone and for how long they should be provided with emergency accommodation. For example if someone is found intentionally homeless, it is up to the Councils discretion to provide emergency accommodation. The Bill proposes that in such circumstances emergency accommodation should be provided for 56 days, which will place huge strains on both our temporary accommodation and B&B budget, though B&B should be the last resort. The Government is intending to allocate a national budget for the Homeless Reduction Bills implementation of £40 million. Councils will have to apply and compete for the funding.

Question does the Authority make use of the Broxtowe Youth Homeless Model?

We used to make excellent use of the Broxtowe Youth Homelessness Project and they provided our schools engagement programme, however due to budget cuts the department had to stop using their service.

The schools engagement programme was delivered to all secondary schools in the Borough and was led by service users supported by staff from Broxtowe Youth Homelessness Project, they also produce a magazine. The cost was between £2-3k p.a.

We are currently in the process of bidding for the recently announced trailblazer funding and the scheme we are seeking funding for works in partnership with Broxtowe and Rushcliffe Borough Councils and Broxtowe Youth Homelessness Scheme. Funding permitting we should be able to benefit again from this comprehensive peer led initiative.

L1051 Average time to process homeless applications (number of working days)



Question what were the findings of the review?

There has not been a review, but an overview of the service is provided below. Regrettably the target has not been achieved since Q3 2014/15. Ironically the annual target had been lowered from 25 days to 19 days for the year 2015/16, based on previous years' experience. (The industry standard is 33 days, so the team's performance as listed below is still good). However the target has not been achieved due to the enhanced pressures which the team are facing in terms of initially preventing homelessness or sourcing alternative accommodation.

The team has seen an increase in both the number of people approaching the service for assistance, and an increase in the level of complex needs which the team are working with. To support the team SLT has recently given approval for a full time Housing Needs Officer for 1 year to provide additional support for the team. However this is set against the backdrop of a national housing crisis, issues around affordability in the borough for the first time, and the loss of invaluable support services to enable vulnerable clients to maintain their tenancies.

Housing Needs Performance

Year	Performance	Industry standard / good practice	Target
2014/15			
Q1	17	33 days	25 days
Q2	19	33 days	25 days
Q3	15	33 days	25 days
Q4	35.7	33 days	25 days
2015/16			
Q1	35	33 days	19 days
Q2	25	33 days	19 days
Q3	22.7	33 days	19 days
Q4	23.1	33 days	19 days
2016/17			
Q1	23	33 days	19 days
Q2	22.9	33 days	19 days

Question what are the new homelessness procedures?

Summarised procedure to process a new homeless application

- (a) Obtain customers details, e.g. name, D.O.B, address and length of residency, family composition and use this to fill in an initial assessment form. This can either be done in person or over the phone.
- (b) Work through the key criteria in the Housing Act 1996 as set out below:
 1. Are they eligible for assistance
 2. Are they homeless within the next 28 days
 3. Is there a priority need
 4. Consider the issue of intentionality
 5. Do they have a local connection
 6. Assess if temporary accommodation is required, and if so, source the appropriate type, e.g. Council accommodation, refuge or hostel, lastly B&B.
 7. Do they have a current Homeseach Application
 8. Does the applicant / their family, have any support needs, and if so who is providing that support - contact these agencies and ensure that the support continues
 9. Advise the customers of all the supporting evidence required
 10. Advise the customer of the next steps and likely timescales for a decision
 11. Discuss all alternative options with the applicant, i.e. private rented
 12. Complete the declaration and authority to access information

L1086

**Average length of time spent in
temporary accommodation (in weeks)**



Question could you provide more clarity on why and how the issues impeded the performance?

Last quarter saw a drop to 6 weeks, this was due to the fact that we had placed several cases in B&B, which is something which we always try to avoid. The overall direction of travel for the average length of stay in temporary accommodation is increasing and this is due directly with the wider issues which the team is facing when trying to secure accommodation for people including the following:-

National Housing Crisis

Welfare Reform & Universal Credit

Private rents now exceed local housing allowance

Private landlords and RSL's becoming far more selective about the type of tenants they will consider, i.e. need a guarantor, good credit rating and good references.

For those cases with rent arrears, many landlords either will not consider the applicant, or will only do so after they have entered into a re-payment agreement and honoured it for 6 months.

Loss of affordable housing - Right to Buy, extension of the definition of affordable housing to include starter homes (20% discount open market sale)

Impact of 0 hours contracts

Tightening up of mortgage lenders criteria and robustness of tests applied before a mortgage will be offered

Loss of the Mortgage Rescue Scheme - funded by DCLG and delivered by us.

Loss of significant numbers of supported housing schemes

Limited access to floating support

Increase in the threshold of services provided by both adult and children's services

Homeless Reduction Bill

Question have you considered a contingency or continuity plan for the future to manage cases of possession?

It supported the request for an additional full time housing officer, who has been in place since 03.10.2016.

The further issue is the difficult one of providing support, as whilst the statutory function is to house those applicants to whom the Council accepts a full duty under the homeless persons legislation sits with the Council. The requirement on the Council is a bricks and mortar solution, and often the essential link to sustain the tenancy is support, which is not the Council's responsibility. However due to the constriction of both accommodation and floating support options in the Borough, many vulnerable people are not receiving the support they need, and this is falling to the Council to resolve.

Who can provide support and advice for those nearing repossession?

That's our statutory role. We have a protocol with the local registered providers who contact us when they are considering possession proceedings; in addition the courts notify us in cases of both landlord evictions and mortgage repossessions. We then contact the individual(s) concerned and initially try to prevent them losing their home, or failing that take a homeless application. In terms of others who could help there is Shelter, Nottingham Law Centre and Nottingham Housing Advice - (we used to make a contribution to the Nottingham Advice Service but again this has been cut.) In addition people can go to private solicitors.

Question what temporary accommodation is available in Gedling?

How many units do we have across Gedling?

We own

1a and 6a Beechwood Avenue

1a, 10a and 12a Wollaton Avenue

41a Oxclose Lane

NB all the above properties are 1st floor 2 bed flats

We gave 8a Wollaton Avenue back to Estates due to its poor condition, but we are visiting it with Estates to get an idea of costs and timescales.

In addition we lease from Derwent Living a registered social provider

2 & 5 Jacobs Court - 2 bed Ground Floor Flats

8 + 20 Brook Avenue - 3 bed house

Question Do we place people outside the Borough? Does Gedling use Bed and Breakfast accommodation?

Yes as a temporary measure we use accommodation provided by both Rushcliffe and Mansfield District Councils. When we use B&B's none of them are within the Borough, due to both cost and the willingness of the proprietor to work with us.

On a permanent basis we often secure private rented properties outside the borough due to issues relating to both cost and the availability of larger homes within the borough.

Does Gedling use Bed and Breakfast accommodation?

Yes, however we would prefer not to do this and do this as a last resort.

Question review and improve temporary housing - this action is due for completion on 31 November 2016. It was 23% completed by the end of Quarter 1. Could Cllr Wheeler explain how far this action has progressed?

We are currently in negotiations to lease some properties from Gedling Homes. How many and what type?

We have requested 2 and 3 bedroomed properties ideally ground floor flats or houses.

We will be visiting one mothballed owned property to assess how much work is needed to bring it to a lettable standard - 8a Wollaton Avenue.

We will be expanding the model used at Killisick court, which saw the site developed by a partner RSL, who then leased 4 units back to the Council for use as temporary housing.

NI 181 Time taken to process Housing
Benefit/Council Tax Benefit new claims
and change events (in calendar days)



Performance Data	30/09/2015	30/09/2016
Total Caseload	9086	8803
Days Claims processing Average	10	13
Change in Circs. Average	3	4
Percentage age of new claims received electronically	20	97

The Benefits Cap

The Summer Budget 2015 announced changes to the level of the benefit cap so that households will no longer be entitled to receive more than £20,000 in benefit nationally (£13,400 for single adults with no children). The benefit cap levels came in to force from the 7 November 2016. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) wrote to potentially affected claimants, between 19 and 30 September 2016, to inform them that they may be subject to the cap.

benefits that will be taken into account when calculating the cap are:

Bereavement Allowance (BA)
 Child Benefit (ChB)
 Child Tax Credit (CTC)
 Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) (contribution-based and income-related) except where the support component has been awarded
 Incapacity Benefit (IB)
 Income Support (IS)
 Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) (contribution-based and income-based)
 Maternity Allowance (MA)
 Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA)
 Widow's Pension, Widowed Mother's Allowance, and Widowed Parent's Allowance.
 Housing Benefit (HB)

The cap will not apply where a member of the household qualifies for one of the following:

Working Tax Credit (WTC) (a claim for WTC must be made)
 Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
 Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
 Attendance Allowance (AA)
 Industrial Injuries Benefits (IIB)
 ESA, if paid with the support component
 Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Payments (AFCS)
 Armed Forces Independence Payment (AFIP)
 War Pensions Scheme Payments (WPS) (including War Widow's/Widower's pension and War Disablement Pension)
 Carer's Allowance (CA) (including the equivalent claimants in Universal Credit)
 Guardian's Allowance (GA).

The Benefits Cap affected cases

We are in the process of amending the effected claims in line with the current guidance in advance of the go live which was the 7th November. We are aware that 15 currently capped cases will be capped further based upon the new income levels.

The latest data scan, received has indicated that we will have around 104 capped cases in total.

104 claims have children living in the household. The breakdown of children numbers per case is as follows:-

Number of children per case	Number of Cases
2 children	6 cases
3 children	55 cases
4 children	31 cases
5 children	12 cases
Total	104 cases