



Tameside MBC

# Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2013-18



# Foreword

## The prevention of homeless in Tameside continues to be a key priority for the Council and its partners.

Households experiencing homelessness or who are threatened with homelessness are trapped in cycles of deprivation that impact on their health, emotional wellbeing and life chances. The effects on children within households experiencing or threatening homelessness can be life long.

In these times of austerity and the decreasing availability of resources to carry on funding services in the way we used to, it is of paramount importance that we identify new ways of delivering services to our communities. The commitment to follow this path has already been outlined in Tameside's Community Strategy with the emphasis on working across our traditional boundaries and looking towards increasing collaboration across public services, industry, commerce and the public and voluntary sectors.

Our Homelessness Prevention Strategy for 2013 to 2018 sets out how the Council alongside its partners intends to meet the challenge over the next five years of ensuring support is available to help people avoid being without a home. With demand upon our services likely to increase over the next few years the form this support takes will vary with an emphasis on identifying people at risk as early as possible. The only way we are going to succeed in this challenge is by widening and strengthening our existing partnerships and by

helping everybody involved to recognise and then act upon the early signs that somebody might be at risk of homelessness.

Despite the difficult environment we are now working in we remain confident that our partnerships can respond to this challenge and make a difference to the people of Tameside. We hope that you find this document informative and would welcome any comments from our stakeholders about improvements we could make.



**Councillor Lynn Travis**  
Executive Member Health and Neighbourhoods



# Contents

<b>01</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>P04</b>	Accommodation and Access.....	P15	
<b>02</b>	<b>DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY</b> .....	<b>P05</b>	- Tameside Allocation Scheme.....	P15	
	Context of the Review .....	P05	- The Role of the Private Rented Sector .....	P16	
<b>03</b>	<b>BACKGROUND</b> .....	<b>P07</b>	- Tackling Empty Homes .....	P16	
	Our Achievements .....	P07	Positive Move-on and Sustainability .....	P17	
	- Developing the Housing Advice Service .....	P07	- Great Lives programme .....	P17	
	- Reducing the use of temporary accommodation.....	P07	- Employment .....	P18	
	- Prevention of homelessness .....	P08	Improving Health and Wellbeing .....	P18	
	- Reducing homelessness amongst young people.....	P08	- Making Every Contact Count .....	P18	
	- Service User involvement .....	P08	- Hospital Discharge Protocol .....	P19	
	- Increasing access to a choice of settled homes.....	P08			
	Current Trends .....	P08	<b>05</b>	<b>SUPPORTING OUR MOST VULNERABLE GROUPS</b> .....	<b>P20</b>
	Policy Drivers .....	P09		Domestic Abuse .....	P20
	- The Community Strategy .....	P09		Young People .....	P21
	- Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2013-16 .....	P09		Rough Sleepers .....	P21
	- Troubled Families.....	P10	<b>06</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>P23</b>
	Key Legislative Changes .....	P10		Monitoring arrangements .....	P23
	- Localism Act 2011.....	P10		Risk management .....	P23
	- Welfare Reform Act 2012.....	P11	<b>07</b>	<b>KEY CONTACTS</b> .....	<b>P24</b>
	The Government's homelessness strategy .....	P11			
	- Developing a Shared Vision .....	P12			
	- Implementation .....	P12			
<b>04</b>	<b>KEY STRATEGIC THEMES</b> .....	<b>P13</b>			
	Early Intervention and prevention .....	P13			
	- Mitigating the impact of Welfare Reform .....	P14			
	- Housing Options .....	P14			
	- Strengthening Partnerships.....	P15			
	- Tameside Support for Independent Living Scheme .....	P15			





# 01

## Introduction

The prevention of homelessness will make significant contributions to some of the key aims outlined in Tameside's Community Strategy and to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. These include ensuring that all children and young people thrive and achieve, tackling poverty and deprivation by getting more local people into good jobs, reducing crime and the fear of crime, addressing the issues of substance misuse and anti-social behaviour and improving health and wellbeing.

Fundamental to the success of this strategy will be how well we can respond to the challenge of continuing to achieve positive outcomes for the Tameside community in the context of a greatly decreased level of financial resources. This challenge is outlined in the Tameside Community Strategy where the importance of radical public sector reform is emphasised with a need to find new ways of working across traditional boundaries.

We will ensure that the prevention of homelessness remains a core objective. We know at both a local level and from wider research that many households who become homeless will have had significant previous interventions from a wide variety of agencies looking to address their needs. Through new ways of working together and engaging with our customers we need to ensure that interventions when they occur help people

avoid experiencing homelessness and other forms of social exclusion.

In 2013 we agreed to merge two pre-existing forums, the Homelessness Forum and the Supported Housing Forum to form the Preventing Homelessness Forum. This brings together all the agencies working on homelessness prevention and the forum will be well placed to ensure that the issue remains a paramount consideration on all the other cross cutting agenda's that this strategy will need to influence. This Homelessness Prevention Strategy outlines the early intervention work that is already taking place, identifies the challenges ahead in intensifying our preventative approach and invites our wider partnership to respond to the opportunities presented to play their part in reducing homelessness in the borough.

In preparing this strategy the Council has, in accordance with s 7(A) of the Homelessness Act 2002, had regard to its current Housing Allocations Scheme under s 166A of the Housing Act 1996 and its Strategic Tenancy Policy under s 150 of the Localism Act 2011.

This strategy will be kept under review to ensure it is up to date with key changes in legislation, government guidance, corporate priorities and local and national trends and issues.





# 02

## Developing the strategy

In developing this strategy a comprehensive review of homelessness in Tameside has been undertaken. This included both primary research and in-depth desk top analysis of data from the Council and other agencies to identify key issues and trends.

### Context of the Review

The context of the Review was to address the need for a strategy for:

1. the prevention of homelessness in Tameside,
2. the securing of accommodation for those people in Tameside who are or may become homeless and
3. the provision of satisfactory services to those in Tameside who are actually or potentially homeless, including those who used to be homeless and now need support in order to prevent them becoming homeless (s 153 of the Localism Act 2011)

In doing so this involved the following processes:

- A consideration of statutory trends and national data
- Analysis of the Contract Monitoring Reports with New Charter Housing Trust
- Consideration of the outcome of the consultation undertaken
- The carrying out of an Equalities Impact Assessment
- Consideration of other Homelessness Strategies, including Nottingham City Council, Leicester City Council and Salford City Council

The Homelessness Review can be found at: <http://intranet2.tameside.gov.uk/misc/HomelessnessReview2013.pdf>

The findings of the review have therefore informed this strategy.

A key outcome of the review is for the Tameside Preventing Homeless Forum to become more focused on the implementation of and monitoring of the strategic priorities set out in this Strategy.

The key themes identified in this strategy have been developed through consultation with Tameside Preventing Homelessness Forum.

The terms of reference for this group confirm the ongoing role it will take in overseeing the implementation of the action plan that will be developed once this strategy has been approved.





The following agencies have been consulted in the development of this strategy:

- New Charter Housing Trust
- Creative Support
- Lifeline
- Ashton Pioneer Homes
- Tameside Housing Advice
- Foundation
- Mind
- Alcohol and Drug Services
- Peak Valley Housing Association
- Threshold Housing
- Greystones
- Disability Housing Support (Tameside MBC)
- Welfare Rights Team
- Pennine Care

Consultation with the public on some of the main themes of the strategy was carried out online through the Council's Big Conversation. The questions included in the survey were designed to receive responses regarding the type of partnerships that needed developing if we are to

be effective in preventing homelessness.

Respondents were asked which agencies in their opinion would have the biggest role in preventing homelessness. New Charter Housing Trust received the highest response (**66.7%**) followed by Social Services (**55.6%**) and GP'S and Primary health care providers (**44.4%**).

Specific questions were asked in relation to welfare reform and the use of the private rented sector and the responses to these have been outlined later in the strategy.





# 03

## Background

Tameside's previous Homelessness Strategy covered the time period 2008 - 2013. It was based around 6 key themes and identified early intervention and effective joint working as the 2 key principles behind our approach to prevent homelessness:

- Developing the Housing Advice Service (formerly the Housing Options Centre)
- Reducing the use of temporary accommodation
- Prevention of homelessness
- Reducing homelessness amongst young people
- Service user involvement
- Increasing access to a choice of settled homes

### Our Achievements

#### Developing the Housing Advice Service

The homelessness service in Tameside is currently provided on the Council's behalf by New Charter Housing Trust via a contract. The new contract will include a service plan outlining how the service delivered by Tameside Housing Advice will develop over the next 5 years. The plan will incorporate the priorities identified by this strategy.

The previous strategy identified the need to raise the profile of Tameside Housing Advice to ensure that the general public were aware of the key role it needed to play in preventing homelessness. The service now has a well established website advertising the range of services it can provide for people in housing need. A proactive approach to partnership working has also seen joint protocols implemented with Children's Services and with Mental Health services to ensure these clients have their needs met in a co-ordinated way.

Customers can now via the website complete their own online self-assessment which will provide them with a range of housing options available to them based upon their needs and circumstances. Improvements in the customer experience have also been introduced through the introduction of a triage system allowing for the quicker identification of people's housing needs and a determination of their housing options at the first point of contact.

#### Reducing the use of temporary accommodation

Working in partnership with New Charter we have remodelled our main temporary homelessness provision for those homeless people to whom we owe a statutory housing duty. The service is now more focussed on the resettlement process and achieving positive outcomes for people within an agreed time frame. This has enabled us to support more households to move from homelessness into independent housing. In 2012/13 the service supported 214 households to move on into independence compared to 115 households in 2011/2. This improvement has reduced both the number of placements and the length of stay in unsuitable bed and breakfast accommodation. It has also enabled us to maintain the government target of not placing families with children in bed and breakfasts for more than 6 weeks.



## Prevention of homelessness

The 2008-13 strategy set a target for all services working with households at risk of homelessness to increase cases of homeless prevention by at least 10% every financial year. This target has been surpassed every year of the strategy and since April 2010 there has been a 50% increase in verified homelessness preventions.

The effectiveness of a joint approach to prevention is illustrated by the success of a co-location of a Welfare Rights Advisor at Tameside Housing Advice. This ensures that any customer visiting Tameside Housing Advice can be referred for in-house specialist debt advice. This has been very successful with debt advice being one of the key tools responsible for the increase in our prevention statistics.

## Reducing homelessness amongst young people

We agreed an effective joint protocol between Tameside Housing Advice and Children's Services that requires all 16/17 year olds approaching the Council in housing need to be assessed by the Children's Social Work team under the remit of the Children Act 1989. This approach has been extremely effective in identifying the most appropriate pathway for the young person to take to resolve their housing need. In many cases the option taken has been to help the young person to return home with support measures in place for the whole family. A positive consequence of this is that we have seen a radical reduction in the number of young people placed in bed and breakfast accommodation. There have been no young people placed in bed and breakfast accommodation since August 2012 and only 4 accommodated under a housing duty throughout 2012/13.

## Service User involvement

In the development of the previous strategy, service users when consulted identified the provision of a drop-in facility as being a priority for the tackling of homelessness. Despite the challenges involved in funding a new service in the current financial climate we have been successful in achieving this target. Working closely with our partners in neighbourhood regeneration we have commissioned a new outreach and day support service to support people identified at being at risk of sleeping rough.

## Increasing access to a choice of settled homes

The provision of non cash bonds as a means of helping people access the private rented sector has remained stable over the past 2 years. The Bond Scheme has been developed as a self help model with the expectation on customers to find their own properties and make their own introductions to landlords. Over the first 2 quarters of 2013/14 there have been 41 bonds issued representing a 44% increase from the same period last year.

A lot of progress has been made in establishing the Social Lettings Scheme as a means of increasing the supply of affordable housing in the borough. New Charter Housing Trust started developing this scheme in November 2012 and have been successful in recruiting 25 landlords to participate in the scheme up to November 2013.

We have remodelled the Floating Support Services in Tameside through a re-commissioning process resulting in one provider, Adullum, being appointed to deliver the service for all socially excluded households. Links have been established with the Probation service who have a dedicated resettlement worker based with Adullam's floating support service.

The Council have commissioned a specialist tenancy support and compliance service with New Charter Housing Trust, the ROOTS project, for high risk offenders who have in the past faced barriers to accessing housing through the normal pathways.

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## Current Trends

At both national and local levels the economic downturn combined with the increasing impact of welfare reform has resulted in a greater number of households at risk of becoming homeless.

We have assessed the local impact in Tameside by looking at both the numbers of homelessness applications made and the level of prevention activity.

Whilst there has been an overall 22% decrease in the number of homelessness applications made over the past 2 years this has been accompanied over the same period by a 75% increase in the number of households found alternative accommodation through prevention work. A total of 446 household have been found alternative





accommodation in 2012/13 through prevention work all of whom were identified as being at risk of becoming homeless.

The Council received homelessness applications from 433 households in 2012/13 of whom 107 were assessed as being homeless, unintentionally homeless and in priority need and given a full housing duty. This represents a 16% increase from the previous 12 months.

Over the past 2 years Tameside Housing Advice have monitored the number of people approaching the service who are already in crisis and expecting to be homeless that night. This figure has fluctuated over the period in both actual and percentage terms with the average for the whole period lying at 56%. The highest percentage was recorded in quarter 3 of 2011/12 where there was a reason to believe that 80% of all households attending triage at Tameside Housing Advice would be homeless that night.

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## Policy Drivers

The key strategic objectives for Tameside are outlined in the new Community Strategy 2012-22 and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013-6.

### The Community Strategy

The Community Strategy has been organised around key strategic themes, 4 of which have clear overlaps with the objectives outlined in the Homelessness Prevention Strategy:

#### Supportive Tameside

Through the provision of advice, supported housing and other specialist interventions the strategy outlines how we intend to support some of our most vulnerable households through this period of financial austerity and welfare reform.

#### Prosperous Tameside

The strategy has identified the vital importance of maintaining and building upon the aspirations of people who have experienced homelessness and housing need. People will be given support to access training and employment opportunities alongside other initiatives designed to develop self resilience and independence.

#### Safe Tameside

Assisting people to remain in their own homes or to find accommodation quickly after a period of being unsettled has clear benefits to achieving a reduction in offending.

#### Healthy Tameside

The links between homelessness and poor health have been well documented in national and regional studies into the issue. This strategy makes clear the importance of forming stronger partnerships with the health sector and identifying areas where there is a common interest in achieving shared outcomes.

### Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013-16

One of the key underpinning principles of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy is working together to reduce inequalities across the borough. Two of the identified actions supporting this principle and with clear overlap with this strategy are to reduce homelessness and to address lifestyle issues.

The links between homelessness and health inequality are now well established by research and include a range of both physical and mental health conditions including respiratory issues, poor dental health, skin diseases, depression, schizophrenia and substance dependency. Research collated by Homeless Link illustrated that:

- 80% of homeless people have more than one health condition
- 70% of homeless people have at least one mental health condition
- People who sleep rough are 200 times more likely to contract tuberculosis than the general population.
- A third of rough sleepers have attempted to commit suicide

Tameside's Health and Wellbeing Board has the following strategic priorities:

- Improve the health and wellbeing of local residents throughout life;
- Give targeted support to those with poor health to enable their health to improve faster;
- Focus on prevention and early intervention;
- Develop cost effective solutions and innovative services through improved efficiency;
- Emphasize local action and responsibility for everyone;
- Deliver more joined up services that meet local need; and
- Enable and ensure public involvement in improving health and wellbeing.





One of the key underpinning programmes of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy is Making Every Contact Count. This is a public health initiative that has been given the highest priority across all key agencies in Tameside with a key strategic objective of encouraging positive lifestyle choices across the whole population. Fully embracing the Making Every Contact Count initiative will be a major contributor towards both homelessness prevention and in enabling our current services assist some of our customers who have a history of not engaging with the health services that they need.

### **Troubled Families**

The Troubled Families initiative has identified 620 families in Tameside for whom a new integrated service delivery model needs to be developed over a three year period. In addition to the identified families it is anticipated that the learning and the development of new systematic ways of working will bring benefits to a wider section of our communities.

Whilst the Troubled Families model and similar initiatives will provide intervention in cases where a need can be clearly identified, we need to be aware that homelessness can impact upon anyone in our community. The radical changes that the government have introduced to the welfare system and the impact of the economic recession in Tameside may result in many people facing significant financial difficulties and potential homelessness for the first time in their lives. We need to ensure that all our partners across the public and voluntary sector are fully aware of this increased risk and know what role they can play in preventing homelessness.

## **Key Legislative Changes**

The Localism Act 2011 and the Welfare Reform Act 2012 will impact on homelessness and the way we deliver services.

### **Localism Act 2011**

The Localism Act has given Councils greater flexibility and choice over how it deals with homelessness and housing need. A major change is a new power to discharge a housing duty by offering households a suitable property in the private rented sector. Prior to this legislative change, homeless households who were owed a housing duty were entitled to an offer of a secure tenancy with a social housing provider.

Given the shortage of social housing in relation to rising demand, making use of the private rented sector offers the potential to increase the stock of properties available for homeless households and enable the Council to meet its duties more efficiently. To comply with the legislation the Council will need to have appropriate protocols and procedures in place to ensure that any property being offered is suitable and meets the relevant housing standards and that the tenancy is for a minimum 12 month period.

The Localism Act also gives local authorities the flexibility to set their own local qualifying criteria for their Allocation Scheme where it can nominate people for social housing. The Council have recently agreed a new allocation scheme that will only allow people who have a proven housing need to join the housing register.



## Welfare Reform Act 2012

With the changes introduced by the Welfare Reform Act 2012 combined with the earlier changes to housing benefit and council tax benefit there are already indications that many households are at an increased risk of homelessness due to the financial pressure they are under. The Council have estimated that the combined impact of all the welfare reforms will amount to a loss to Tameside's local economy of £68.2 million a year by 2014/15.

With the gradual introduction of Universal Credit over the next three years households dependent on welfare benefits will have more change to cope with, and services will need to be as proactive as possible to ensure they make a transition as smoothly as possible. Some of the key changes in welfare benefits that are causing the most concern include the following:

- Since January 2012 All single people aged under 35 year olds who wish to live in a private sector tenancy now only qualify for the shared room rate (£57 per week) under changes to Housing Benefits rules; this formerly applied to under 25 year olds.
- Since April 2013 Households under occupying accommodation in social housing by one bedroom will have their housing benefit reduced by 14% and for two bedrooms 25% reduction off the eligible rent due to changes to Housing Benefit rules regarding the spare room subsidy ("bedroom tax"). Figures from May 2013 indicated that 2,571 households were affected by the "bedroom Tax".
- In April 2013 Council Tax benefit was abolished and replaced by local Council Tax Support Schemes. In Tameside this scheme means that all households (except for pensioners) must pay at least 20% of their Council Tax bill
- Since March 2011 people claiming former sickness benefits (e.g. Incapacity Benefit) are gradually being transferred over to Employment Support Allowance (ESA) or to Jobseekers Allowance if they are reassessed as being fit for work. The latest national figures released by the DWP in April 2013 indicate that 27% of Incapacity Benefits claimants failed to qualify for Employment Support Allowance when they were reassessed although the latest DWP figures indicated that 31% of cases in the North West are successful upon appeal.

## The Government's homelessness strategy

The Department for Communities and Local Government published the paper "Making every contact count: A joint approach to preventing homelessness" in August 2012. In this they posed the following 10 challenges to the sector:

1. Adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services.
2. Actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs.
3. Offer a Housing Options prevention service, including written advice to all clients.
4. Adopt a No Second Night Out model or an effective local alternative.
5. Have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support.
6. Develop a suitable private rented offer for all client groups including advice and support to both clients and landlords
7. Actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme.
8. Have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging need.
9. Not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation
10. Not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and then for no longer than 6 weeks.



# DEBT

## Developing a Shared Vision

The strategic priorities outlined in this strategy align with these 10 challenges. The strategy sets out how we intend to meet these challenges and the steps we need to take to achieve the positive outcomes required, the detail of which it is intended will be addressed and implemented through the Preventing Homelessness Forum

The key to the success of this strategy is the development of a shared vision across all the public, private and voluntary sectors that the prevention of homelessness is everyone's priority and that anyone can make a contribution. The challenges that lie ahead posed by high levels of deprivation, a difficult housing market and reductions in government spending are of an intensity not previously experienced. Robust evidence now exists from studies<sup>1</sup> at a national level into how homelessness can incur extra costs across a wide selection of other areas including welfare, health, tackling crime and education. An example of this is a recent Department of Health study<sup>2</sup> into the health needs of people who were either rough sleeping or in temporary accommodation. This found that homeless people were over 3 times more likely to become an inpatient admission, far more likely to access their health care through the Accidents and Emergency department and have health costs that were 1.5 times the level of the general population.

In Tameside in 2013-14 the Council will be contributing a total of £3.3 million of revenue funding towards the prevention and tackling

of homelessness. This includes recently re-commissioned service for tackling domestic abuse. In this time of severe economic pressures we need to ensure that funding is being used as efficiently as possible and that positive outcomes are being achieved and can be supported by evidence.

We will illustrate to our partners in the health, crime prevention and housing provision the positive impact that the prevention of homelessness can have upon their own targets and look for further opportunities to work more effectively together in tackling issues that we share.

## Implementation

The Homelessness Prevention Strategy will be underpinned by an Annual Action Plan with clear, achievable and measurable targets. The Preventing Homelessness Forum will oversee the establishment and implementation of the plan. The membership of the forum will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that we have an active membership consisting of all the agencies and across all the sectors required to progress this strategy. Appendix 1 outlines the terms of reference for the Preventing Homelessness Forum. The Forum will renew the Action Plan annually. We will encourage all members to put forward their own initiatives based upon their own experience or good practice from other areas.

<sup>1</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government, August 2010, Evidence review of the cost of homelessness.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Health, March 2010, Healthcare for single homeless people.





# 04

## Key strategic themes

The Homelessness Prevention Strategy has identified the following 4 key strategic themes:

1. Early Intervention and Prevention
2. Accommodation and Access
3. Positive Move-On and Sustainability
4. Improving Health and Wellbeing

Against each of these themes we will be looking for opportunities to develop partnership approaches that maximise the effectiveness of our services and achieve shared outcomes. In addition to the key strategic themes the Homelessness Prevention Strategy then addresses the support needs of specific groups we have identified as being at greater risk of homelessness.

### Early Intervention and prevention

Our record of preventing homelessness over the past 5 years has been very positive with a 70% increase since 2008 in the number of households who have either been able to stay in their own home or have been provided with alternative accommodation. Much of this success has been built on robust partnerships that have enabled early intervention in cases where a risk of homelessness has been identified.

Over the past 5 years the two most successful methods of assisting households to stay in their own home have remained the Sanctuary Scheme measures for victims of domestic abuse and specialist debt advice. Recent changes to the configuration of services have seen the post at the Sanctuary Scheme seconded to the new Bridges project. This will deliver a comprehensive approach towards tackling domestic abuse and the Council remain committed to supporting the Family Support Charity in finding new sources of funding for this important work.

Other forms of prevention work that we have increasingly used include conciliation in cases where people are threatened with exclusion and providing assistance that will enable someone to remain in the private or social rented sector.

This strategy will continue to focus on the prevention of homelessness as a key strategic priority and will set new and achievable targets on the number of cases that do not require the customer visiting Tameside Housing Advice. This will be done by identifying those agencies already working with vulnerable households and working together to ensure that homelessness prevention work is included in the support provided.



## Mitigating the impact of Welfare Reform

The Council has given a clear message that tackling poverty and addressing the negative impact of welfare reform remains a key strategic priority. Our network of advice agencies in Tameside is strong and include the Council's Welfare Rights Team, Citizens Advice Bureau, MINT and Cashbox (Credit Union). Our Registered Providers also provide specialist advice to their tenants many of whom will be under increased financial pressure with the impact of Council Tax and the under occupation levy.

In our consultation when developing this strategy we asked respondents what approach we should make our priority in mitigating the impact of welfare reform. The 3 options given and the response each one received have been outlined in Table 1 below.

**Table 1**

To identify individual households likely to be affected by welfare reform as early as possible and provide information and assistance designed to minimise their risk of becoming homeless	83.3%
To ensure those households who have previous experience of debt and homelessness are contacted and assistance provided if future risks have been identified.	11.1%
To wait for households to identify themselves as being adversely impacted upon and then ensure they can find help as quickly as possible to resolve that crisis.	5.6%

Although we will need to ensure that our approach to welfare reform embraces aspects of all 3 approaches the 83% supported by the first option provide support for a strategy with a strong emphasis on prevention and early intervention.

It is vital that we continue to make our frontline services as high profile as possible and that people know how they can be accessed in times of need. The decision to bring the Citizen Advice Bureau in to operate from the hub in Ashton has brought benefits of greater joint working and increased the visibility of services who are directly tackling the impact of welfare reform.

Whilst there will always be a role for specialist advice in this area there is also a need to prepare our partners to play their part in this type of preventative work. Agencies with a greater understanding of how the benefit system works and the future impact of Universal Credit will be better prepared to recognise the signs when their customers are at risk of losing income. A simple intervention of supporting people to respond to a letter or to attend an appointment can make a significant difference in the avoidance of debt that in turn could have led to homelessness.

## Housing Options

In co-operation with neighbouring local authorities we shall be working towards achieving Gold Standard status for the services we offer in preventing and tackling homelessness. The Gold Standard challenge is a local authority, sector led peer review scheme developed by the National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS) designed to help the process of delivering more efficient and cost effective homelessness prevention services.

In delivering a housing options approach to customers who access services we want to ensure that the option of remaining in their current home is given as much priority whenever appropriate. Through benchmarking and identifying other models of good practice we will be looking to promote and revitalise other prevention initiatives that may have hitherto been underused in Tameside that could help people remain living where they are.

In line with the ethos of Tameside's Community Strategy our Housing Advice Service have already embarked upon promoting a self help model that encourages customers to look for their own solutions to resolve their housing needs. Such practice has already been adopted by the bond scheme and we will be looking to replicate a similar approach across a broader choice of property tenures.

The use of personalisation funding to help resolve a persons housing needs is an approach that we will wish to see promoted through this strategy. Great Lives, the Threshold service for people in supported housing provision, has a personalisation fund along with Adullam as part of the Reducing Re-offending Strategy. Through the Homelessness Prevention Forum we would like to share good practice on how these funds are being used and identify the means to develop them further.



Alongside the challenge of benchmarking our services we will strive to maintain a commitment to the right of customers to access the services they need and ensure that the recorded outcomes can be monitored for quality assurance purposes and are delivering value for money for the Council and their partners.

### **Strengthening Partnerships**

To maximise the effectiveness of homelessness prevention we will build upon our existing partnerships and identify opportunities to broaden the network of agencies who in turn identify this as their strategic priority. We will be ensuring that homelessness prevention work across the wider partnerships is captured in the data collected for the local authority statistical returns.

As it is intended that the Preventing Homelessness Forum will oversee the implementation of the action plan which will underpin this strategy it will have a crucial part to play in ensuring we engage with a wide range of stakeholders with a role to play in preventing homelessness. The Forum includes representation from Public Health and this will be a vital link in developing new partnerships and assisting the homelessness sector benefit make their own contribution to the “Making Every Contact Count” health agenda.

### **Tameside Support for Independent Living Scheme**

The development of the Tameside Support for Independent Living Scheme (TSIL) to replace the former DWP Social Fund has created opportunities to enhance prevention activity and enabled capacity building. TSIL works in partnership with the Cashbox Credit Union to make emergency payments for essential items to households in need. Recipients of support must become a member of Cashbox to receive their payment. The scheme links applicants in with Tameside Housing Advice, Adullam Homes, CAB, Welfare Rights and other support agencies to help prevent homelessness. It also supports the resettlement process from temporary and supported housing by enabling rapid access to basic furniture and household goods packages delivered direct to the applicant’s new home.

Since it began operating in April 2013 the TSIL has been well received with a high number of applications in comparison with neighbouring local authorities.

We will build upon the positive start made by TSIL in identifying and helping vulnerable households by looking for opportunities to enhance integrated working with partners. We will continue to promote Cashbox membership as a tool to help households towards achieving the financial self-sufficiency skills to cope with future crisis.

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### **Accommodation and Access**

While supporting people at risk of homelessness to remain in their existing home will be a key priority in this strategy we will support initiatives to ensure that a range of accommodation options are available for those who do have to move, including more flexible access to the private rented sector. Over the past 3 years, over 1000 households who have approached Tameside Housing Advice have been prevented from becoming homeless through being found alternative accommodation. This is a very positive achievement and is one we want to build and improve upon in this strategy.

### **Tameside Allocation Scheme**

The Council approved its new Allocation Scheme in September 2013 having made an important decision to restrict the scheme to households with an identified housing need. Whilst the pre-existing scheme has served customers well over the past 5 years analysis of the outcomes achieved suggested a need to develop stronger working partnership with our registered providers based upon an improved mutual understanding.

The introduction of the new scheme provides an opportunity to re-examine how properties are allocated and to work with our registered providers to ensure all households on the register are re-housed efficiently. We also want to ensure that people's housing and wider social needs are fully recognised and that as far as possible in the context of an increasing demand for a scarce resource the properties they are allocated provide them with a sustainable future. We will be commencing discussions with all our key registered providers with a view to developing a robust nominations agreement that ensures the Council is able to fulfil its responsibility to find accommodation for people in housing need.





## The Role of the Private Rented Sector

Many people in housing need in Tameside are already directed towards private sector housing as a viable way of resolving their situation. In some cases this is through the bond scheme where private landlords receive an incentive in the form of a bond guarantee to accept a referral from Tameside Housing Advice. In 2012-13 there were 59 households who were re-housed in this way and a further 31 who were prevented from becoming homeless by accessing a private rented property without the need of a landlord incentive. The latter figure has more than doubled from the previous 12 months and is an indication of the stronger working relationships Tameside Housing Advice is developing with private sector landlords.

With the introduction of the power to discharge a housing duty through a Private Rented Sector Offer (PRSO) there is an increased interest in the homelessness sector on making optimum use of this sector of the housing market. We propose to benchmark our use of the private rented sector against comparable authorities as a means of exploring new ideas in this field. Any proposals will take into account and compliment those outlined in the Council's Strategic Tenancy Policy.

The development of this strategy included the start of a consultation process as to how the Council should use its new power to discharge our housing duty via the private rented sector. This represents a potential increase of the options available in tackling homelessness and could form an important asset over the next 2-3 years should an expected increase in homelessness presentations materialise. Through the Big Conversation we have consulted on this specific issue and received 66.7% of responses in favour and 27.8%

disagreeing that the Council should be asking private landlords to provide more accommodation to those in housing need.

The responses we have received have led us to the conclusion a feasibility study is required to enable us to carry out a thorough cost-benefits analysis into this issue. We will develop an options appraisal paper to enable us to engage with all stakeholders with an interest in this issue. We will need to involve customers, private landlords and local members in this consultation and ensure that the resource implications behind the different options under consideration have been fully assessed. Do we actually want to state this here? An alternative is to do nothing. We will continue to support the work that New Charter Housing Trust have embarked upon in developing a Social Lettings Agency offering a housing management service for landlords with private properties. This has made a positive start and we aim to make this the beginning of an increasing number of partnerships we develop with the private and voluntary sectors.

## Tackling Empty Homes

Tameside is at the forefront of the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) campaign "Empty to Plenty" to bring empty homes back into use. The Council have received some of the Greater Manchester single homelessness prevention fund to pilot innovative ways of engaging with private landlords and several initiatives are being worked on to help bring properties into use across the region. Working with two locally based Registered Providers we are developing schemes to support property owners and increase the number of affordable homes in the borough.





The first initiative is in partnership with Ashton Pioneer Homes (APH) who operate a lease and repair scheme that offers owners an easy and accessible way to get guaranteed rental income from an empty property. Under this “Lease and Repair” initiative, APH act as the managing agents allowing them to invest finance into the property to bring it up to a standard whereby it can be let at an affordable rent.

The second scheme is with New Charter Housing Trust who under the “Purchase and Repair” scheme may be able to purchase empty properties from owners and carry out the necessary repairs to allow it to be brought back into use. Properties purchased under this initiative are then let at affordable rents.

To date these initiatives have succeeded in bringing 4 properties back into use with a further 13 where work is underway to achieve a similar outcome. There is a local target in Tameside to bring 50 properties back into use via these two initiatives.

Other initiatives are being piloted in other areas as part of the overall AGMA campaign. We will keep abreast of these developments over the next 2-3 years and identify any opportunities to more closely align these initiatives with the prevention of homelessness.

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## Positive Move-on and Sustainability

The Supporting People funded provision in Tameside remains an important tool in both tackling homelessness when it does occur and assisting in minimising future occurrences. In April 2013 three new services for people facing social exclusion were launched after a significant remodelling process was carried out over the previous 12 months.

The objective of the new model of service delivery is to improve the efficiency and the outcomes of supported housing services so that services are better targeted, access is quicker and simpler and an increased number of people are able to move through services more quickly towards independence. The new service model is for people who need support to develop their capacity to achieve or maintain independent living and who are able and willing to access support, are committed to recovery or working towards it. This aims to improve the sustainability of support.

In addition the service providers are committed increasing the number of people who move on from their services in a planned way.

To improve access to services we have established a whole system approach for people presenting at Tameside Housing Advice with the creation of a single point of access to supported housing. This integrates supported housing as part of a range of homelessness prevention tools and enables Tameside Housing Advice to provide a whole range of options to prevent and address homelessness.

The emphasis of this new model mirrors the overall strategic direction of the Council in ensuring resources are used as efficiently as possible and that we encourage our customers to move towards a more self-sufficient lifestyle where they are less reliant on services for their survival.

This aligns with and compliments the Council’s Strategic Tenancy Policy.

## Great Lives programme

This model includes the provision of the Great Lives programme designed to complement the work of the supported housing project in preparing people to take on their own tenancies. This service aims to support people to develop new skills for independence and self sufficiency through the provision of a range of core activities. This will include the following:

- Skillshare - an intensive capacity building course
- Keys to your Door pre-tenancy programme
- Tenancy awareness
- Parenting
- Sharing your home
- Employability
- Motivation to change
- Health/well-being
- Money management
- Confidence building and anger management
- Basic house maintenance
- Psychosocial and specialist interventions
- Self-help/interest groups

Since April 2013 there have been 83 people who have participated in the formal programme run at Great Lives.



## Employment

An emphasis on the role of employment in preventing future homelessness is a message that we would like all services who work with people in housing need to embrace. Improving people's employability skills is a core component of the Great Lives programme and Tameside Housing Advice have started to address the issue of employment when helping people to look at their housing options.

The Greater Manchester Housing Needs Group have approved in principle that the homelessness transition fund should support an initiative that promotes employment and economic activity across the sub-region. Initial discussions are taking place with Business in the Community to identify how extra funding could improve the Ready for Work programme in a way that ensures it has a positive impact in all the boroughs of Greater Manchester. We need to ensure that this initiative receives the support it needs in Tameside by helping it link up with the business and economic regeneration activity taking place in the borough.

The links between employment and tenancy sustainability that this strategy seeks to emphasise is exemplified by New Charter's Great Opportunities programme. This programme is designed to give people the skills and knowledge to get back into work and with the use of voluntary work placements and the support of Jobcentre Plus a total of thirty three 18-24 year olds moved into paid employment during 2012/13.

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## Improving Health and Wellbeing

There is a direct correlation between homelessness and a range of other health and social issues that serve to increase a person's vulnerability. Notable among the key issues that frequently combine with homelessness are substance misuse, offending behaviour, mental health issues, low educational attainment and domestic violence. That these issues will frequently combine within an individual or as part of a household increases the need to form a coherent strategic response.

The challenge underlying the aim of improving the health of people at risk of homelessness is that these issues can often be causative factors behind a person's homelessness that also become exacerbated should they fall into an unsettled way

of life. A study undertaken by the Royal College of Physicians found that two thirds of serious health problems suffered by homeless people pre-existed their homelessness but that the cost of treating them increased by a third due to their homelessness.<sup>3</sup>

We are developing this strategy at a time of significant reform within the National Health Service. The Health and Social Care Act 2012 places the responsibility for improving the health of the local population with local authorities. New Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG's) are responsible for commissioning NHS services. CCG's have been directed by the Government to work with local partners and listen to agencies who can offer advice based on a broad range of expertise.

## Making Every Contact Count

One of the key public health ambitions in Tameside is the Making Every Contact Count initiative. This initiative requires agencies across all sectors to:

- Take a long term view to encourage change at an organisational, community and individual level.
- Promote the adoption of healthy lifestyles to people in Tameside.
- Actively encourage involvement by all partner organisations working to improve health and well-being.
- Provide training and resources for key workers who are able to promote and support healthy lifestyles.

The new structures and ways of commissioning provide opportunities to maximise our partnerships and we will be looking to identify ways of working together and sharing our outcomes. The Making Every Contact agenda has indicated that sharing outcomes between sectors is an effective means of making best use of resources.

The Making Every Contact Count initiative in Tameside includes the provision of training workshops to enable front line staff to deliver brief health related interventions to their customers. We propose that all frontline staff that work with people at risk of homelessness should attend this training. This will provide them with the skills and a greater level of confidence to deliver advice and promote messages designed to move people towards a healthier lifestyle.





## Hospital Discharge Protocol

The local implementation of the Hospital Discharge (Homelessness Prevention) Protocol will be reviewed to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. The protocol aims to promote a joint understanding across all sectors of the importance of sharing information as early as possible in cases where there is a likelihood of a patient being discharged from hospital with nowhere to live. New Charter has been successful in a bid to the Transitional Homelessness Fund that has enabled them to create a post dedicated to improving outcomes for customers who are at risk of homelessness when being discharged from hospital. This has given us an opportunity to ensure that the principles outlined in the protocol become more fully embedded in our respective working practices.

Closely linked to the Hospital Discharge Protocol is the need to ensure that all services are working together as effectively as possible in resolving the problems many people with mental health issues have with their housing. Consultation on this strategy reveals some concern that people with mental health issues may not receive the support they need when they are not eligible for a full housing duty. We intend to carry out a fuller consultation into this issue with a view to identifying the barriers to suitable accommodation and developing some practical steps that can be taken to improve the outcomes for people with mental health issues.





# 05

## Supporting our most vulnerable groups

### Domestic Abuse

The violent breakdown of a relationship involving a partner is the single biggest cause of homelessness in Tameside. In 2012/13 this accounted for 28% of the total cases of homelessness accepted for a housing duty, a reduction from 36% the previous year. It should also be noted that the percentage figure in Tameside exceeds the comparable indicators for both the north- west region (20.5%) and nationally (12.1%).

These figures have to be seen in the context of the high rate of reported incidences of domestic abuse in Tameside relative to other areas of Greater Manchester. A report into domestic abuse carried out by the Commission for the New Economy in 2012 found that Tameside ranked fourth highest out of ten Greater Manchester local authority areas. The report also highlights a specific problem in Tameside of victims not supporting the case in criminal proceedings.

The report suggested that improvements in how domestic abuse is dealt with in Tameside should focus on the following 3 key theme areas:

- Unhealthy relationships and tolerance;
- Engaging health professionals; and
- Perpetrator programmes

The recommendations made by the report are now being followed by the Domestic Abuse Strategy Group. In 2013 the Council commissioned a new service, to deliver a holistic approach to achieving a reduction in cases of domestic abuse in Tameside over the next five years. New Charter Housing Trust won the tender to provide the new service, known as Bridges. Amongst the key performance indicators against which the service will be measured is the number of cases going through the criminal justice system with a target of a continual year on year increase after an initial increase. Other performance indicators relate to early intervention and prevention, the number of cases actively engaged in drug/alcohol treatment, cases involved with Victim Support. The new service has also accessed additional funding to enable it to deliver specific programmes aimed at perpetrators.



## Young People

One of the key causes of homelessness in 2012/13 is still parental evictions as it was at the time of the previous strategy. This indicator comprised 11.2% of the total figure and is comparable to the overall figure for the average figure across the North West.

Over the past 12 months we have not placed any 16 or 17 year old into Bed and Breakfast accommodation. This is in contrast to 2011/12 year when 27 such placements had to be made. This is the result of an effective joint protocol between Tameside Housing Advice and Children's Services that ensures all young people are now assessed under the Children Act 1989 and can be directed towards the pathway that best suits their needs. This has resulted in more families receiving specialist input that has enabled a greater number of young people to return to their family homes.

Young people however will remain a vulnerable group in terms of their likelihood of becoming homeless and recent changes to welfare benefits alongside the potential for further reforms in the form of removing the entitlement to Housing Benefit for under 25 year olds may see young people at increased risk. Through the implementation of this strategy we need to ensure that all stakeholders and the wider community are made aware of potential changes to the welfare system and to promote lifestyles and decision making that minimise the potential of future homelessness.

Through our partnerships we plan to identify those young people who are at the greatest risk of homeless and make effective interventions to prevent this from happening. Research into the background of those who present as homeless has found a strong linkage with previous dissatisfaction with education with a high level school exclusions and truancy being recorded. We will strengthen our partnership with schools with a view to conveying an effective homelessness prevention message to young people. Central to this work will be ensuring that young people are given accurate information regarding the housing options available to them and promoting the type of family intervention available to assist a process of gradual transition into independence.

Alongside initiatives designed to support families to stay together we recognise that in some cases leaving the family home will be their best option for some young people. In line with the wider strategic objectives of the Council we will promote an increased self-reliance and resilience amongst young people. The Great Live's programme aims to develop a peer mentoring approach to working with young people based on the understanding that people with similar life experiences can often be effective communicators.

In supporting young people to move on to independent living we will focus on promoting the range of lifeskills required to ensure that they don't become homeless in the future. Alongside the personal awareness, household and budgeting skills that can be developed through pre-tenancy courses we need to promote a range of other initiatives to develop young people's long term resilience. These will include:

Young people who do have to leave home will continue to need to have access to advice on education and training opportunities to ensure that they retain their personal aspirations for the future.

The role of employment as a tool in preventing homelessness will take on increasing significance when Universal Credit is fully introduced, and all agencies working with young people will need to ensure that this link is firmly established.

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## Rough Sleepers

We know from our partnership work with the police and other agencies that people sleep rough in Tameside. We also know that there are 4-6 people who sleep rough regularly who we have been unable to successfully resettle due to the complexity of their support needs.

Over the past three years in Tameside a wide range of partners who are involved in supporting or handling some of these vulnerable people have been meeting on a regular basis to share information on individual cases. This forum has a dual focus in that individuals can be referred in to be discussed either because they are rough sleeping or on the grounds they have committed acts of anti-social behaviour. The fact that these two issues frequently co-exist within an individual illustrates the usefulness of these meetings in sharing ideas and agreeing a common approach to complex problems.





The improved level of intelligence with regard to rough sleeping in Tameside and strong partnership approaches developed through the joint meetings made a substantial contribution towards the successful funding of the new IMPACT service. This is a service that will be delivered by Greystones and will be targeted at those individuals who are either sleeping rough or who have been identified as being at extreme risk of having to do so. The Impact Project commenced its outreach and day support service in March 2013 and we are expecting the accommodation units comprising 3 extra bed spaces to be available early in 2014.

We intend to continue the work of the Complex Needs Panel as a means to ensuring that all services are working proactively to resolve cases of rough sleeping and to help us identify as quickly as possible any people who may be new to this lifestyle.

The Impact Project is aiming to provide a holistic support service that addresses the complexities of peoples needs with the objective of getting them re-engaged with mainstream services. Together with Greystones we will be closely monitoring how the project operates over the first 12 months before setting targets to achieve outcomes across health indicators, engagement with education or training and moving into suitable accommodation.

We will be opening up discussions with our partners to explore the steps we need to take to fully adopt the No Second Night Out model so we can be assured that any people sleeping rough for the first time can be quickly moved off the streets.





# 06

## Conclusion

### Monitoring arrangements

The Preventing Homelessness Forum will be responsible for developing an Implementation Plan for this strategy following the key strategic themes that have been outlined. The Forum will be responsible for monitoring performance against the targets agreed and for ensuring that updates are fed into the strategic partnerships arrangements currently under review.

The Implementation Plan will be renewed every year to ensure that targets being pursued are relevant and consideration given to developments in relation to good practice in preventing homelessness and the challenges services are facing on the ground.

The Preventing Homelessness Forum is a multi-agency group and therefore will be able to continue their responsibilities to oversee the implementation of the strategy should there be any unforeseen departmental restructures either within Tameside MBC or in other parts of the wider partnership.

### Risk management

This strategy has been developed in a time of considerable uncertainty regarding changes in national policy, budget and commissioning decisions and service development and provision. Therefore, the annual review of the Implementation Plan will allow for any amendments to the strategy that the Preventing Homelessness Forum identifies as necessary over its five year course.





# 07

## Key contacts

### **Tameside Housing Advice**

Housing options and homelessness service  
0161 331 2700

### **New Charter Housing Trust**

Registered housing provider  
0161 331 2000

### **Creative Support**

Mental health support charity  
0161 236 0829

### **Lifeline**

Drug support agency  
0161 343 1820

### **Ashton Pioneer Homes**

Register housing provider  
0161 343 8128

### **Foundation**

Supported housing provider  
0161 330 3436

### **Threshold Housing**

Supported housing and Great Lives  
0161 626 0844

### **Adullam Homes**

Floating Support Service  
07824 526807

### **Mind**

Mental health support charity  
0161 330 9223

### **Alcohol and Drug Services**

0161 343 1133

### **Peak Valley Housing Association**

Registered housing provider  
0345 270 3501

### **Greystones**

Supported housing and the Impact Project (rough sleepers)  
0161 330 1557

### **Bridges**

Service supporting people who have experienced domestic abuse  
0161 331 2552

