

Support and Care Services: Pathways to Independence for young People Newcastle, UK

Analytical Case Study



Overview

Young Matthew wants to leave home. He doesn't want to stay with his parents any more: the usual conflicts, longing for independence, all that stuff. How to do it, without falling into a trap of indebtedness and disorder, ending up in the street?

The Pathways to Independence is a whole system approach aiming to help people reach their optimum level of independence, (within the "Integrated Chain Concept"). The process is based on support workers intervening at the earliest opportunity.

The aim behind this process was to make it easier for the supported housing sector to support their clients to achieve independence. In theory this is the essence of their business. However in practice this is not so easy or necessarily what the client wants. Independence with its attendant responsibility and costs is hard to envision and can be harder to achieve. People who have been homeless are, understandably perceived as being a higher risk by mainstream landlords.

The Pathways process is about helping people see their goal of independence and then support them to overcome the risks and obstacles to achieve their goal. It also creates an explicit link between the supported and general needs housing sectors. Which include commissioned services to

- Assess the clients' capacity to live independently
- Address any weaknesses e.g. budgeting
- Apply for housing
- Jointly plan transition to independence with the general needs housing provider
- Increased priority for people waiting longer than 2 months
- Maintain support once the person has moved to independence.

There are **two possible routes for a young person looking for accommodation**, Route A for those not in crisis, B for those in crisis.

Route A: the young person completes a YCH application which is sent to YHN Young People's Service to register within 5 days. YHN Young People's Service arranges verification checks to be carried out. All applications from 16 & 17 year olds are assessed by YHN Young People's Service and appointments are given within 7 days to establish if there is a need to access accommodation and check that any floating support needs can be met and a support package put in place.

For both Route A and Route B, where a home visit is to be made by YHN Young People's Service, it involves an assessment of the following:

- a) Whether mediation is an option, or if the person can return home without any further input.
- b) If not, the outcome wanted by the family and young person.
- c) How long the young person can remain at this address (family/friends/extended family)
- d) Whether young person needs to be referred to supported accommodation or supported tenancy, or could manage a tenancy unsupported.
- e) Assessment of support needs and referral are made to the most appropriate organisation or the provider.

Outcomes - The young person and family are provided with a written outcome and advised what they can do if they disagree with the decision. The range of outcomes is:

- a) No Further Action: when the reality of living independently is explained it often leads to the young person reconsidering. They may make a later application to YCH.
- b) Family mediation can be offered for up to four appointments, including with parents. If the situation is resolved, they will also be advised that they can contact YHN Young People's Service directly if their situation changes.
- c) Referred to supported accommodation. The young person and family receive a written explanation why this route is offered, what to expect from providers and what planned move on would be. The supported housing provider will complete a Support Plan with the young person within 28 days of moving in including all areas deemed essential and possible timescales for moving on.
- d) Floating support in a YHN or RSL tenancy with support until the young person can live unsupported making them aware that an accommodation offer depends on their engagement with the level of support agreed.

Support Plan: Young people who are adequately prepared for independence are more successful and

they are expected to engage in preparation for independence covering: budgeting, benefits and income, tenancy agreement and responsibilities, practical matters; furnishing a home, fuel connection, safety and security, accessing support and working with authority figures, health, being part of the community, education, training & employment etc..

Preventing Repeat Homelessness and Evictions Protocols

The **Pathways and Prevention from Eviction Protocols** were introduced as the cornerstones of the Council's Homelessness Strategy and Homelessness Prevention Network. There were **3 primary aims**:

1. To reduce evictions, particularly from supported housing for the homeless whose most common last address was a homeless hostel. Therefore the problem was not being solved.
2. To increase the number of people moving from supported housing to independence and then to sustain that independence. Our strap line is “ no one set up to fail, no one left to fail”.
3. To improve synergy between the supported and general needs housing sectors and develop a common approach to supporting people to independence.

It is the product of an agreement between Newcastle City Council's Adult and Culture and Children's Social Services and Your Homes Newcastle.¹ It sets out a series of good practice principles for staff in YHN which will help to identify when someone moving into one of their properties is vulnerable and what should be put in place with them and agencies working with them to help them sustain that tenancy. It also helps to identify what each type of agency is able to do when supporting a vulnerable tenant, and suggests ways of working together if problems arise.

Under 18s Pathway (2009)

The Pathway for Under 18s is aimed at helping young people aged 16 or 17 into settled housing (with support as necessary) without having to make a homeless application. This is an interim arrangement whilst the Council examines whether it should change its allocations policy for this age group. The Pathway will mean that under 18s' skills for independent living are assessed on a consistent basis across all agencies, and get help from agencies to sustain tenancies.

Basic description of the background and setting

Summary	The 'Pathways supports young people to move to and then to sustain independence. Where possible young people are reunited with their families.
Challenges that the practice addresses	<p>Many people who have got tenancies at 16 find themselves before long burdened with debt. This can mean that they are later denied access to housing because of the problems they had when they were not ready for the responsibilities of being a tenant.</p> <p>Evidence from homeless applications and consultation with young people involved in Youth Voice has shown that many long term problems can be created by giving a tenancy to a 16 -17 year old that is not ready for or adequately supported to live independently.</p> <p>Invariably, those young people who get a tenancy through homelessness are amongst those in the greatest need, but NC municipality focussed more on their accommodation and not enough on a package to meet accommodation and support needs. As a result, the City has been criticised for setting people up to fail.</p> <p>Furthermore, there are changes in the housing market. Newcastle no longer has a surplus of available housing. One consequence of this change is that the City has to make much better use of the available resources and prevent homelessness and repeat homelessness. She works in partnership to address the root causes of the vulnerability that lead to homelessness, rather than moving people around to satisfy their immediate needs.</p>

Your Homes Newcastle (YHN), the Council's Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO). <http://www.yhn.org.uk/home.aspx>
 An Arms Length Management Organization – usually referred to as an ALMO – is a devise through which the government is prepared to grant money to bring council housing stock up to the Decent Homes standard.

http://www.proz.com/kudoz/english_to_german/business_commerce_general/1237721-arms_length_management_organization.html

The Context	The Protocols are provided in the context of the Council's Homelessness and Sustainable Communities Strategies. The key factors are support by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) the Council's Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) that manages 30,000 of the 36,000 social rented homes in the city. o Supporting People – the Council's commissioning team that funds support housing o The 60 agencies that are partners in the City's Homelessness Prevention Network.
Aims and objectives	The process aims to best meet their housing and support needs, while developing the individual's abilities to achieve the best possible level of successful independent living. This process creates a positive route to sustainable independent living that makes the best use of all the housing-related support available and not just relying on Council housing and the homelessness route. Support is aimed at sustaining independence and addressing the vulnerability that leads to homelessness, not just advocating for the client's right to make a homeless application, but also meeting the person's long term support needs.
Social Innovation	Direct and pro-active contact to young people below 18 before they enter a vicious circle of debts, housing loss, homelessness, supported accommodation.
Case: Concise description and explanation of the practice	
Main components or parts of the practice	The Pathway is based on a joint approach between the Council, YCH, Your Homes Newcastle (YHN), the client and all support agencies in the City.
Timing - Start and duration	Start 2006. Ongoing
Process - Development over time	Developed 2006 ('to move into settled housing'). 2007: 16-17 years old eligible to join the Your Choice Homes (YCH) ² to access social housing in the city. Consequently, adaptation of the 'Pathway'. Ongoing action. Reviewed 2009. The key stages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development by a multi-agency steering group. - Sign off by the agencies involved. An extensive training programme was introduced. Over 1,000 staff have been trained through the introduction, refresh and induction training.
Overcoming challenges	Securing agreement and culture change from supported housing providers. Training staff to have the skills required. Creating a city wide system.
Trans-nationality	The process has been influenced by the EURO CITIES Working Group on Homelessness' Integrated Chain Model, see ³ .

² A 'Choice Based Lettings' (CBS) scheme, e.g. see: Housing Quality Network (2005); *A review of Your Choice Homes*.
<http://www.yhn.org.uk/pdf/ReviewYCHFullReport.pdf>

³ The EURO CITIES Working Group on Homelessness (WGH) was established in 2004. It is chaired by the city of Vienna and currently has 12 members: Barcelona, Bergen, Malmo, Newcastle, Munich, Oslo, Riga, Rotterdam, Stockholm, Utrecht, Vienna and Warsaw. The WGH meets regularly to analyse policy and practice in preventing homelessness. This includes analysis of the interventions and services aimed at supporting people who have previously been homeless but are now in accommodation.
http://www.eukn.org/E_library/Housing/Housing_Policy/Homelessness/City_strategies_against_homelessness. See also download publication 'The Integrated Chain Approach – City strategies against homelessness.

Key actors	
Main actors involved	<p>The Pathway is based on a joint approach between the Council, YCH, Your Homes Newcastle (YHN), the client and a support agency.</p> <p>Your Homes Newcastle is an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) set up on 1 April 2004 with responsibility for the management of 30,000 council homes in Newcastle.</p> <p>The mission is to be the best housing provider in the North East and to achieve this by investing in support and care to communities; three star excellent services; a quality workforce; and refurbishing and building homes.</p> <p>Involving people in managing their homes and estates is vital to delivering better housing services so all of Newcastle City Council's tenants and leaseholders can have a say in the way that we provide services. Working hard to make services more accessible for all of the customers, including customers who are disabled or who have a long term limiting illness.</p>
Coordination mechanisms	Coordination was facilitated through the Supporting People Commissioning Framework. It became a contractual requirement for agencies to follow the Protocols once the procedures were agreed.
Participation	Service users were involved through Youth Voice a service user led group that is made-up of young people who live independently (see http://www.yhn.org.uk/tenancy_services/young_peoples_service/youth_voice.aspx).
Supporting programmes and funding sources	
Total cost and Sources of funding	The development of the programme was financed through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. The funding covered a range of areas and lasted for 2 years. In total it was £200,000 (about € 239.000 ⁴).
EU financial contribution	None.
Annual budget in Euro	Young People's Services £1.5m (6%) (about € 1,8 ⁵).
Immediate and lasting results	
Overall impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • statutory homeless cases reduced - 956 cases in 2005-6 to 233 cases in 2009-10; • reduced YHN evictions from 197 cases in 2007 to 118 cases in 2009 (43 in last 6 months); • reduced evictions from supported housing, from 347 cases in 2004 (17%) to 127 cases in 2009-10; • move on from supported housing to an independent tenancy up from 146 in 2008/9 to 262 in 2009/10 • reduced use of statutory temporary accommodation –from 405 in 2008 to 380 in 2009.
Beneficiaries	Young people, communities and funders.
Concrete results	See overall impact above.
Impact on governance	The Protocols are now contractual requirements they have enabled the council to better identify and respond to housing need

⁴ Exchange rate 24 July 2010.

⁵ Exchange rate 24 July 2010.

Lessons to be learnt	
Success factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear aim of the problems to be solved. • All agencies involved in the development of the Protocols. • Support from YHN largest landlord. • Extensive training. • Changes in contract to ensure compliance. • On going quarterly monitoring and evaluation. • Change of housing allocation policy. • High level political support.
Barriers, bottlenecks and challenges	Scale of the project and extent of change. Involving non-core partners eg health.
Future issues	We are building on the programme by developing an extensive pre-tenancy training programme for residents
Transnationality	See 'Case: Concise description and explanation of the practice'.
Duration	Now mainstreamed practice.
Transferability	A Eurocities Peer Review of Newcastle City Council's Services to Homeless People has been carried out in September 2010, with positive results. A report will soon be available.
Expert opinion	<p>Prevention of housing loss and an integrated approach are seen as key elements in combating poverty and social exclusion. This recently also has been emphasised in EU papers on Housing Exclusion in Europe (see links at the end of this template). Support for those threatened by homelessness or already homeless is characterised by the challenge of the interface of at least four fields – securing existence, access to adequate jobs, supply of affordable housing, and the provision of psycho-social support.</p> <p>Priority should be given to contacting people as early as possible, before entering a legal procedure and a vicious circle. Assisting people once they have become homeless to quickly regain a regular independent living situation is important. The approach aims to be enabling, i.e. to give tools to individuals to overcome their difficulties to integrated in society, especially important at an early age. Thus, especially emphasising measures against Youth Homelessness 'pays' for municipalities. The figures of the Newcastle case show the success.</p> <p>The NC concept consistently covers a big part of the interface problems in systemic ways. In doing so, it goes far beyond the well established mainstreamed 'integrated chain approach' for homelessness programmes and implementation. Newcastle City Council is certainly among the pioneers of this practice.</p> <p>Recently, municipalities and organisations are discussing and testing a new approach – 'Housing First Plus'. The principle of HF P – almost immediate re-integration of homeless people into an individual living situation, with floating support, no obligation to follow 'pathways' via supported accommodation, homes etc. - is promising, albeit probably not applicable for all. However, especially for young people threatened by homelessness, this access can be adequate. The Newcastle 'Pathways' already provide the opportunity to implement the holistic approach of HF P, and proves the urgency of this innovation.</p>

	To learn more about combating homelessness strategies, see 'links'.
Stakeholder opinion	The project is cited as good practice by Homeless Link, the NGO that represents the Homelessness Sector, and was a key factor in Newcastle being Named the UK Government's Homelessness Champions in 2008.

Information sources	
Name of the initiative	Newcastle, Pathways to Independence Protocol (for the SUITE network)
Country/region/city etc.	England, Northeast, Newcastle upon Tyne
Administering organisation(s)	Newcastle City Council
Contact details of administering organisation(s)	Neil Munslow Housing Services Manager Housing Services Adult & Culture Services Directorate Room 126 Civic Centre Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8PR Tel. 0191 2116351 / 07855828048 Fax: 0191 2114810 E-mail: <mailto:neil.munslow@newcastle.gov.uk> Website: http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/core.nsf/a/nhf_home
Interviewed persons	Martyn Burn, Head of Support and Care, YHN Neil Munslow, City of Newcastle, Adult and Culture Services Heinz Schoibl, helix austria, homelessness research, Salzburg, Austria and FEANTSA (for homelessness policies)
Other documentation sources	See http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/wwwfileroot/nhf/Preventing_Evictions_Protocol_Final_April_2009.pdf http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/wwwfileroot/nhf/Pathways_to_independence_under_18s_April_09.doc http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/wwwfileroot/nhf/The_Pathway_process_for_people_aged_18_and_over_1.pdf
Website URL	http://www.newcastle.gov.uk http://urbact.eu/en/projects/quality-sustainable-living/suite/homepage
Main author of the case	Neil Munslow, City of Newcastle, Adult and Culture Services Cooperation: Heidrun Feigelfeld, Lead Expert, comment together with Darinka Czischke, Thematic Expert.
Links to relevant background sources	http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/chp/Projects/euexclusion.htm http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu/network-of-independent-experts/2009/homelessness-and-housing-exclusion

	http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/chp/publications/PDF/YouthHomelessUK.pdf www.feantsa.org http://www.housingeurope.eu/news/1306
Illustrations	Some pictures at hand.

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