



# Homeless Prevention Trailblazer

## Year 2 review

Briefing note #2 published May 2019

### What is the homeless prevention trailblazer project?

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's homeless prevention trailblazer project was funded by the government for two years to look at new and creative ways to reduce homelessness in our area. Happily, we secured further funds for Year 3 so the project can continue into 2019/20.

This note sets out the ways the trailblazer project is working at the end of its second including case studies to give some "real life" examples of the work; and testimonials from our partners. The Trailblazer team works with a wide range of partners and landlords to **make homelessness the unacceptable outcome**.

The partners funding the project into 2019/20 are

- Cambridge City Council

- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Police and Crime Commissioner
- Cambridgeshire County Council
- Fenland District Council (project leaders)
- Huntingdonshire District Council
- South Cambridgeshire District Council, and
- Peterborough City Council.

Find out how you can get involved on page 8.

*This year has been immensely productive and successful. This is all down to the commitment of many different partners - and of course the Trailblazer team. We look forward to continuing the work in future.*

*Helen Brown, Team Manager, Homeless Prevention Trailblazer Team*

### In the beginning...

In 2017 we secured £736,000 of funding from the government and recruited the Trailblazer team. You can find our note on Year 1 of the project here <https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/trailblazer-year1-review-1.pdf>. In 2018 we secured further enabling the project to continue for a further year. As well as advising people and partner agencies about individual cases, helping prevent homelessness, the Trailblazer project runs various projects to help increase understanding and seek new ways to solve problems and work together better. These included...

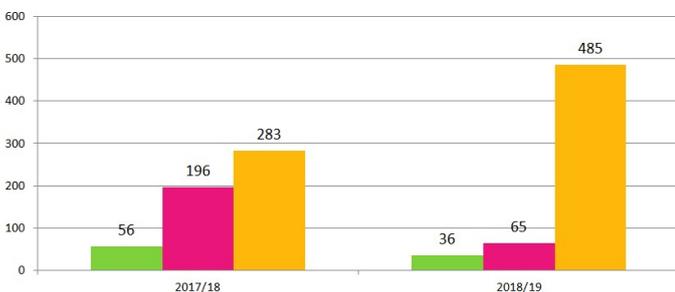
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## Memorandum

- At the start of the project public sector partners adopted our [memorandum of cooperation](#) to make homelessness the unacceptable outcome.
- This sets out how partners will prevent homelessness, because homelessness is unacceptable and affects all our local ambitions – for example our ambitions to create healthy and safe communities and to encourage economic growth.
- Then a new [statement of intent](#) has been created which voluntary sector partners can sign up to, based on the memorandum to show their commitment to making homelessness the unacceptable outcome.
- If you'd like to be part of the Trailblazer way of working, please contact [trailblazer@fenland.gov.uk](mailto:trailblazer@fenland.gov.uk) to find out more.
- The webpage where you can find both documents is [www.cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/trailblazer](http://www.cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/trailblazer)

## How many people have been helped?

- Overall the team has taken 1,138 referrals; 1,031 of these were completed by the end of March 2019. A further 84 are in progress and 23 not started yet.
- In total, 774 had more than 56 days warning of homelessness (these are the Trailblazer team's key target). This number increased from 283 in 2017/18 to 485 on 2018/19.
- 196 had less than 56 days' warning in 2017/18, This number fell to 65 by 2018/19.
- 56 were already homeless in 2017/18 and this number fell to 36 in 2018/19 (i.e. no time to prevent homelessness at point of referral).



### Notes:

The team lost one officer in November 2018 which led to a gap in service in the team for a couple of months. A new team member has now been recruited and is progressing those cases.

Also at 1 April the computer system used to monitor Trailblazer cases changed, so in fact each officer is dealing with around 30 to 40 cases currently and there are more "in progress" than the stats above imply.



## Testimonials

*Throughout this note, we have included quotes about the value the trailblazer project brings...*

This was my first time of working with Trailblazers and went into it blind. I was very impressed with how quickly you responded to my concerns regarding a service user facing eviction. The Personality Disorder Community Service had only become aware of the eviction notice a few days prior to contacting Trailblazers. With your letter of support to hand in to the Judge regarding the situation as well as you working towards the outstanding rent arrears with the Housing Association, the lady in question was able to virtually clear outstanding arrears apart from a small shortfall. Therefore the eviction notice was lifted and as far as I'm aware she is still in her home with her young 5 year old son.

The fact that all this happened over a period of two weeks or so is a testament of how you were able to respond at a moment's notice enabling a mother and young child to remain in their home. Had this not happened they would have been classed as homeless. I believe that Trailblazers were going to help the lady with other outstanding debts. I really believe that Trailblazers do a fantastic service in helping and supporting those people who are very vulnerable and face homelessness. I will definitely be using Trailblazers again when the need arises.

Thank you so much.

*From Vicky Harris, Support Time and Recovery Worker, Personality Disorder Community Service*

## Do you know someone at risk of homelessness?

- Rent arrears
- Benefit concerns
- Landlord and tenant relationship breakdown
- Debt problems
- Anti-Social Behaviour concerns
- Poor condition of property
- Threatened eviction notice
- Warning letters from landlord

**HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION TRAILBLAZER**  
Covering Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Please email [trailblazer@fenland.gov.uk](mailto:trailblazer@fenland.gov.uk)

## The Trailblazer Training initiative

“A new, motivational approach to facilitating change”.

- In 2018 the Trailblazer project embarked on a major new project to create a training development initiative which would have a positive and lasting impact on individuals, helping to tackle issues which could lead to homelessness.
- The Trailblazer project funded 12 public sector workers from a variety of organisations to be trained on delivering this new type of training to other workers.
- It’s free for officers to attend, with 14 sessions being run so far for 250 delegates - and more being planned. We aim to reach all practitioners across the area who may have conversations with clients at risk of homelessness.
- Motivational training is based on the idea that positive and early engagement with individuals helps raise awareness, and highlight personal responsibility for issues which might have led to homelessness. The approach helps these people access and accept support to resolve the issues.
- The plan is that all partners trained will use the motivational approach especially in sensitive or difficult conversations, to make every conversation as constructive and productive as possible. So not only is the current crisis tackled but the customer is better equipped to tackle such situations in future.
- The course enables professionals to gain a practical understanding of what motivational interviewing is - to know the fundamentals of a motivational skills approach - and to see how these can be used in ‘early help’ conversations and to transform difficult conversations. The approach helps understand and use the *cycle of behaviour change* to connect more meaningfully with clients who may be ambivalent or unaware of emerging problems - and to help inspire them to the possibilities of change.
- Find out more at <https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/housing/priority-themes/housing-need/homelessness-trailblazer/>

## Case study #1: legal action avoided

**Referred by** Homequest letting agency  
**Household type and any vulnerability**

- 1 adult and 1 child
- Self-employed
- Off sick with no sick pay
- Rent arrears and limited income to pay them off

**Tenure**

Private rented through letting agency

**Risk of homelessness**

Medium, as landlord had told letting agency he could not wait much longer

before serving a notice if arrears continued to build up.

**Actions taken**

- Support discretionary housing payment (DHP) application
- Mediation with benefits over housing benefit issues and appeal
- Support application for ESA & PIP
- Support Home-Link application
- Mediation with letting agency for more time while we try and help resolve issues.

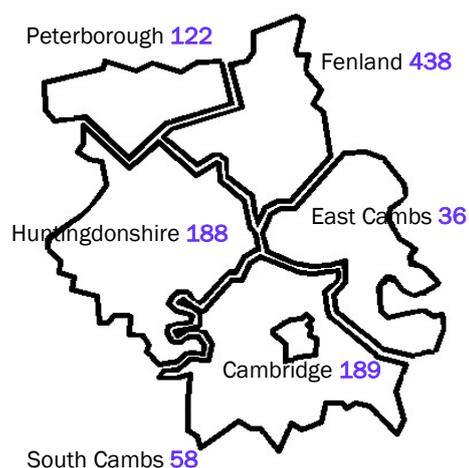
**Outcome**

Able to remain - DHP awarded clearing arrears, HB claim issue resolved – tenant won appeal and got backdated HB. Sadly, tenant was then diagnosed with terminal brain cancer and we directed her to apply for social housing through Home-Link and assisted her with PIP and ESA claim. Mediation with letting agency, guidance to tenant and letting agency who were kindly helping tenant with forms for DHP application, and HB applications and issues.

## Where do customers live?

The spread of 1,031 cases completed by the team was quite uneven over the six districts for a variety of reasons, but all benefitted.

The number of people referred to the trailblazer team are shown on the map...



## Outcomes

Homelessness prevented by household being able to remain	318
Homelessness prevented by securing alternative accommodation	92
Help, when too late to prevent	32
Referred to housing options team	216
Gave advice only	242
Uncontactable	131
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,031</b>

### Case study #2: support secured

#### Household type and any vulnerability

Family referred to trailblazer team with over £1,500 of rent arrears. The team worked closely with the family to build up trust to get further support from the early help team to get a family worker, as the family previously had bad experiences. Mum has health needs.

#### Tenure

Housing Association rented

#### Actions taken

Trailblazer officer, housing officer, Money Matters and the Housing Benefit teams worked together to offer support to the family, completing a discretionary housing payment form. Was established there was a housing benefit over-payment

#### Outcomes

DHP cleared rent arrears and the

£4,000 overpayment. The family are now on a payment plan, awaiting an outcome from a Disability Living Allowance application (supported by Money Matters) and are awaiting allocation for a family worker. Mum has been referred to an occupational therapist & is getting help with her health needs.

### Trailblazer partners

In 2019, trailblazer partners included...

- Cambridgeshire County Council teams including Adult and Autism Team, Adult Early Help, Children's Centres, Children's Services including early help and safeguarding teams, Chronically Excluded Adults, Drug & Alcohol Team, Mental Health Commissioning, Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, Family Workers, Physical Disabilities Team, and Together for Families.
- Addenbrooke's hospital, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust, GPs, and Public Health.
- A number of landlords and lettings agents.
- Women's Refuge and independent DV advisor.
- Local housing associations including Accent Nene, Axiom, bpha, Centre 33, CHS Group, Clarion, Cross Keys, Flagship, Hastoe, Home Group, Hundred, King Street, Luminus, Metropolitan, Muir, Papworth, Sanctuary.
- Homelessness projects such as Wintercomfort, Jimmy's Nightshelter and Railway House.
- Support and advice providers including Access Migrant Support, CABx, Centra Floating Support, Change-Grow-Live, Kings Hedges Family Support, New Horizons project, Ormiston Families, Prism, Richmond Fellowship, Young People Wisbech,
- Anglia Revenues Partnership, Department of Work & Pensions and Job Centre Plus.
- Criminal Justice partners including BENCH CRC, Integrated Offender Management, Operation Farmington, Police & Crime Commissioner, Peterborough Prison, Probation and St Giles Trust.
- Charities including Arthur Rank Hospice, Aspire, The Autism Society, Inclusion, John Huntingdon's Charity and the SPACE project.
- Local schools.
- Various teams within each district council including customer contact, housing options and private sector housing teams.
- The Housing Board for Cambridgeshire, Peterborough & West Suffolk.
- Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Public Service Board.

Abi listened to me effectively, understood things from my point of view, focused on what is important to me and accepted what I said without judging me. She showed warmth towards me and fostered a safe and trusting environment.

The service provided helped me with whatever originally led me to seek help, as well as finding solutions to my bad situation such as an application for DHP, informing me which benefits I may apply for etc.

I'm very satisfied with the service provided. Based on my experience, I would recommend Abi to others.

*Marta, Trailblazer Customer*



## Putting a foot in the revolving door... the criminal justice partnership

There has been a great deal of work over the past year to improve housing pathways for people with experience of the criminal justice system.

The local Police and Crime Plan contains an objective that all agencies coming into contact with offenders make sure they address the causes of criminality; and it identifies a priority to address the long-term causes of offending - including housing.

Housing has been a priority issue. Homeless offenders entering prison have a much higher reconviction rate within a year (79% vs. 47%). Key issues include

- A need to improve co-ordination between housing and criminal justice services.
- The fact current policies can limit access to housing – which impacts on offending; and
- Demand for appropriate housing outstrips supply.

*Homeless offenders entering prison have a much higher reconviction rate within a year at 79% compared to 47%.*

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 provided an opportunity to improve co-ordination and the Homeless Prevention Trailblazer project has worked with partners in the criminal justice system to improve pathways through the system. In May 2018 the Trailblazer team and the Police and Crime Commissioner co-hosted an event attended by 60 practitioners across housing and criminal justice services. The event was led by an independent facilitator who produced a summary report you can find [here](#).

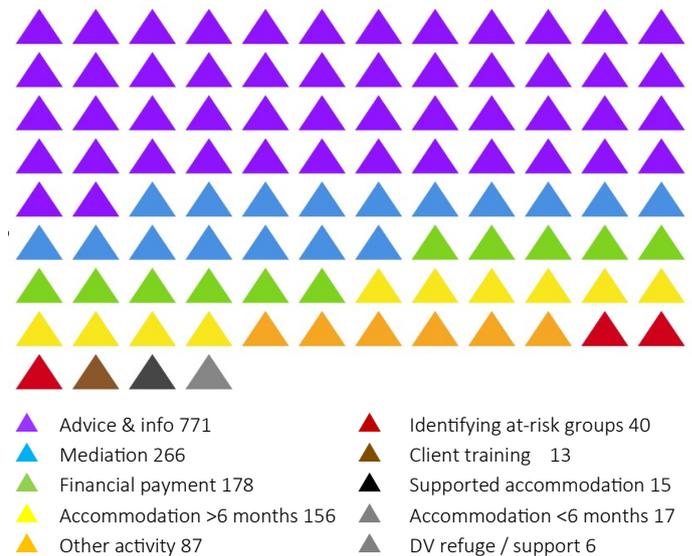
### Key current activities

Following the event, a multi-agency task and finish group was established to develop a stronger shared understanding of roles, risks and issues. This enabled a joint [protocol](#) to be agreed. Partners across these agencies have developed their understanding of wider pathways and the protocol clarifies expectations at different stages, with an emphasis on early referral. This group continues to meet and will continue to monitor how the 'duty to refer' is operating in practice for this issue; and to address any issues which arise. It continues to support a multi-agency problem-solving approach, supporting links into wider criminal justice and housing initiatives.

With many thanks for this article, to Cristina Strood, Head of Policy for Police and Fire, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

## The type of help people get

The pictogram shows the total number of households getting one of ten types of help provided by the Trailblazer team...



The table below gives some insight into a large number of households who get more than one type of help...

Advice & info	Mediation	Financial payment	Supported accommodation	Temp accommodation (up to 6 months)	Private / Social accommodation (min 6 months)	Identifying at-risk groups	Other activity	Number of households helped
✓								349
✓	✓							81
✓	✓	✓			✓			52
✓	✓	✓						46
✓					✓			37
✓							✓	30
✓		✓						26
✓	✓				✓			24
✓		✓			✓			20
✓						✓	✓	10
✓	✓						✓	9
✓						✓		6
✓	✓			✓				6
✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	6
✓				✓				5
✓					✓		✓	5
✓			✓					4
✓	✓		✓					4
✓	✓					✓		4

The table and pictogram exclude 'less than 3 household' combinations, and only report on 'completed' cases.



### Who refers people to the Trailblazer team?

	Count of referrals	% of total
District councils	360	32%
Housing associations	227	20%
Cambs County Council	213	19%
Benefits including DWP and Job Centres	88	8%
Peterborough City Council	62	5%
Criminal justice & police	44	4%
Private landlords	29	3%
Self, family, friends	27	2%
Health	24	2%
Charities	16	1%
Other	14	1%
Schools	12	1%
Domestic violence project & refuges	10	1%
Homelessness projects	5	<1%

### Buying additional debt advice

- Debt advice and resolving arrears are key to homelessness prevention.
- The Trailblazer project supports the Making Money Count (MMC) web resource, which also helps people find out about the Trailblazer project, here <http://makingmoneycount.org.uk/>
- To increase the available debt advice we also purchased additional debt advice for 600 individuals and families across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough who were in financial difficulties, through partnerships with CHS, Peterborough CAB and Cambridgeshire's rural CAB.

It was a refreshing change to have the support from yourself with the case that I referred to your team. I normally just keep hitting my head against a brick wall in these type of cases. I found it very useful the way that you collaborated and brought together the required professionals to help a vulnerable adult within Huntingdonshire. You managed the case to achieve an excellent outcome for this person. I hope this continues and that a suitable care package is also implemented so as a professional I am not required to implement any further interventions. Any intervention that I would have required to take would have had a negative impact on the client. I hope we can continue this successful partnership working by helping the vulnerable in the community.

*Jon Setchell  
Environmental Protection Officer, Huntingdonshire District Council*

Abi (from the Trailblazer Team) has been a fantastic help with my situation. It has taken some of the stress away of trying to sort things.

Also with helping to make sure I am getting all the necessary help that is available to me.

Without this I'm not sure of what position I would be in right now.

*Kay, Trailblazer Customer*

### Case study #3: housing association decides not to evict

#### Household type and any vulnerability

- A family of which there are non-dependents in the household and there is a shortfall with the rent.
- The Housing Association was looking to evict even with £90 worth of rent arrears and £110 warrant costs and £250 court costs and would not accept the payment in instalments.

#### Tenure

Housing association rented

#### Risk of homelessness

The rent officer was going to apply for court.

#### Actions taken

- Trailblazer officer discussed with the rent officer emphasising the tenant and the family are on low income (benefit based) so will not be able to afford to pay their debt in full.
- As no luck, the Trailblazer officer contacted the rent officer's manager and asked them to reconsider this procedure.

#### Outcome

- The tenant is now able to pay the rent and arrears on top (as per the payment plan)
- Is paying court costs in instalments as paying them off in full wasn't feasible.
- The rent officer has a better understand of affordability
- Trailblazer team and the rent officer are working together towards prevention rather than evicting a tenant for the overall costs of £450.

# Milestones



2017-2018: Project funding secured, team recruited. Project board established, data systems set up and referrals started.

End of Year 1: some 472 people had been referred to the team

**2017-2018**  
472 referrals

May 2018: Developed new [trailblazer](#) web pages at [Making Money Count](#)

May 2018: Workshop with Police Crime Commissioner to look at homelessness and offending, and strengthen working relationships between housing and criminal justice. Event was a huge success and task & finish group formed to develop a shared protocol.

June 2018 Statement of Intent developed for housing association and other partners. Training provided to housing associations on the *Think Family* approach and homelessness prevention.



**June 2018**  
678 referrals

June 2018: Trailblazer Manager delivering homeless prevention training to a range of public agencies

June 2018: First Landlord event held in Wisbech

**Sept 2018**  
873 referrals

Sept 2018: Motivational Interviewing project starts



September 2018: Motivational training: group of 12 officers learn to "train the trainer" over 2 days, funded by the Trailblazer project

**Dec 2018**  
1,001 referrals

Nov 2018: local funding for year 3 agreed by key partners, to combine with any MHCLG underspend

Dec 2018 Criminal justice protocol agreed

December 2018: Motivational Interviewing Training now taking place across the region and to many different agencies. 50 people trained by end of Dec 2018.

Feb 2019: New project to develop improved pathways between health agencies and housing initiated, making contact with Integrated Commissioning manager and teams involved in reducing delays to hospital discharge

**March 2019**  
1,132 referrals

March 2019: second landlord event held in Wisbech

March 2019: hoarding research completed which investigates ways to tackling hoarding sensitively, and models of working across various agencies and professional interests effectively.

March 2019: Motivational training: 14 courses run for about 250 participants



- To come in 2019/20:
- Workshop on housing, mental health & substance misuse planned for 20 June 2019
  - Workshop on housing & health including helping people with housing problems get out of hospital, planned for September 2019
  - More work to tackle hoarding issues and motivational training courses for staff.



### What's coming next?

The Trailblazer project is to continue to work across the local housing market area for another year (2019/20), completing all the tasks set out in our bid. Tasks still to come include...

- Work with partners to tackle hoarding issues.
- Running more motivational training courses.
- Developing new protocols with partners on
  - ◇ Housing, mental health & substance misuse
  - ◇ Housing & health including helping people with housing problems get out of hospital

The Trailblazer Project has helped many a Home Group customer and has managed to prevent them from being evicted. The work they have done knowing the severity of the cases has been very professional, very prompt and always kept us informed of what was happening. When speaking with the Prevention Officers they have always followed policy and procedure with us.

As well as preventing our customers being evicted they have also assisted in obtaining Discretionary Housing payments to help them sustain their tenancies, while they look for alternative suitable accommodation, if they are under-occupying.

I believe the Trailblazer Project is a very good service.

*Jemima Tyrell, Home Group*

I wanted to say that during my time working with Trailblazer I have found it to be extremely productive. Working together we have been able to help numerous tenants in very difficult financial situations and I feel that the Trailblazer's role has been crucial in supporting people in need and helping keep people in their homes.

I cannot give enough praise to how you personally have worked tirelessly in your position giving advice and helping give people a better understanding of how they can help themselves with difficulties that they have faced.

I look forward to continuing to work together and support people in need.

*Annabel Newcombe, Housing Officer, Flagship Homes*

- ...and embedding our housing & criminal justice protocol
- Continuing to building relationships with private landlords
- Building joint working practices with registered provider / housing association partners
- More casework in partnership with district and county councils and all the Trailblazer partners across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- Making the case for funding to continue the work beyond March 2020.

I have found your assistance in the two cases you have worked on really helpful. You have followed up and made two successful discretionary housing payment applications and have been very quick to respond to queries.

Many thanks for all you have done.

*Source: Mary-Jane Kehoe, Incomes Adviser, Cross Keys Homes*

### How to get in touch



[trailblazer@fenland.gov.uk](mailto:trailblazer@fenland.gov.uk)



01354 654321



[www.cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/trailblazer](http://www.cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/trailblazer)

## Thank you!

