

Registered providers and the homelessness trailblazer project



Looking at outcomes of the trailblazer project for registered housing providers, 2017-2019.

Report based on Trailblazer monitoring data

Collated for the *Housing Board and Homes for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough*

By Sue Beecroft and Helen Brown

September 2019

Contents

Background to the Trailblazer Project	2
Vision	2
How does the trailblazer project fit in with other services?.....	2
What is the difference between the roles of the Trailblazer and Housing Options Teams?.....	3
Does the Trailblazer go beyond councils' statutory responsibilities?	3
What does the council expect of RP partners?	3
Costs avoided by homelessness prevention	4
Which RPs use the project most?	6
Outline of Trailblazer projects	8
Building the Trailblazer network	10
Registered Provider involvement and support so far	11
Practically speaking, what does this all mean for RPs?	11
Number of referrals from RPs	12
What were the main reasons for homelessness for customers referred by RPs?	13
Outcomes	14
Warning of homelessness	14
Some brief case studies.....	15
Background information	19

Background to the Trailblazer Project

The government's Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government set up a network of Homelessness Prevention Trailblazers across England in 2017 "who want to go further and faster with reform and develop innovative new approaches to preventing homelessness". The Trailblazers "will carry out prevention activity earlier and work with a wider group of people – not just those who are owed the main homelessness duty".

The Trailblazer Team was set up to help implement the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Five key changes in the Act, as summarized by Homeless Link¹, are to

- Improve advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness
- Extend the period 'threatened with homelessness'
- Introduce new duties to prevent and relieve homelessness for all eligible people, regardless of priority need and intentionality
- Introduce assessments and personalised housing plans, setting out the actions housing authorities and individuals will take to secure accommodation
- Encourage public bodies to work together to prevent and relieve homelessness through a duty to refer

In September 2016 partners from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough got together to prepare a bid. Our vision is that "by empowering all public facing staff to identify the risk of homelessness and work together to prevent it, we make homelessness the 'unacceptable outcome'".

In December 2016 we discovered our bid had been successful and we had secured an additional £736,400 funding.

Vision

The Trailblazer partnership's vision is that

- Homelessness becomes the "unacceptable outcome"
- Homelessness specialists are employed who link housing advice and other early help teams, to spot potential homelessness and coordinate actions to prevent it.
- Public-facing staff get homelessness prevention training, supported by e-learning.
- Partners are helped to spot early warning signs of homelessness, and know who to turn to for help, for example through a housing health-check tool.
- Frontline staff get training to enable them to deal with "difficult interactions" and help secure better long term outcomes for the people they are helping.

Late in 2018, the project got approval to continue for a further twelve months beyond its original funding. This has since been extended to 2019, ending March 2020.

How does the trailblazer project fit in with other services?

The Trailblazer team aims to help people who have more than 56 day's notice of homelessness. Local Authority Housing Options Teams will deal with anyone who has 56 days' notice or less,

though of course the Trailblazer team will help partners and individuals “get to” the housing options teams for the help they need, if this is problematic for them.

What is the difference between the roles of the Trailblazer and Housing Options Teams?

- The TB team deals with people with more notice of homelessness than the local authorities are required to work with. (Pre and post 56 days’ notice).
- The Trailblazer team works across the whole region of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- The team works to increase capacity by training and in-depth advice to professionals.
- The team aims to act as the ‘glue’ between a wide array of public and other services, to prevent homelessness wherever possible.

Does the Trailblazer go beyond councils’ statutory responsibilities?

All partners are now required to work with individuals before they approach the statutory responsibility stage, though of course in some cases that is still necessary.

The TB team has the added flexibility of permission to be inventive, a pot of funds for “small interventions” specifically for homelessness prevention, alongside strands of partnership working with the larger statutory agencies which can provide difficult to understand and to work with for individual housing options team where time is pressurized and workloads don’t necessarily support more strategic, time-consuming discussions.

In this way the Trailblazer team has worked on the criminal justice protocol, mental health, drug and alcohol issues, hoarding; and soon to start, hospital discharge.

What does the council expect of RP partners?

Naturally the local authority expects RPs to do all they can to prevent homelessness as outlined in numerous national good practice guides e.g. NHF¹ Crisis² Equality and Human Rights Commission³ Chartered Institute of Housing (2006)⁴ but if a customer’s housing is at risk, or they are faced with possession proceedings, the Trailblazer team will help both the customer and the RP to investigate alternative approaches and options. For the customer hopefully this will avoid homelessness; for the RP, the team’s aim is to educate and inform on alternative courses of action / partners to get involved, possible courses of action the RP may not have been aware of; or navigating through processes such as getting a discretionary housing payment. Once the RP staff member has been through the process, the ambition is for them to use that knowledge in future cases, calling on the Trailblazer team only where necessary.

¹ NHF at <https://www.housing.org.uk/resource-library/browse/homelessness-and-housing-associations-briefing/>

² Crisis at <https://crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/the-plan-to-end-homelessness-full-version/next-steps/a-housing-association-commitment-to-ending-homelessness/>

³ EHRC at <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/guidance-social-housing-providers>

⁴ CIH here <http://www.cih.org/resources/PDF/Policy%20free%20download%20pdfs/Homelessness%20prevention%20and%20HAs.pdf>

Costs avoided by homelessness prevention

The cost of an eviction and the loss of rent, plus void costs, for the RP add up to a significant loss for each tenant evicted, for whatever reason. Plus we end up with a person going through a stressful and expensive process, who may well end up getting local authority help back into another property. If the Trailblazer team can remove this cost and stress, and one less person goes through the homelessness process, numerous interactions are prevented.

However this all means the RP accepting alternative courses of action to eviction, and this has to be carried out within the association's rules / guidelines and with their full support and commitment. In time we hope to challenge some of these rules and guidelines if they are proving counter-productive to all.

Note: The figures in this report are based on data from the Trailblazer's monitoring spreadsheet, put in place at the start of the project and covering all cases dealt with from 2017 to March 2019. All the stats look at completed cases only, and exclude those "in progress" or "not started" as at April 2019. There is a technological gap which is currently being fixed, between the Trailblazer's data and the Housing Options Team monitoring, so some final outcomes are more difficult to trace through each case's entire process. In 2019/2020 the systems are being more closely aligned.

If a rent arrears eviction is avoided, the housing association gets the arrears in, rather than writing them off, and voids work costs are avoided. In the following paragraphs we bring together some local statistics to provide a ballpark figure for the kind of cost savings this might represent.

Average rent loss

Table 1. Arrears of 20 cases dealt with by Trailblazer in 2017-2019

Actions set / Info	Arrears	Outcome summarised	LA
1. Arrears £1760.07	£ 1,760	Able to remain	CCC
2. £1700 rent arrears in Young Persons Project. HB back payment. Arrears cleared.	£ 1,700	Able to remain	ECDC
3. Around £5000 behind with rent. Has suspended possession order.	£ 5,000	Able to remain	ECDC
4. Arrears approx. £1100	£ 1,100	Able to remain	FDC
5. Static rent arrears of £119.30 - he cannot pay them off as he is unwell.	£ 119	Able to remain	FDC
6. Rent arrears - £2K. Eviction likely as 3rd time	£ 2,000	Able to remain	FDC
7. Rent arrears £1090	£ 1,090	Able to remain	FDC
8. £1728.30 paid to clear arrears	£ 1,728	Able to remain	FDC
9. Arrears £983.25	£ 983	Able to remain	FDC
10. Currently £2232.88 in rent arrears - LL applying for possession	£ 2,233	Able to remain	PCC
11. Rent arrears of £523.30	£ 523	Able to remain	PCC
12. Complete application to pay off arrears of 177.82 from HPF	£ 178	Able to remain	PCC

Actions set / Info	Arrears	Outcome summarised	LA
13. Has rent arrears of £809.02 DHP application done	£ 809	Able to remain	PCC
14. Rent arrears of £1407.76 NOSP due to be served	£ 1,407	Able to remain	PCC
15. Current rent arrears of £3,980.51. NSP likely	£ 3,980	Able to remain	SCDC
16. Arrears £1557: accelerated possession applied for.	£ 1,557	Advice only	PCC
17. Housing benefit payment stopped June 2017, currently in £1690.20 arrears	£ 1,690	Advice only	PCC
18. Underoccupying property. Rent arrears over £2k preventing any potential move.	£ 2,000	Alternative accommodation	FDC
19. Arrears £2332.99, payment plan in place but only for shortfall, not arrears	£ 2,333	Referred to HOT	ECDC
20. Arrears high £2304.26, court hearing due September.	£ 2,304	Referred to HOT	ECDC
Total	£34,494		
Average = £34,494 / 20	£1,725		
Arrears range from £178 to £5,000			

In summary, there were **20** cases where the rent arrear total was included in the monitoring spreadsheet. Overall, the total arrears amounted to £34,494 between these 20 cases. The lowest arrear was £178 and the highest was £5,000. The average arrear was **£1,725**.

Average void works figure

We would use an average void cost of £2,000 to £3,000 for RPs in our area, based on local experience. South Cambs District Council's most recent cost of a void (repairs, cleaning, turnaround etc) was **£6,765** (at September 2019) however this included some long term and high cost voids, which we suspect would over-estimate the cost for the purposes of this report.

We will therefore use **£2,500** as a mid point of the estimated range of void costs.

Average rent loss

Average rent loss, reckoning on 6 weeks vacant at average rent excluding service charge, using the Housing Market Bulletin which is based on the HCA SDR for 2017-18, averaged across 6 districts.

Table 2. Average RP rent levels across 6 local districts¹

	Housing Association 'low cost' rent per week	For 6 weeks est. void period	Housing Association 'affordable' rent per week	For 6 weeks est. void period
Average 1 bed	£84	£504	£104	£624
Average 2 bed	£99	£594	£119	£714
Average 3 bed	£108	£648	£138	£828

So for a social rent, the void rent loss could be between **£504 and £648**; and for an ‘affordable’ rent, between **£624 and £828** assuming at least 6 weeks turnaround time.

Cost of making a homelessness application

In addition, the CHS cost benefit analysis tool identifies the cost of preventing a homelessness application averages £2,724 per application (for the local authority).

Cost of an eviction

The same tool identifies the average cost of a local authority eviction as £7,276. This is a moderate estimate but can give an idea of the cost saved by preventing evictions for a local authority and acts as a comparator to the figure we have devised below, for RPs.

Average cost of homelessness avoided for RPs

Table 3. Summary of average costs avoided **per case**

	Cost per case approx....
Average arrear figure	£1,725
Average cost of a void	£2,500
Average rent loss over 6 weeks: Social rent	Between £504 and £648
Average rent loss over 6 weeks: Affordable rent	Between £624 and £828
Standard court fee	£300
Total	Between £5,654 and £6,001
Compared to the average cost of a local authority eviction	£7,276

Which RPs use the project most?

Many RPs are referring to the Trailblazer service, however some are not and it would be the plan in 2020 to continue to promote the service and encourage RPs to take advantage of its presence. The service is open to all RPs, there are no restrictions on this. The team plans to promote its use by RPs through our web page at <https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/housing/priority-themes/housing-need/homelessness-trailblazer/>. Also through the housing operational group e-newsletter, word of mouth, posters, meetings, district forums etc, backed up by a further mail-out once we know we have funding for 2020/21.

At the end of March 2019 the list includes:

Table 4. Referring and non-referring RPs, and their housing stock in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough based on 2017-18 HCA SDR

Registered provider	Referring?	All stock 2018 ⁵
Cross Keys Homes	✓	10,523
Luminus Homes & Oak Foundation	✓	6,504
Clarion Housing Association	✓	5,704
Sanctuary Housing Association	✓	5,490
Bpha	✓	3,146
Accent Housing	✓	2,907

⁵ Includes rented and LCHO

Registered provider	Referring?	All stock 2018 ⁵
CHS Group	✓	2,805
Metropolitan Housing Trust	✓	2,267
Axiom Housing Association	✓	2,115
Hyde Housing Association	✗	1,401
Hundred Houses Society	✓	1,377
Muir Group Housing Association	✓	761
Home Group	✓	720
Papworth Trust	✓	527
Flagship Housing Group	✓	495
Longhurst & Havelok Homes	✗	451
Housing & Care 21	✗	349
King Street Housing Society	✓	268
Anchor Trust	✗	256
Hanover Housing Association	✗	207
Riverside Group	✗	162
Hastoe Housing Association	✓	155
Places for People Homes and Living+	✗	140
Guinness Partnership	✗	130
Stonewater	✗	125
Cotman Housing Association	✗	117
Aldwyck Housing Group	✗	113
Orbit Group & Orbit South Housing Association	✗	106
London & Quadrant Housing Trust	✗	89
Argyle Street Housing Co-operative	✗	84
Havebury Housing Partnership	✗	83
Housing Partnership (London)	✗	78
Genesis Housing Association	✗	63
First Priority Housing Association	✗	59
Origin Housing	✗	57
Suffolk Housing Society	✗	57
Reside Housing Association	✗	50
Salvation Army Housing Association	✗	36
Golden Lane Housing Ltd	✗	35
Paradigm Homes Charitable Housing Association	✗	20
Westmoreland Supported Housing	✗	19
Abbeyfield Society	✗	17
Orwell Housing Association	✗	15
Richmond Fellowship	✗	12
Dimensions (UK)	✗	11
Paradise Housing Co-operative	✗	11
Bespoke Supportive Tenancies	✗	10

Registered provider	Referring?	All stock 2018 ⁵
Progress Care Housing Association	✗	9
Saffron Housing Trust	✗	9
Colne Housing Society	✗	8
Habinteg Housing Association	✗	7
Aragon Housing Association	✗	4
Thames Valley HA & Charitable HA	✗	2
Catalyst Housing	✗	1
Sovereign Housing Association	✗	1

Outline of Trailblazer projects

As well as advising people and partner agencies about individual cases to help prevent homelessness, the Trailblazer project runs various projects to help increase understanding and seek new ways to solve problems and work together better. Some examples are set out below:

Homelessness Prevention

- Help partners recognise early warning signs of homelessness and ways to prevent it.
- Help people threatened with homelessness as early as possible, regardless of “priority need”.
- Promote new budgeting tools & skills.
- Support partners making action plans for those at risk of homelessness.
- Work closely with housing options teams to see what has been successful and what has not and use the feedback to further develop the project.

Supporting landlords by helping with

- Housing Benefit claims
- Applications for Discretionary Housing Payments which the Trailblazer team is well placed to make, knowing the intricacies of each district’s approach to DHPs.
- Debt problems especially linked to rent arrears
- Preventing eviction and harassment
- Understanding of landlord and tenant responsibilities
- Property repairs and maintenance
- Referrals to tenancy support services
- Managing a ‘small interventions fund’ (to be re-kindled in 2019/20) to help pay for small and unusual interventions which help prevent homelessness e.g. one-off taxi fares, spot cleaning, skip hire where such actions make a difference.

Specialist issues, including

- Tackling hoarding
- Improving transition from prison to home, to help reduce housing’s contribution to instability and possible re-offending

- Working together where homelessness is linked to mental health and substance misuse issues
- Working with hospitals to help patients whose release from hospital is delayed due to homelessness or other housing issues.

Training, education and partnerships

- Memorandum of understanding - sets out how partners agree to prevent homelessness
- Statement of intent - based on the memorandum - for non-statutory partners to sign showing their commitment to making homelessness the 'unacceptable outcome'
- Links with criminal justice (with support from the Police and Crime Commissioner) to develop and implement a new protocol around leaving prison
- Funding additional debt advice and resolve arrears for 600 households across the area
- Running training courses including
 - Motivational interviewing
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - Free for all officers operating in the area to attend, so far 14 sessions have been run and 250 delegates trained.
 - We aim to reach more practitioners across the area who may have conversations with clients at risk of homelessness in 2020+. 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.
 - Introduction to the Homelessness Reduction Act and the Trailblazer team
 - One of the trailblazer's first projects was to provide training on the Homelessness Reduction Act and its implications for partners, which involved a sequence of events with housing providers across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. This included raising awareness of the Trailblazer team and the difference between trailblazer and Housing Options Team roles, with trailblazers acting as the "front end" of homelessness prevention services.

- Think Family
- In partnership with the County Council, the Trailblazer team has delivered Think Family training, which RPs attended. This will be refreshed in 2020 if the project gets funding, and will include safeguarding referrals, early help assessments, multi-agency working, navigating personal data issues and DPA, especially in safeguarding cases, so RPs are clear on duties and responsibilities; and building partnerships and links to help prevent homelessness.

Building the Trailblazer network

One Trailblazer team covers the wide geographical area of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, so relationships are easier to build and maintain with the small group of trailblazer officers, who then connect to the array of other partners.

So the Trailblazer team is uniquely placed to know and have contacts with various agencies, for example in 2019 they included:

- County based 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 (MASH)
 - Family Workers
 - Physical Disabilities Team and
 - Together for Families.
- Health service partners including
 - the three main hospitals
 - Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group
 - Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust
 - GPs
 - Public Health for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- A number of private landlords and lettings agents.
- Women’s Refuge and independent Domestic Violence advisor.
- 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.
- Agencies involved with work and with benefits including
 - Anglia Revenues Partnership
 - Department of Work & Pensions
 - Job Centre Plus.
- Criminal Justice partners including
 - BENCH CRC
 - Integrated Offender Management
 - Operation Farmington
 - Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's Police & Crime Commissioner
 - Peterborough Prison
 - Probation
 - St Giles Trust.
- Charities including Arthur Rank Hospice, Aspire, The Autism Society, Inclusion, John Huntingdon's Charity, Cambridge Cyrenians, and the SPACE project.
- Local schools.

Using this knowledge and asking various partners to coordinate action can bring better outcomes than might otherwise be achieved. Also acting as an introduction agency for teams to get to know each other, without Trailblazer's intervention being needed in future.

Registered Provider involvement and support so far

Housing providers are, of course, a vital part of the trailblazer network, and have participated in the project with great enthusiasm and support, for example

- Attending training and workshop sessions around criminal justice; mental health & substance misuse; sitting on the Trailblazer project board.
- Participating in the hoarding working group and new hoarding board.
- Hosting Trailblazer team members – every other week RPs provide office space for an officer at Accent Nene & Cross Keys Housing.
- Conference and training facilities provided by CHS.
- Referring customers to the project and RP officers contacting the Trailblazers for advice.

Practically speaking, what does this all mean for RPs?

- RPs refer people when they have sought a possession order for rent arrears or ASB, and although that is an action the RP has taken these are referrals the Trailblazer team can work

with, to help resolve the issue and where possible, help prevent the situation from getting that bad in future, where possible.

- Until RPs can change their operating practices and avoid seeking possession, or can take alternative actions earlier in the arrears or ASB process, the Trailblazer team is very happy to help find solutions for both the customer and the RP.
- As time goes on, the TB team hopes their efforts will start to affect working practices, thresholds used by RPs and other aspects of their operations, in order to minimize disruption and avoid time consuming and stressful processes which need not end in possession proceedings.
- The Trailblazer is also well placed to help RPs deal with customers who are difficult to engage. As the Trailblazer team is not part of the 'landlord' service, it's possible to build a trusting relationship while the Trailblazer officer who can then act as a 'bridge' to the RP. In this way, although some customers do fall out of contact, there has been a good deal of success finding solutions to a variety of issues with a number of different RPs.

Contacting the team

Email: trailblazer@fenland.gov.uk

Website: www.cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/trailblazer

Number of referrals from RPs

After district councils themselves, housing associations accounted for the biggest number of referrals from the project's start in 2017 to the end of March 2019:

Table 5. Number of referrals by partner 'group'

	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%
Total	1,131	100%

What were the main reasons for homelessness for customers referred by RPs?

Table 6. Count of problemsⁱⁱ

Problem	Count
Rent arrears on Registered provider dwellings	130
Rent arrears on Local authority or other public sector dwellings	19
Other reason (e.g. homeless in emergency, sleeping rough or in hostel, returned from abroad)	14
Rent arrears on Private sector dwellings	6
Loss of rented or tied accommodation: termination of assured shorthold tenancy	6
Loss of rented or tied accommodation: Reasons other than termination of assured shorthold tenancy	3

Evidently the overwhelming problem was **rent arrears**. The second biggest issue was “other” including homeless in emergency, sleeping rough or in hostel, returned from abroad.

Table 7. How does this compare to other referring partners?

	RP total	% of RP	Non-RP	% of non-RP
Rent arrears on: Registered provider dwellings	130	68%	87	11%
Other reason (e.g. homeless in emergency, sleeping rough or in hostel, returned from abroad)	14	7%	141	17%
Rent arrears on: Private sector dwellings	6	3%	137	17%
Rent arrears on: Local authority or other public sector dwellings	19	10%	106	13%
Loss of rented or tied accommodation: termination of assured shorthold tenancy	6	3%	100	12%
Other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	2	1%	46	6%
Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate	1	1%	46	6%
Not recorded, N/A, Not Known	6	3%	30	4%
Loss of rented or tied accommodation: Reasons other than termination of assured shorthold tenancy	3	2%	31	4%
Violence: Violent breakdown of relationship involving partner	2	1%	20	2%
Left HM-Forces	1	1%	1	
Total	191		828	

(Lines where no RP referrals were made for that reason have been excluded).

RPs are referring a significant number of tenants threatened with homelessness due to rent arrears in their own homes.

Outcomes

For RPs, the cases dealt with in the first 2 year of the project ended in the following outcomes / categoriesⁱⁱⁱ:

Table 8. Outcome of Trailblazer involvement

Outcome	Number
Able to remain in current home	84
Given advice only	37
Referred to LA Housing Options team	26
Secured alternative accommodation	8

In terms of the total 191 outcomes, the predominant outcomes was “able to remain in current home” (44%). 37 customers were given advice only. 8 had alternative accommodation secured by the trailblazer team. 26 were referred to the local authority Housing Options team, only 1 needed relief as they were already homeless and 35 fell out of contact during the process of getting help.

How does this compare to other referring partners?

	Able to remain	Advice only	Alternative accommodation	Referred to HOT	Relief	Uncontactable	Total
Housing Associations	84	37	8	26	1	35	191
%	44%	19%	4%	14%	~	18%	
Referrals excl HAs	234	206	84	190	31	96	841
%	28%	25%	10%	23%	4%	11%	

Warning of homelessness

Table 9. How much warning of homelessness was there for RP referrals^{iv}

	Already homeless	Less than 56 days	More than 56 days	Total
Total for RPs	3	45	143	191
%	1%	24%	75%	

As the Trailblazer team was set up to prevent homelessness, cases where people have more warning of potential homelessness are more likely to have successful outcomes.

Housing Providers have been very helpful in referring customers early on in their journey, with 143 having more than 56 days’ warning. Some 45 had less than 56 days’ warning and only 3 were already homeless.

This is impressive given that, in the early months of the project, partners generally referred a significant number of customers with less than 56 days warning or who were already homeless. While the trailblazer team would help in all these cases in some way, the “more than 56 days” group is their target audience.

How does this compare to other referring partners?

	Already homeless	Less than 56 days	More than 56 days	Total
Housing associations	3	45	143	191
%	1%	24%	75%	
All excl RPs	90	211	538	841
%	11%	25%	64%	

So housing associations referred people to the trailblazer project with more warning of homelessness than the total for all other agencies – 75% compared to 64% had more than 56 days' warning of homelessness.

And only 1% of housing association referrals were for people already homeless, compared to 11% for all other partners.

Some brief case studies

SUPPORT SECURED	
Household type	Family, mum has health needs
Tenure	Housing Association rented
Summary of situation	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.
Actions	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
Outcome	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.
DECISION NOT TO EVICT	
Household type	A family of which there are non-dependents in the household and there is a shortfall with the rent.
Tenure	Housing association rented
Summary of situation	The Housing Association was looking to evict with £90 of rent arrears and £110 warrant costs and £250 court costs, did not accept payment in instalments. The rent officer was going to apply for court.
Actions	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.
EVICTION PREVENTED	
Referred by	Clarion Housing's Income Team
Household type	2 adults and 1 child
Tenure	Social rented
Summary of situation	Significant rent arrears and court costs, a suspended possession order and tenant had stopped engaging.
Actions	Regular mediation with Clarion's income team. Assisted discretionary housing payment application
Outcome	Tenant covered £390 court costs herself by borrowing from family, and was awarded a discretionary housing payment to clear the arrears. Clarion cancelled the potential eviction. The Trailblazer team supported the tenant, giving guidance on applying to Home-Link to try to move to a smaller, more affordable property. This would also return a larger home to Clarion, which can be rented to a family who need that larger property.
ARREARS CLEARED	
Referred by	Axiom housing
Household type	One adult
Tenure	Social rented
Summary of situation	Significant rent arrears due to benefits stopping while tenant was away. Served a "section 21" notice.
Actions	Applied for discretionary housing payment and homelessness prevention fund. Worked with Axiom, communicating about funding and arrears.
Outcome	Discretionary Housing Payment application was rejected, but the local authority encouraged an application to its Homelessness Prevention Fund. Successfully secured £730 of funding, the arrear was paid off and the section 21 notice was not pursued any further.
Possession action averted	
Referred by	Accent Nene
Household type	2 adults and one child living in Peterborough, rent arrears
Tenure	Housing Association
Summary of situation	Currently £2,233 in rent arrears and landlord applying for possession.
Actions	Trailblazer met with housing officer. Provided tenant with advice & info, mediation and financial payment.
Outcome	Able to remain
Family able to remain at home	
Referred by	Axiom
Household type	Mum and three children living in Peterborough

Tenure	Housing Association
Summary of situation	Tenant has rent arrears of £809 on Axiom dwelling.
Action required and complete	Trailblazer team helped submit a discretionary housing payment application and gave tenant advice and info, mediation, and financial payment
Outcome	Able to remain
Family in private rented housing find alternative accommodation	
Referred by	Clarion
Household type	2 adults + 2 children living in Fenland
Tenure	Private rented
Summary of situation	Risk of loss of rented or tied accommodation due to termination of assured shorthold tenancy
Actions	Trailblazer team assisted with private rent accommodation, passing on details of rent deposit scheme. Tenant is on housing register band C, but has been told it will go up over time as his date of eviction approaches. Provided advice and info, financial payment, accommodation for > 6 month
Outcome	Secured alternative accommodation
Notice averted	
Referred by	Clarion
Household type	1 adult + 1 child living in Peterborough in rent arrears
Tenure	Housing Association
Summary of situation	Rent arrears of £1,407; NOSP due to be served on ground 10.
Actions	Advice and info, mediation
Outcome	Able to remain
Able to remain when other pressures bear down	
Referred by	Clarion
Household type	1 adult + 2 children living in Fenland
Tenure	Housing Association
Summary of situation	Rent arrears on registered provider dwelling Regular hospital trips for daughter's cancer treatment
Action required and complete	DHP applied for. Advice and info, mediation, financial payment
Outcome	Able to remain
Helped to clear arrears	
Referred by	Clarion
Household type	1 adult + 1 child living in Fenland
Tenure	Housing Association
Summary of situation	Built up rent arrears on housing association property
Actions	Given advice and information, mediation and financial payment as a £500 DHP was awarded, alongside putting a payment plan in place.

Outcome	Able to remain
Fleeing a violent partner	
Referred by	Clarion
Household type	1 adult and five children living in Fenland
Tenure	Housing Association
Summary of situation	Violent breakdown of relationship involving partner
Actions	Home visit made. Passed to colleague to source suitable size property. Advice and info, mediation
Outcome	Able to remain
Fleeing domestic violence	
Referred by	Clarion
Household type	1 adult living in Fenland
Tenure	Housing Association
Summary of situation	Violent breakdown of relationship involving partner
Actions	Fleeing DV. Alternative property found. Requires funding to reduce current arrears and assist with move. DHP paid. Gave advice and info, mediation, financial payment, accommodation found for more than 6mths
Outcome	Sourced alternative accommodation
Underoccupation resolved	
Referred by	Hundred Houses
Household type	1 adult living in Fenland
Tenure	Housing Association
Summary of situation	Rent arrears on registered provider dwelling as under-occupying property. Rent arrears over £2k preventing any potential move.
Actions	Advice & info, meditation
Outcome	Secured alternative accommodation

Background information

Some notes on terms used in this report

Financial payment

This is where funding was secured via either discretionary housing payment (DHP), housing benefit (HB) back date, Homelessness Prevention Fund (HPF) or Trailblazer funds or other small grants.

Outcomes

- Able to remain: Households provided help which prevented homelessness and enabled them to remain in their current home.
- Given advice only: In a number of cases advice only was needed to resolve an issue, including advice and information on the person's rights, advice on where to go to get specific assistance, advice on welfare benefits etc.
- Secured alternative accommodation: In some cases the trailblazer team secured alternative accommodation, either temporary (for less than 6 months) or for longer is needed.
- Referred to LA Housing Options Team: When a person approaches the Trailblazer team, the target audience is people who have more than 56 day's warning of the homelessness. Where there is less than 56 days' notice, the person is usually referred to the district's Housing Options Team (HOT) who hold the baton for these households. However the trailblazer team might offer some help and advice in addition to referring through. In some cases a person approaches the trailblazer team who is already homeless (i.e. is there is no warning of the homelessness happening), so only relief can be offered. Of course the Trailblazer team will help as it can but this is not the main audience for the "early prevention" work the team is focussed on.
- Homelessness relief: See above, this is where there is no warning of homelessness.
- Uncontactable: Some people will fall out of contact with the team during the process of trying to help them.

East Cambridgeshire

As East Cambridgeshire is no longer a funding partner, from 1 April 2019, ECDC customers are mainly referred to ECDC's housing options team and generally not provided the Trailblazer service. If other partners refer ECDC residents to the project, they will still benefit from the service offered but in terms of advice, are offered some advice and guidance. As always, there are some exceptions

Detailed tables

ⁱ Figures used to calculate average RP rents

		Housing Association 'low cost' rent	For 6 weeks est. void period	Housing Association 'affordable' rent	For 6 weeks est. void period
Cambridge	1bed	94		110	

East Cambridgeshire	1bed	86		111	
Fenland	1bed	80		100	
Huntingdonshire	1bed	81		102	
South Cambridgeshire	1bed	88		117	
Peterborough	1bed	75		84	
Avg 1 bed		84	£504	104	£624
Cambridge	2bed	110		129	
East Cambridgeshire	2bed	100		117	
Fenland	2bed	93		107	
Huntingdonshire	2bed	94		122	
South Cambridgeshire	2bed	107		130	
Peterborough	2bed	88		106	
Avg 2 bed		99	£594	119	£714
Cambridge	3bed	122		161	
East Cambridgeshire	3bed	111		136	
Fenland	3bed	99		115	
Huntingdonshire	3bed	103		144	
South Cambridgeshire	3bed	121		158	
Peterborough	3bed	94		114	
Avg 3 bed		108	£648	138	£828

ii Reason for homelessness

	Left HM-Forces	Loss of rented or tied accommodation: termination of assured shorthold tenancy	Loss of rented or tied accommodation: Reasons other than termination of assured	Other reason (e.g. homeless in emergency sleeping rough or in hostel, returned from	Other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate	Rent arrears on: Local authority or other public sector dwellings	Rent arrears on: Private sector dwellings	Rent arrears on: Registered provider dwellings	Violence: Violent breakdown of relationship involving partner	Blank, Not recorded, N/A, Not Known	Total
Accent Nene		1		2		1	1	6				11
Axiom							8	11			1	20
BPHA				1								1
Centre 33				1								1
CHS			1	1			3	17			1	23
Clarion	1	2	5	7	1		2	1	15	2	1	37
Cross Keys								3				3
Flagship								1	27			28
Hastoe								1				1
Home Group											1	1
Hundred							3	1	14		1	19
King Street								2	1		1	4
Luminus				2					1			3
Metropolitan							2		23			25
Papworth								1	10			11
Sanctuary					1				1		1	3
Total	1	3	6	14	2	1	19	6	130	2	7	191

iii Count of referrals to the project from housing associations & outcomes

	Able to remain in current home	Given advice only	Secured alternative accommodation	Referred to LA Housing Options team	Homeless-ness relief	Uncontactable	Total
Accent Nene	5	3		1		2	11
Axiom	10	5	2			3	20
BPHA				1			1
Centre 33		1					1
CHS	13	3		4		3	23
Clarion	17	5	5	5		5	37
Cross Keys	2	1					3
Flagship	13	3		3		9	28
Hastoe	1						1
Home Group						1	1
Hundred	7	5	1	3		3	19
King Street	1	1		1		1	4
Luminus		2			1		3
Metropolitan	7	7		6		5	25
Papworth	7	1				3	11
Sanctuary	1			2			3
Total	84	37	8	26	1	35	191

There is a wide variation in the number of referrals coming from housing providers, overall making up about 20% of referrals to the Trailblazer project between April 2017 and March 2019.

iv How much warning of homelessness was there for RP referrals

	Already homeless	Less than 56 days	More than 56 days	Total
Accent Nene		5	6	11
Axiom		8	12	20
BPHA			1	1
Centre 33	1			1
CHS		5	18	23
Clarion	2	10	25	37
Cross Keys		2	1	3
Flagship			28	28
Hastoe			1	1
Home Group		1		1
Hundred		4	15	19
King Street			4	4
Luminus		1	2	3
Metropolitan		6	19	25
Papworth		1	10	11
Sanctuary		2	1	3
Total	3	45	143	191
%	1%	24%	75%	