

Protocols : Pathways to Independence, Prevention from Eviction & Repeat Homelessness, and CAF Training

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Preventing Evictions and Repeat Homelessness Protocol

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What is it?

- A partnership agreement between Newcastle City Council and Your Homes Newcastle, Housing Associations, and others to prevent homelessness amongst new and existing tenants
- Based on a joint set of principles
- A note of existing good practice – not new responsibilities
- Guidance on what each type of agency will do at each stage

Why have it?

- **Government expectation for City Council (and partners) to reduce and prevent homelessness**
- **Evictions that could have been prevented waste everyone's time, money, and effort**
- **May be able to prevent loss of the home through dialogue**
- **Knowing who will do what and what they won't do saves time and reduces stress**
- **Essential for some agencies to be alerted to a tenant being about to lose their home**

The partners

- Newcastle City Council – Adult Services (Supporting People, Social Care, Drug Support Unit, and Housing), and Children’s Services
- Your Homes Newcastle and the major Housing Associations providing general needs housing in the city: Places for People, NomadE5, Home Housing Group, Riverside North East, and Cheviot Housing
- Northumbria Probation

What's changed since 2006

- Now applies to Housing Associations as well as Your Homes Newcastle
- Is restated as a Newcastle City Council protocol, expectations and role of each signatory identified
- More information about roles and processes
- More information about monitoring
- Importance of Think Family approach identified

Key principles

All agencies signed up to the Protocol will:

- Work together to reduce and prevent homelessness
- Engage with other agencies where tenants are identified as vulnerable – with early intervention to sustain tenancies and prevent evictions
- Help social housing tenants to understand their obligations and what it means to be a tenant
- Help to identify support needs and develop strategies to address these needs
- Recognise the importance of sharing information
- Take responsibility for alerting other agencies where a tenancy looks to be at risk
- Work together to secure alternative housing options where evictions look inevitable
- Train their staff

Vulnerable people

- **Indicators include:**
- **Formal engagement with a support agency:**
 - supported housing agency (SP funded)
 - social worker, Community Psychiatric Nurse, drug/alcohol worker
 - Probation, Youth Offending Team
 - leaving hospital, care, forces, prison
 - vulnerable through disability
 - refugees
 - subject to MAPPA (high risk)
 - housed through a priority (urgent or immediate housing need)
- Have been **statutorily homeless**
- Are **not able to manage a tenancy without outside support** - beyond ordinary housing management

Key elements of the Protocol

- **Part One:** Action to be taken before the tenancy starts
- **Part Two:** Action to be taken during the tenancy
- **Part Three:** Action to be taken where there are serious concerns about the tenancy, to prevent eviction and loss of home
- **Appendices:** roles and contact points of each type of agency, how to identify which agencies are already working with the applicant/tenant, proformas, flowcharts
- **Monitoring!**

Part One: Planning at the start of a tenancy – before sign-up (at verification)

- **Housing officer to identify anyone who is vulnerable and which agency/agencies are working with them**
- **Support agencies to tell housing officer they are involved**
- **Referral to YHN Advice and Support Worker if no support already in place (as work permits, for Housing Assn applicants/tenants)**
- **Preventing Eviction Plan drawn up at a case meeting if there are serious concerns about whether the person can manage a tenancy, and more than two agencies to meet**
- **Flag put on tenancy record to show that the new tenant is vulnerable (all cases)**
- **Support agency roles - identifying vulnerability when helping person to apply (letters of support, nominations meetings etc), sharing support plans**

Indications that the person is vulnerable

- They receive or need support in some form (**housing-related or other support, or social care**) and
- Would not be able to manage a tenancy without outside assistance beyond ordinary housing management

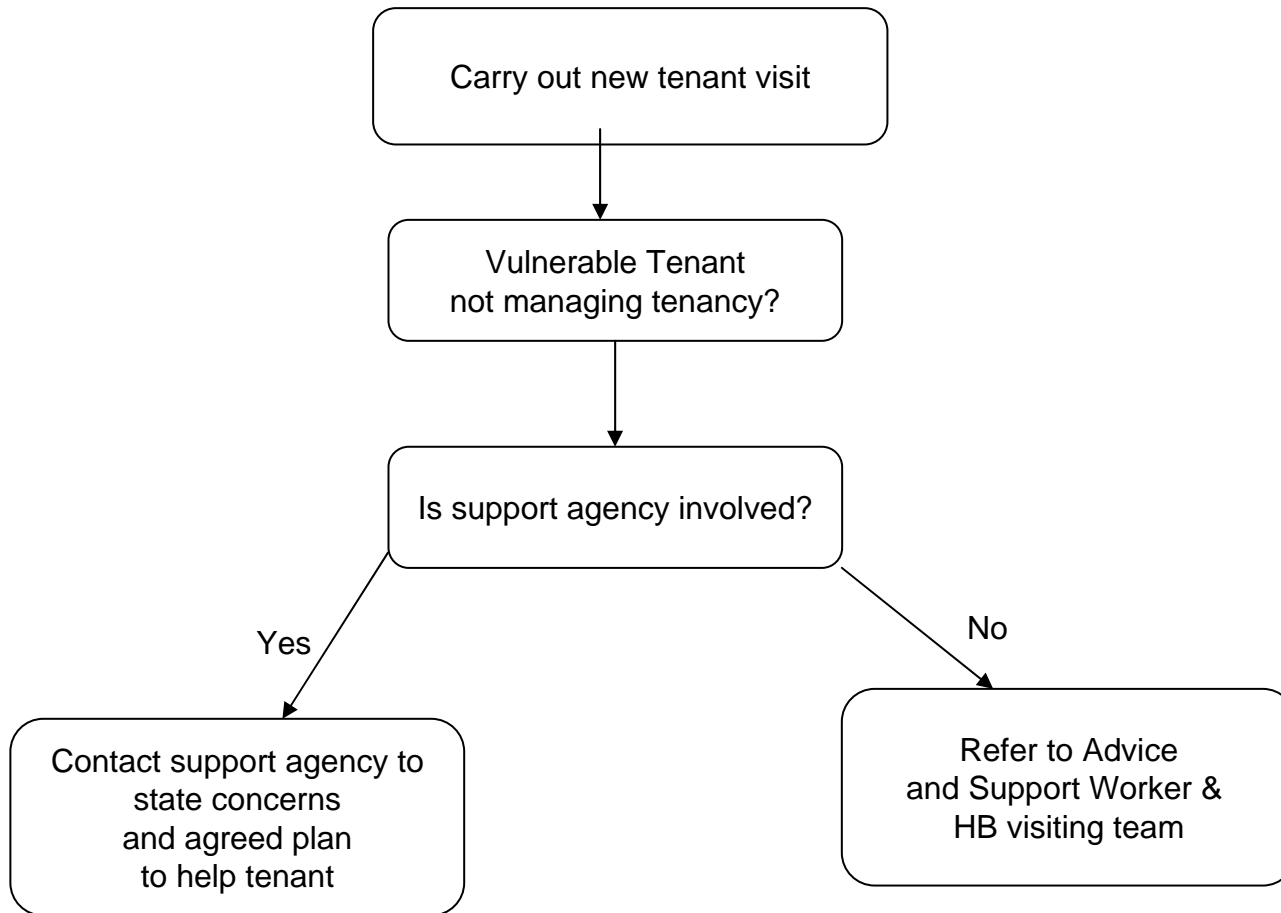
Particular attention must be paid if household includes dependent children

Table on page 10 shows groups which are likely to indicate vulnerability, and where to find information to help form a view of vulnerability

Part One: at start of tenancy

- **Case meeting** may be called (within 10 days of property identified or before if possible)
Will always be *considered* if:
 - applicant has been rehoused previously as homeless
 - applicant has homeless priority but is ineligible for YCH, and there are particular problems
 - is *especially* vulnerable or likely to have difficulties managing a tenancy
- Case meeting may be called by other agencies
- Meeting is **recorded**, notes circulated, Preventing Eviction Plan drawn up
- Agencies asked to **report** outcome of actions
- Housing officer **visits all new tenants** within 6 weeks – will alert other agencies involved if any concerns

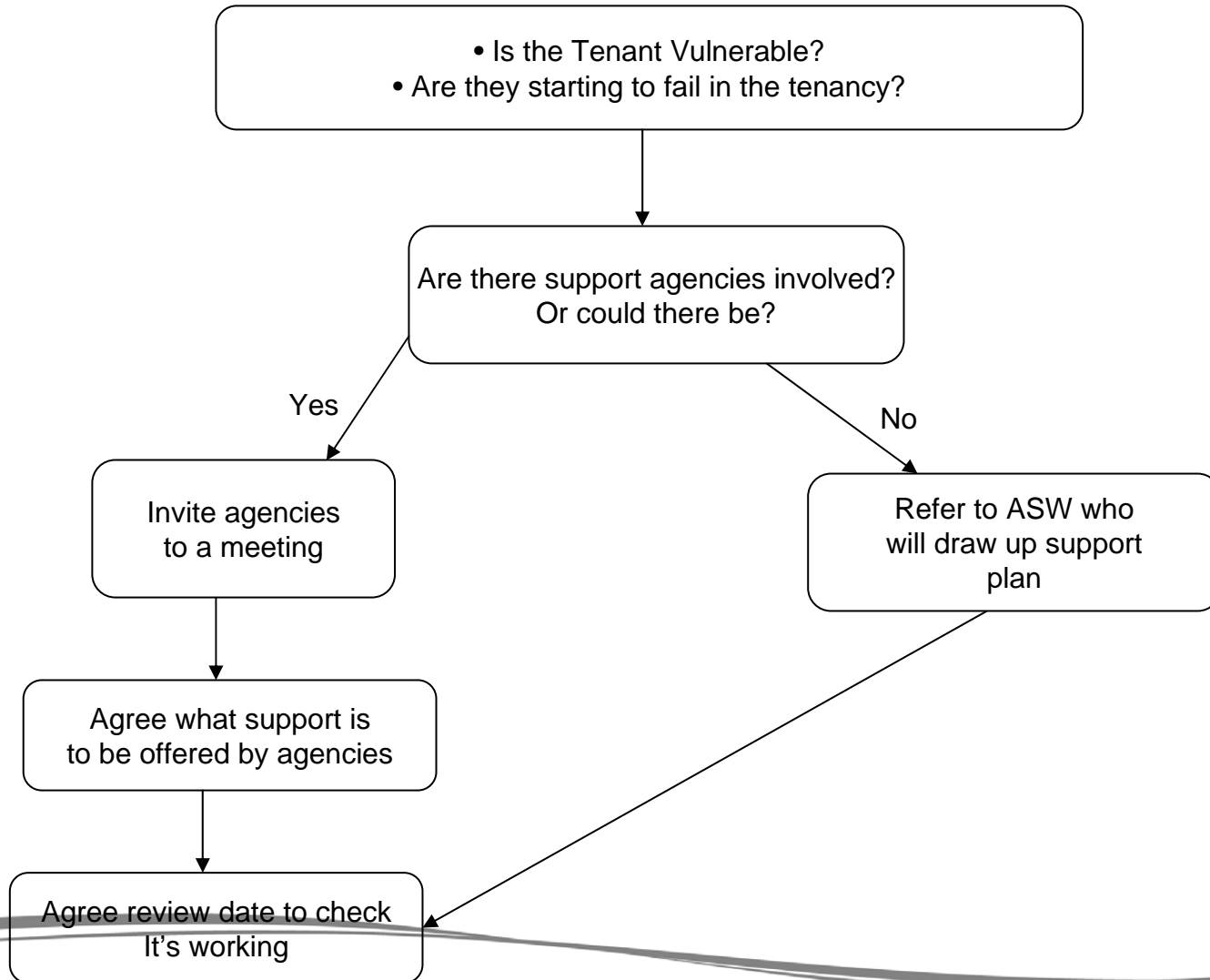
PART ONE – ACTION BEFORE THE TENANCY STARTS (CONT.)



Part Two: During the course of a tenancy

- Housing officer may call case meeting if there are concerns about the tenancy
- Other agencies may call the meeting
- Review Preventing Eviction Plan or develop new Plan
- Steps are aimed at not missing people who are now thought to be vulnerable, and reviewing actions, if things are not working
- Agree respective responsibilities

PART TWO – DURING THE TENANCY



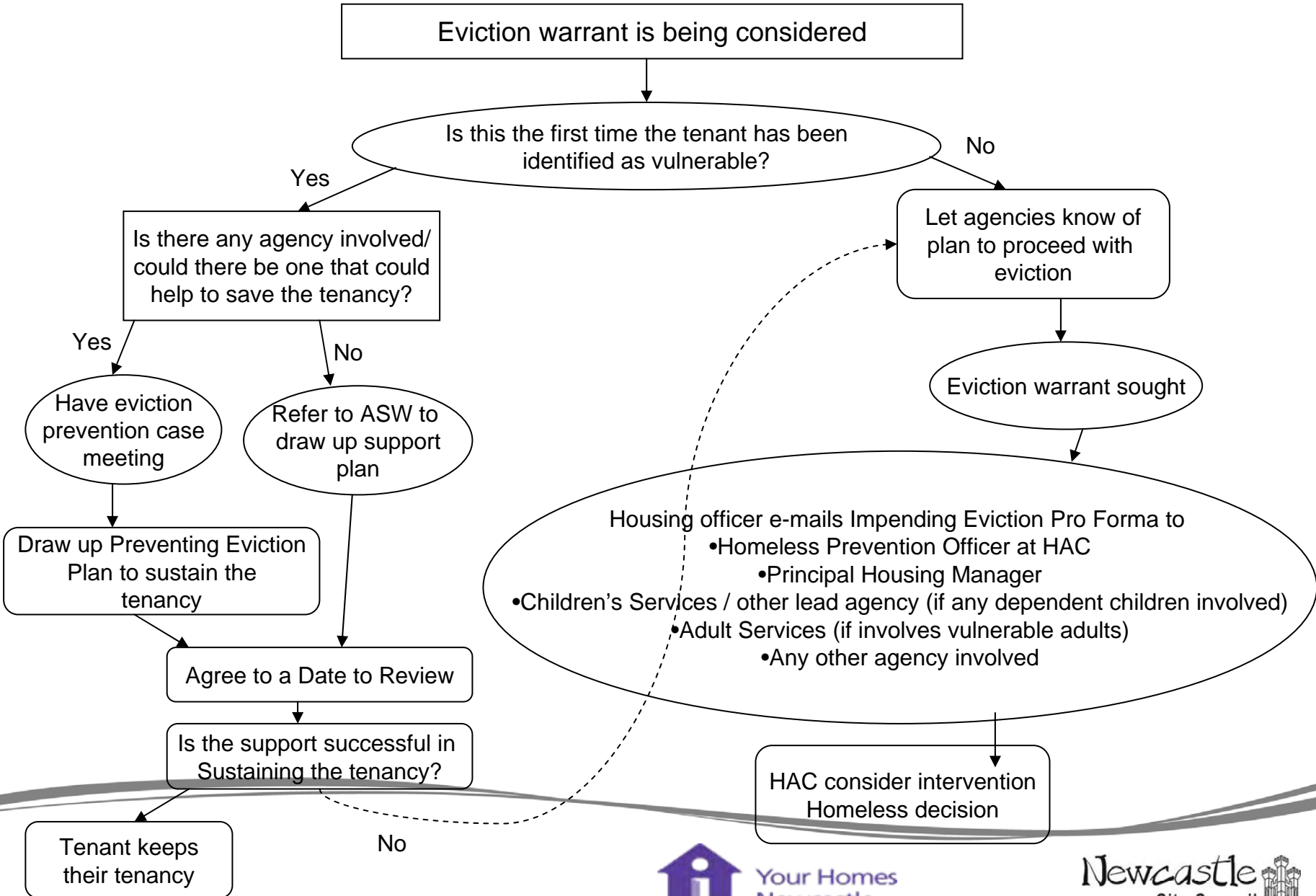
Part Three: If a tenancy is seriously at risk

- Identify any tenant who is vulnerable (same procedure as before – in case not already done)
- Call eviction prevention case meeting (as one last go) if person is vulnerable, and especially if there are children in the household
- Housing officer to fill in Impending Eviction Proforma – *to be sent when warrant is applied for*
- Other agencies may still have a duty, or may be able to influence the tenant

Part Three contd

- Impending Eviction Pro-forma to be sent to:
- HAC
- Principal Housing Manager for YHN, or a nominated senior housing officer for Housing Associations
- Adult Services, where they are already known to be working with the tenant
- Children's Services or another lead agency, wherever children are in the household
- Any other agency known to be working with the tenant

PART THREE – ACTIONS TO PREVENT EVICTION AND THE LOSS OF HOME



Role of housing officer

- At visit or offer stage, identify any applicant who might be vulnerable, and put flag on tenant record
- Contact other agencies already involved or seek information from agencies which might be involved
- Make tenant aware of responsibilities as a tenant
- Provide a named contact to any social worker already involved with the tenant
- Involve YHN Advice & Support Worker if no housing support worker already involved (time permitting, for Housing Association referrals)
- Call case meeting, if necessary, to develop Preventing Eviction Plan (or set up by phone / e-mail), record case meeting, and circulate notes
- Keep case under review, keep paperwork & flag up-to-date
- Inform HAC, social care, & others) if tenancy seriously at risk or eviction imminent

Role of social care agencies

- Inform housing officer if already involved with a vulnerable household
- Agree role in relation to this tenant, and help to make tenant aware of responsibilities as a tenant
- Contribute to Preventing Eviction Plan
- At eviction stage:
 - Safeguarding vulnerable adults from harm, or others from risk of harm
 - Assessment
 - Responding within agreed timescales

Role of social care agencies

- **May be able to intervene where lower level support services have not succeeded, to:**
 - **Persuade / influence the tenant to alter their behaviour**
 - **Help the tenant to maximise their income, or to deal with other debts**
 - **Negotiate on behalf of the household**
 - **Increase their involvement with household if housing issues lead to significant concerns about safeguarding adults or protecting them or others from harm**
 - **Accommodate the person if there is a duty**

Role of mental health workers, Probation, YOT etc

- **Confirming if already involved**
- **Flagging up that the person is vulnerable**
- **Agreeing role in relation to this tenant, and help to make tenant aware of responsibilities as a tenant**
- **Coming to case meetings, carrying out actions as agreed, keeping housing officer informed**
- **Contributing to preventing eviction planning, and flagging up any problems**
- **At impending eviction stage:**
 - **Assessment**
 - **Responding within agreed timescales**
 - **Helping to plan next steps**

Role of housing support agencies

- Help applicants to fill in YCH registration form
- Confirm / inform housing officer if already involved, and flagging up that tenant is vulnerable
- Assess support needs and work with tenant where any needs identified for further work to develop skills for managing a tenancy
- Communicate support needs to housing officer
- Provide support as agreed
- Contribute to reviewing and revising Preventing Eviction Plan
- Communicate with other agencies where difficulties arise e.g. tenant not engaging well, not contactable, or not managing tenant role
- At impending eviction stage: help tenant and other agencies to plan next steps

Role of Homelessness Prevention Officers

- Respond to request for information from housing officer
- Help to identify vulnerable tenants and other agencies working with them
- Provide completed paperwork showing cases applicant has been given homeless priority (now or in the past)
- At impending eviction stage:
 - Help tenant and other agencies to plan next steps e.g. identify suitable alternative accommodation, help tenant to understand what they can do to regain settled accommodation

If PERHP isn't working:

- Please don't keep quiet about it – tell someone!
- Tell one of these people:
 - - Ian Oliver - Supporting People
 - - Neil Munslow – Adult Services
 - - Sharon Williams/ Myra Milne – Children's Services
 - - Martyn Burn - YHN

Monitoring and review

- **Monitoring data sought from all agencies**
- **Monitoring Group meets quarterly: Housing, Supporting People, Adult & Children's Services, YHN, rep of Housing Assns**
- **Next review in January 2011**

Further information

- **Newcastle Homelessness Prevention Project: c/o Housing Advice Centre 277 1733 or 1731**
hpp@newcastle.gov.uk
- **Newcastle Homelessness Forum web page: www.newcastle.gov.uk/nhf**
- **Newcastle Homelessness Prevention Network: page on NHF web page (directory, briefings, conferences, training, and newsletter)**