

Bad housing wrecks lives

Shelter North East

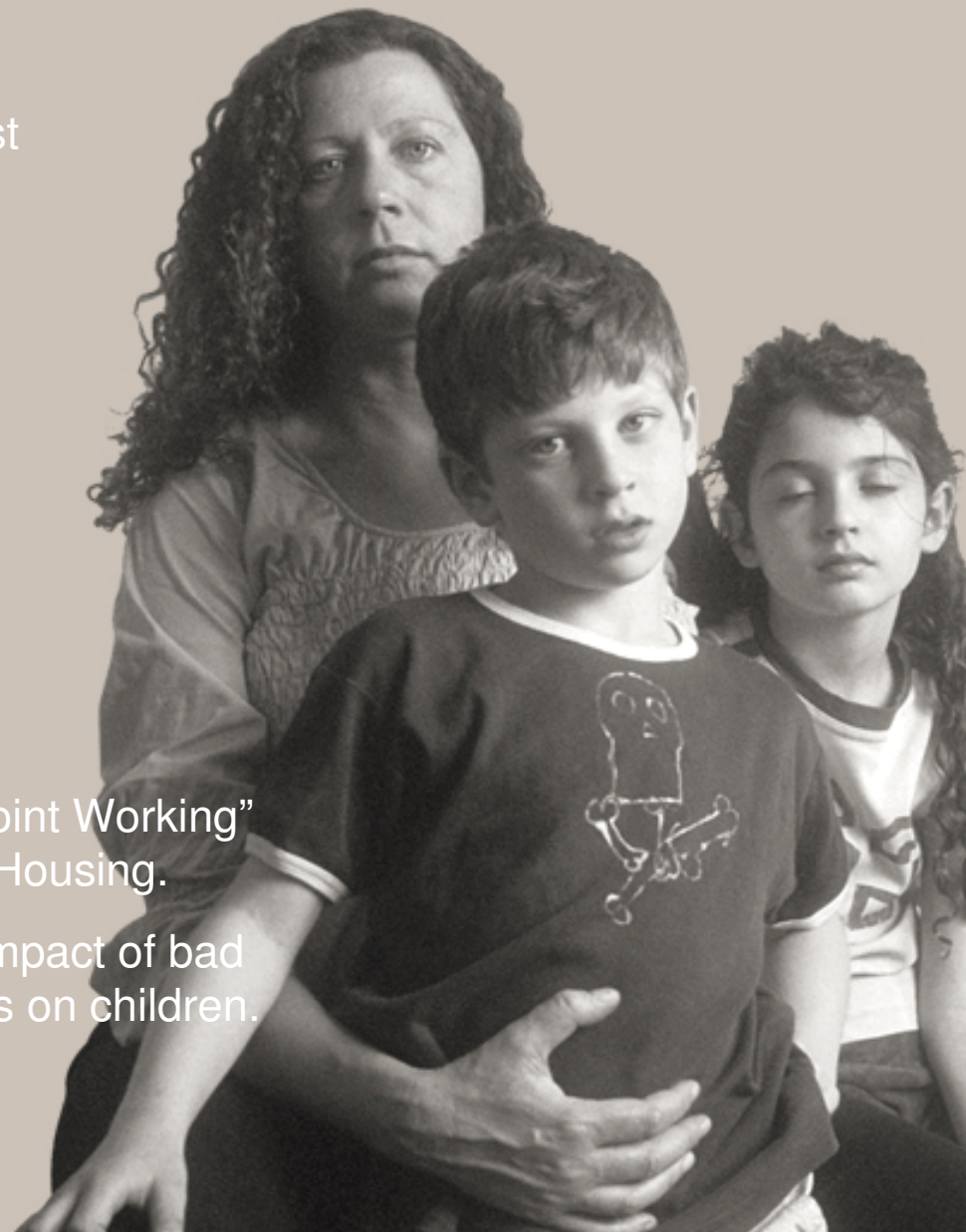
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Shelter North East

- Shelter advice services in the North East
- Tees Valley Children's Service
- Multi Lingual Project
- Regional campaigns

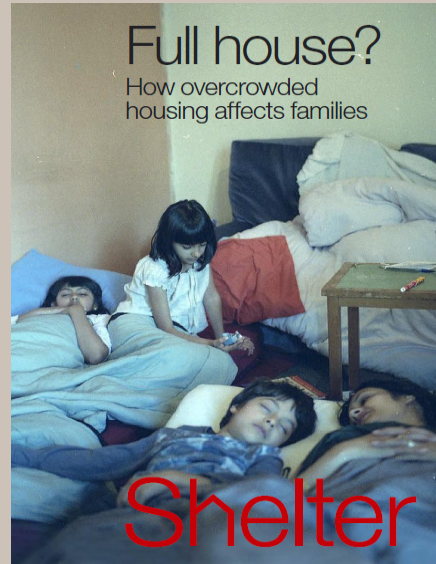
Shelter Children's Service

- Advice and support
 - On the ground with projects
 - In Children's Centres
- Influence local authorities to develop "Joint Working" practices between Children's Services & Housing.
- Influence government to highlight the impact of bad housing, overcrowding and homelessness on children.



Recent Research

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A Question of Choice: Good practice and issues in choice-based lettings (2005). Shelter.

Advantages

- Transparent system
- Choice
- Quick response rates to bids
- More accessible for those with access to internet.

Disadvantages

- Shifts housing priority away from those in most urgent need
- Homeless applicants have less choice and are forced to bid more quickly.
- Vulnerable applicants may struggle with the bidding process.
- Difficulties in enabling mobility between areas and regions

Fair and Flexible – Shelter's Response

Key issues to consider in allocations systems.

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- Strongly support the Governments view that overall priority for social housing should go to those in greatest need.
- Where overcrowding is a particularly serious problem we would welcome local authorities prioritising overcrowding within their reasonable preference category.
- Housing authorities need to exercise extreme care when setting the allocation of social housing within a wider housing options approach.
- Under occupation of tenancies needs to be handled sensitively but would begin to address overcrowding.
- Concerns about policies which promote lettings to particular groups that are not in significant housing need.
- Local community involvement in developing allocations policies increases transparency and dispels myths.

- Clarification on reasonable preference to all people who are homeless. *In accordance with R (on the application of Alam) v Tower Hamlets LBC (Jan 2009).*
 - ‘Authorities may wish to consider the scope for giving more weight to waiting time’ – this may impact upon housing those in most need.
 - Giving more priority to local connection – could discriminate against migrants and longer settled ethnic minority communities.
 - Unfair exclusions by RSL’s – Shelter have called for strong guidance in the TSA Code of Practice.
- “ 52% of respondents were worried or very worried about being excluded because of their age and 45% were worried about having a criminal conviction” (Centre Point, 2008)*

Housing Waiting Lists

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Local authority	Total new lettings	Households on waiting list	Years to clear
ALL	745	4995	7.61
NORTH EAST ENGLAND	818	3588	5.3
Alnwick	172	1,010	5.87
Berwick-upon-Tweed	113	521	4.61
Blyth Valley	481	3,585	7.45
Castle Morpeth	127	1,033	8.13
Chester-le-Street	275	2,596	9.44
Darlington UA	789	2,465	3.12
Derwentside	572	4,269	7.46
Durham	440	2,558	5.81
Easington	903	3,654	4.05
Gateshead	2,117	10,681	5.05
Hartlepool UA	640	3,794	5.93
Middlesbrough UA	1,294	4,746	3.67
Newcastle upon Tyne	2,333	9,489	4.07
North Tyneside	1,378	5,783	4.20
Redcar and Cleveland UA	869	2,572	2.96
Sedgefield	814	1,884	2.31
South Tyneside	1,173	9,578	8.17
Stockton-on-Tees UA	1,337	3,123	2.34
Sunderland	1,862	2,184	1.17
Teesdale	77	485	6.30
Tynedale	196	1,586	8.09
Wansbeck	397	2,500	6.30
Wear Valley	458	2,428	5.30

Shelter, 2009

“78% of stakeholders believed that young people did not have access to enough independent advice”

Advice agencies

- Gentoo
- Solicitors – LSC
- CAB - Washington
- Sunderland City Council Housing Options Team
- Possible launch of Shelter Advice Service in 2010
- Ongoing work to promote Shelter Children’s Service Advice Line.

Clients

- 4 – 5 % of Shelters clients came from Sunderland
- Majority households were families with dependent children followed by single males and single females.
- Majority of households were White British
- Resident from areas SR2, SR3 and SR4

Presenting Problems

- Homelessness, Possession Action, Eviction
- Rent Arrears
- Disrepair
- Harassment.

Pros

- 4 band systems – easier for clients to access preference
- Date of application rather than length of residency
- Consider individual circumstances rather than apply blanket policy.
- Have ability to give multiple priority based on cumulative need.

Cons

- Two band systems – clients need to have extreme need before being given priority status.
- Determining access to a scheme based on length of residency.
- Criteria to submit a new application after every move – issues for clients with no access to settled accommodation.

- Inflexibility and exclusions based on housing related debts
- Advertisements and the scheme not always accessible to hard to reach groups (BME etc.)
- Being inflexible on references – difficult for those from unsettled accommodation.
- Not all partners operate same allocations criteria
- Inaccessible allocations policies not available in public domain.
- Homeless Teams using TA out of area – issues for families with children.
- Discharging duties through PRS.

- Adopt a system which ensures that social housing goes to those in greatest need.
- Clear guidance and flexibility on exclusions policies – no blanket policies.
- Multi band systems to allow for increased client choice and preference.
- Band applications based on date submitted rather than length of residency.
- Have all partner agencies adopt one policy
- Continue to address cumulative need
- Preference to transfer for tenants who are under occupying
- Retain reasonable preference groups in banding system.

**For further details or copies
of any of Shelter's reports please contact:**

Tracy Guy

Service Manager (North East)

Tracy_guy@shelter.org.uk

Nina Cara-Collins

Regional Children's Coordinator (North East / Yorkshire)

Nina_cara-collins@shelter.org.uk