

## St Helens North Parliamentary Constituency

This is the first bulletin of 2014 produced by Northern Housing Consortium (NHC) providing analysis of housing-related data for the Parliamentary Constituencies in the North of England. The report provides analysis of the impacts of welfare reform and the housing market in the constituency.

We have used the following symbols to indicate your performance against the relevant regional or national statistics.



Above average



Reference point



Below average

### Welfare Reform



The third [Real Life Reform](#) report found an increase in the average debt of respondents taking part in the study (£3,503) with debt repayments increasing by 58% since October. 46% of participants report having nothing left each week to live on once rent and essentials such as food and bills have been paid.



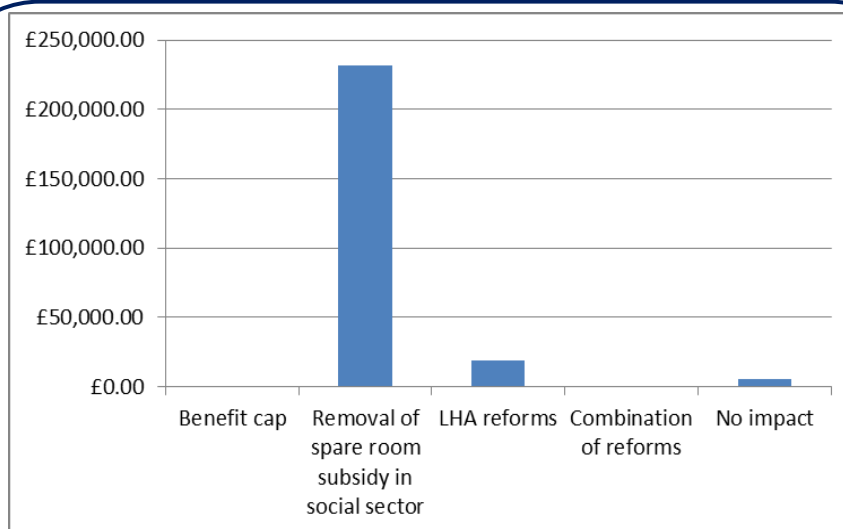
Last year we reported that in St Helens North, 5,232 children live in poverty – 25% of the child population in the constituency. According to figures by The Children's Society, 4,197 children in poverty are estimated to miss out on the [warm home discount](#) in the constituency.



A number of sources report that households affected by the spare room subsidy cannot move due to a lack of suitable accommodation. In the first three quarters of 2013/14, there were 1,096 general needs lettings in St Helens (CORE data). This compares to 881 lettings in the same period of 2012/13 (a 24.4% increase). Lettings of one-bedroom properties fell by 1.3% (Q3 2013/14 compared to Q3 2012/13).



Data released by the Department of Communities and Local Government in October shows that a total of £399,636 was allocated to St Helens Council in Discretionary Housing Payment funding. Of that, £255,998 has been committed (64.1%). The greatest demand on this (£232,018) was to support 724 households affected by the removal of spare room subsidy in the social rented sector.



**Figure 1:** Summary of DHP Awards

## Housing Market



The Chancellor announced in his Budget Statement that the Help to Buy Equity Loan scheme will be extended until March 2020. Since its launch on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 to the end of February 2014, a total of 104 homes were bought in St Helens with support of the scheme. This represents 23.9% of the 436 completed equity loans in Merseyside.



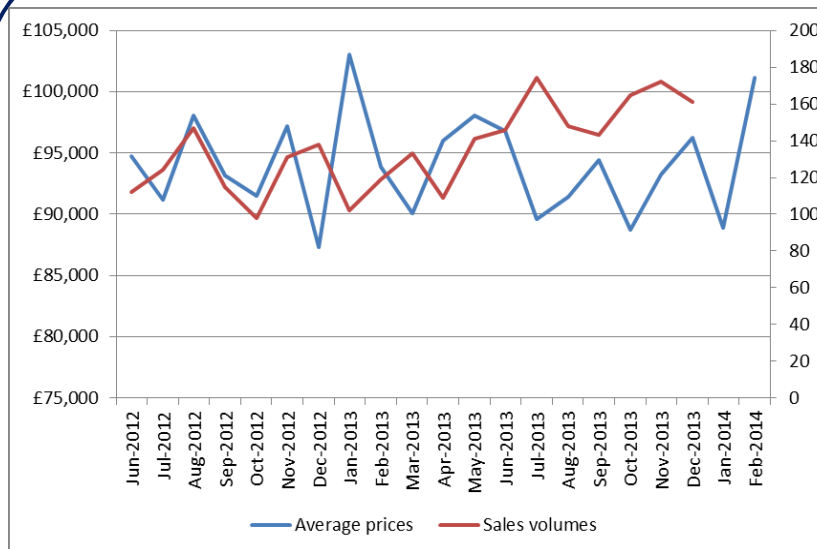
Average house prices in St Helens in February 2014 stood at £101149 an increase of 7.7% on the same period in 2013. This is driven by sales volumes being on a general upward trend, ending on 161 in December 2013 compared with 138 in December 2012.



Vacant dwellings have been on a general downward trend since 2008. In October 2013 there were a total of 2,575 vacant dwellings in St Helens compared with 2,592 in 2008. Of the 2013 figure, 241 were owned by housing associations. Long-term vacants have fallen by 5% since 2008.



In 2012/13, St Helens Council made a total of 232 homeless decisions. Of these, 151 applicants were accepted as being homeless and in priority need (65.1%). The number accepted as being homeless equates to 1.99 per 1,000 households in the borough – down from 2.43 in 2011/12 and from 2.99 in 2010/11.



**Figure 2: Change in house prices and sales volumes**

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