

City of Chester Parliamentary Constituency

This is the second bulletin of 2017 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

Health Issues



Falls are a significant cause of emergency hospital admissions for older people and are a major factor in people moving into nursing homes or residential care. There is a clear deprivation gradient in the rate of hospital admissions for falls, with the rate for the most deprived decile being 1.6 times that of the least deprived decile.



Hospital Episode Statistics shows that in 2015/16 there were 1,669 emergency hospital admissions due to falls of over 65 year olds in Cheshire West and Chester. This equates to 2,453 per 10,000 population which compares to an average of 2,770 in Cheshire and 2,452 in the North West.



Although the NHS is responsible for most “bed blocking”, the number attributable to social care has been increasing. In Cheshire West and Chester, 18 days per 1,000 people aged 18+ between April 2016 and January 2017 were due to social care issues (13.5 in Cheshire). This increases to 155 days for over 75s only (119 in Cheshire). Cheshire West and Chester received almost £12m in the additional adult social care funding.



Data produced by NHS Digital shows that between October 2015 and September 2016, there were 452 emergency readmissions to hospital in Countess of Chester NHS Trust – a crude rate of 3.0. This is a, increase in rate from 2.3 in the same period of 2013/14.

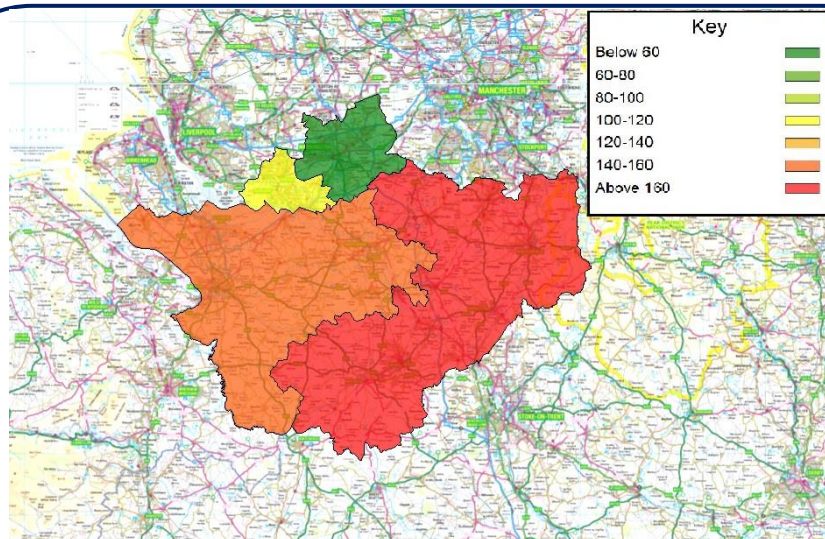


Figure 1: Bed blocking for over 75s in the sub-region

Universal Credit



In response to concerns raised by Northern Housing Consortium (NHC) members about the impact Universal Credit was having on their customers and the landlords, NHC embarked on a longitudinal research project to monitor these impacts over the course of the year April 2016 to March 2017. Reports were published at each stage of the project and these can be found at <https://www.northern-consortium.org.uk/services/policy/welfare/>



The full Universal Credit service was rolled out to Chester JobCentres in July 2017 and at October 2017, there were 1,488 people claiming the new benefit in the constituency. This is an increase from 1,366 in September and compares to a Cheshire average of 1,851.



Amongst NHC's findings was that people working variable hours such as zero hour contracts, part-time etc. were struggling to keep track of what Universal Credit they were being paid and as such struggled to pay their housing costs. DWP figures show that 578 UC claimants in the constituency are in employment.



As the infographic below shows, NHC found that rent arrears are increasing and DWP figures show that most households in the constituency are entitled to the housing element of UC (571). Of these, over half live in social accommodation (61.1% compared to 38.9% in private accommodation).



The Universal Credit Impact Report

Based upon respondents from 38 organisations representing a total of 628,373 households and 10,965 Universal Credit claimants from across the North

Impact on the tenant

78% of respondents to our Universal Credit Impact Report survey (Round 4) experienced delays in processing claims. This fell from 84.2% in our Round 1 report.

92% of tenants on variable hours reported finding it difficult to keep track of how much they are being paid. As a result 94.7% said tenants were having difficulty meeting housing costs.

Members aware of tenants with health issues, including stress, depression and anxiety, increased from **two-fifths** to **over half** over the course of the project.

All respondents said that they were aware of tenants turning to foodbanks to feed their families.

Impact on the landlord

The percentage of respondents reporting evictions due to rent arrears increased since the rollout of UC to

27%

41% said tenants terminated their own tenancy as a result of UC. Some respondents said these tenants were sofa surfing or living with family.

The average amount of arrears per responding organisation is

£180,000

Average tenant arrears: **£427**



91.7% said staff were spending more time supporting people through UC than HB

36.1% of landlords had introduced credit checks before letting units to new tenants



DWP Experience

89% said that there had been communication problems between tenants/orgs and DWP

Over the year, average UC claim processing times increased from **27.8** working days to **41.5** working days (+49%).

75% of respondents said they received different answers to the same question from different DWP sources.

Figure 2: NHC Universal Credit findings

If you have any queries regarding the content of the APPG briefings, please contact:
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