

Bellingham / North Tyne Housing Needs Survey Final Report

February 2019

Produced for Northumberland County Council



Introduction

In September 2018, Northumberland County Council commissioned Community Action Northumberland (CAN) to undertake a Local Housing Needs Survey for Bellingham and the surrounding area. This was designed to provide detailed information which would directly input to the development of proposals to help meet the identified strategic need for affordable homes in this area, particularly in relation to older people. The precise list of parishes covered by the survey is as follows:

- Bavington
- Bellingham
- Corsenside
- Falstone
- Kielder
- Kirkwhelpington
- Otterburn
- Rochester & Byrness
- Tarsset with Greystead

Since April 2017, CAN has been contracted by Northumberland County Council to establish a Community-led Housing Hub to act as a support platform for local communities wishing to explore the potential for community-led housing in its various forms and to deliver local affordable homes where they are needed. This hub is called 'Communities CAN.'

This work is initially funded through the Northumberland County Council allocation of the government's Community Housing Fund and seeks to support all stages of development, including the initial identification of housing need.

As part of this work, CAN is funded to undertake Local Housing Needs Surveys where requested to do so and where there is a realistic prospect of any need identified resulting in the delivery of additional affordable homes.

In undertaking Housing Needs Surveys, CAN follows the principles set out in national guidelines drawn up by the Rural Housing Enablers Network as follows:

1. The goal of all Housing Needs Surveys is to provide an objective evidenced overview of the scale and nature of the full range of housing need in a locality, usually a village or parish.
2. Housing Needs Surveys are independent and balanced and seen to be so.
3. The process for collecting the data is open, fair and transparent.
4. Any secondary data used as a principal source of information or to augment data collected from households is up to date and relevant to the geography of the survey.
5. Data is anonymised and confidentiality and data protection statements are clear and correct.
6. The community, which is wider than just the Parish Council, is informed of the reasons for the survey, invited to participate and able to access the results.
7. The reports are written in plain English with explanations of how the findings and conclusions are drawn, including any caveats and noting sources of data.
8. Housing Needs Survey reports are publicly available once the commissioning body has agreed and signed off the survey.
9. Housing Needs Surveys are a snapshot in time, their 'shelf-life' is stated and a process for updating the data is available.
10. The Housing Needs Survey is only the start of the process. Once it is completed ongoing liaison should be maintained with the community, housing association or other developer, local authority and landowner to take the project forward.

Population profile

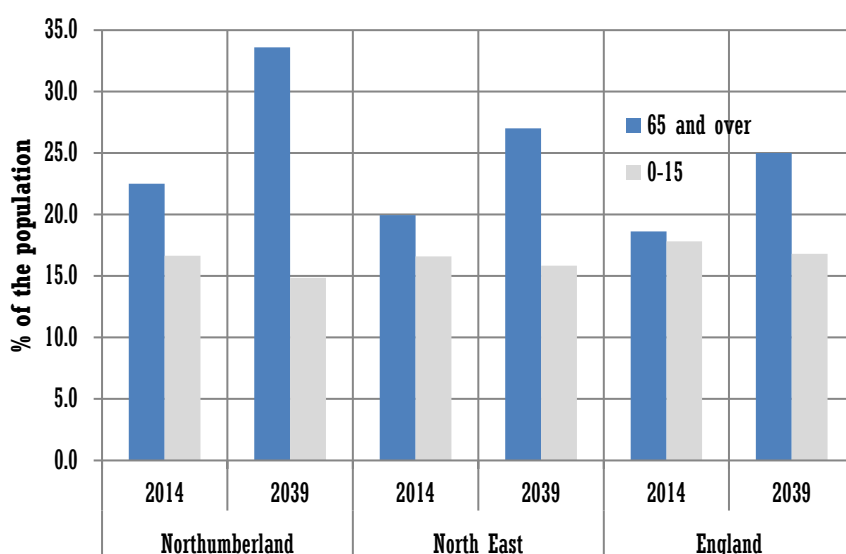
At the time of the 2011 Census 4,074 people lived in the parishes covered by this survey in 1,824 households. Average household size was 2.2 people per household. 15% of the population was aged 0-15 years (compared to 17% across Northumberland) whilst 22% were aged 65 or over (compared to 20% across Northumberland).

63.2% of households were owner occupiers compared to 66% across the county, whilst 14.1% of households were renting from a social landlord (18.7% for Northumberland) and 21.6% rented from a private landlord (13.3% across the county).

26.9% of households contained just one person, 52.2% of which were 65 years or older. Only 11.6% of households had no car or van.

The survey covered an area of 868 square kilometres, representing 17% of the area of Northumberland. Population density in the area is extremely low at 4.7 people per square kilometre compared to 63.0 for Northumberland and 406.9 for England as a whole.

The ageing population structure of Northumberland is well documented and this trend is predicted to continue into the future. The graph below shows projections from Northumberland Knowledge with respect to the growing proportion of the population that will be 65 years and older by 2039. In the parishes covered by this survey, 22% of the population already fell into this age group at the time of the census in 2011. The continued ageing of the population will clearly impact on the range of services and housing needs in the future.



Source: [Northumberland Knowledge Age Profiles](#)

The Housing Needs Survey

Our Housing Needs Survey involved the distribution of a questionnaire to all households within the parishes of Bavington, Bellingham, Corsenside, Falstone, Kielder, Kirkwhelpington, Otterburn, Rochester & Byrness and Tasset with Greystead. The questionnaire was based on a tried and tested questionnaire utilised elsewhere which was developed and amended through discussion and agreement with Northumberland County Council.

The questionnaire was distributed by post to all 1961 households in the 9 parishes. A freepost envelope was provided to each household for return of completed questionnaires.

The questionnaire included six initial questions to be answered by all households and a further eight questions which only needed to be answered by those households who had expressed some form of housing need. For respondents planning to divide their current households into two or more households, an additional sheet was included enabling relevant questions to be completed for each of the proposed new households.

**BELLINGHAM / NORTH TYNE
HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY**

Northumberland County Council is aware that a lack of suitable affordable housing is an issue for many rural communities. We are interested in your views on the principle of providing affordable homes for local people in Bellingham and the North Tyne Valley. A particular need has been identified for the elderly in this area. We would therefore be grateful if you could take a little time to help us by filling in this questionnaire.

This questionnaire is being distributed to all homes in the parishes of Bellingham, Bavington, Corsenside, Falstone, Greystead, Kielder, Kirkwhelpington, Otterburn, Rochester and Tasset.

PART ONE – TO BE COMPLETED BY ALL HOUSEHOLDS

Q1. Please tell us about your household's connection with the North Tyne area

Do you live in the North Tyne area? Yes No

- If yes, please specify the parish where you live Parish

- If yes, how long has a member of your household lived here? Yes Mths

Does any member of your household have close family (parents, children or siblings) living in the North Tyne area? Yes No

Does any member of your household work in the North Tyne area? Yes No

- If yes, how long have they worked here? Yes Mths

Would you be happy to live in suitable accommodation in Bellingham? Yes No

If no, where is your preferred location to live (please give your reasons in the box below)? Location

Q2. Please provide details of everyone living in your home including yourself.

Relationship to You	Employment status*	<25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Self								

*Please select one of the following options: employed/ looking after home or family/ sick or disabled/ unemployed/ student/ child/ retired

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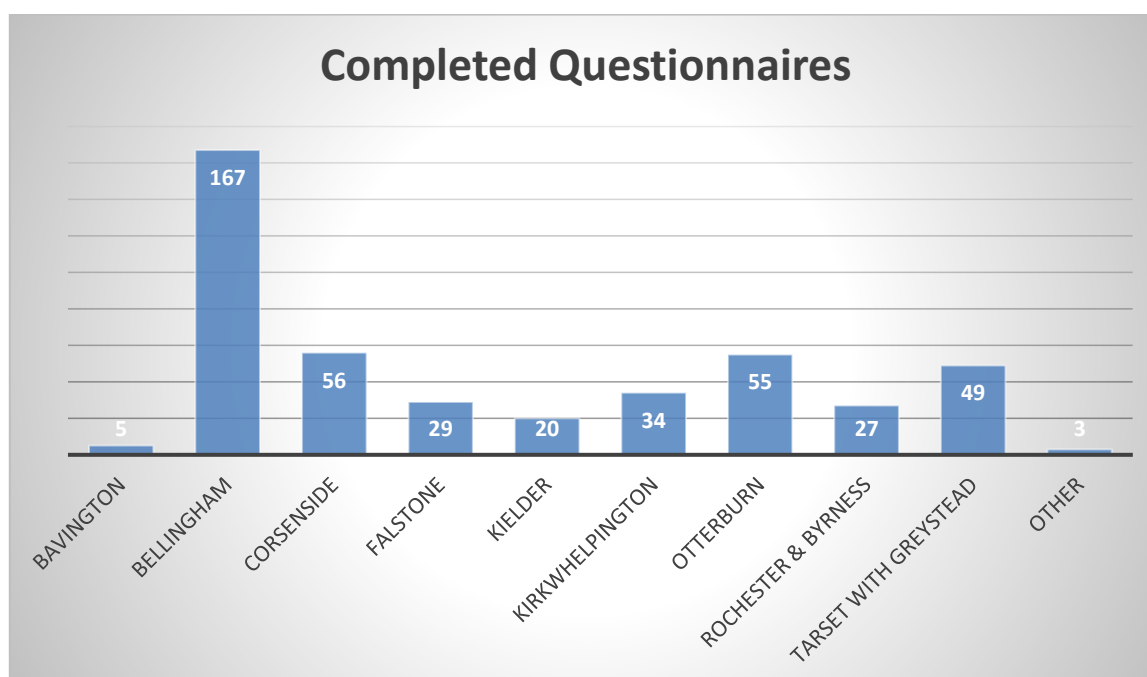
A total of 451 completed questionnaires were returned representing a response rate of 23%. This is a good response rate for questionnaires of this nature, particularly given the large geographic area covered by the survey.

This was a survey of existing residents and, therefore, is an expression of the needs and desires of these residents reflecting the current age profile of Bellingham and the surrounding area.

Research Findings

Connection to the North Tyne area

The overwhelming majority of respondents (99.1%) lived in North Tyne area. This is not surprising given the distribution of the questionnaire to households in this area only but does mean that the responses provide a good picture of local needs. The distribution of all respondents is shown below.



Response rates for each parish varied as shown below with strong response rates recorded in Tarsat with Greystead, Bellingham, Coronside and Falstone.

	Response rate %
Bavington	4.5
Bellingham	28.3
Coronside	24.0
Falstone	23.8
Kielder	19.2
Kirkwhelpington	16.7
Otterburn	19.5
Rochester & Byrness	17.9
Tarsat with Greystead	35.8

Overall, 47.7% of respondents have close family (parents, children or siblings) living in the North Tyne area. 44.6% of all respondents had at least one member of their household who worked in the North Tyne area. This is considerably higher than comparable statistics in

other areas where CAN has carried out Housing Need Surveys over the last two years – 36% in Embleton, 34% in Wooler and 23% in Lesbury.

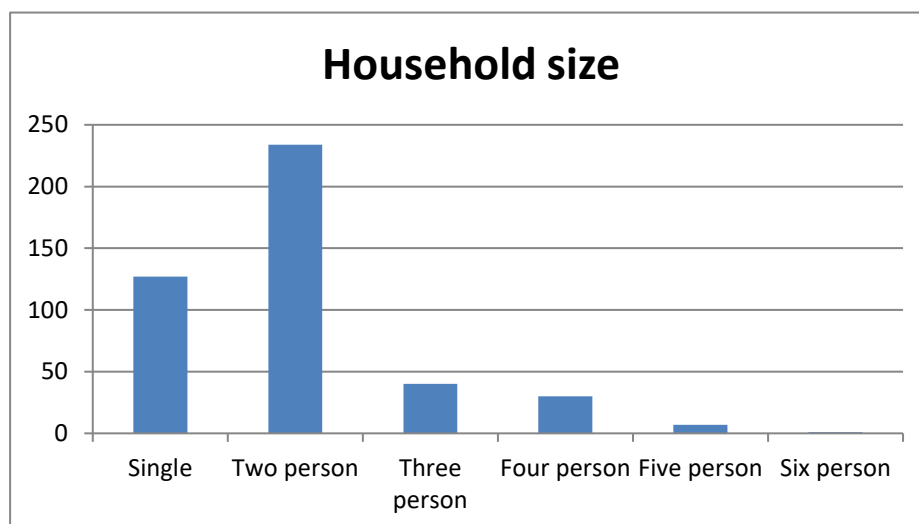
The majority of respondents (59.1%) stated that they would be happy to live in suitable accommodation in the Bellingham area. Given that only 37% of respondents currently live in Bellingham, this means that a reasonable proportion of those currently living in more rural locations would be happy to move to Bellingham. 40.9% of all respondents would not consider moving to Bellingham.

Of those respondents who would not consider moving to Bellingham, 75.8% wished to remain in a more rural community, 14.2% wished to move to the Tyne Valley and 10% wished to move further afield.

The great majority of respondents currently living in Bellingham would be happy to remain there (91.6%).

Household characteristics

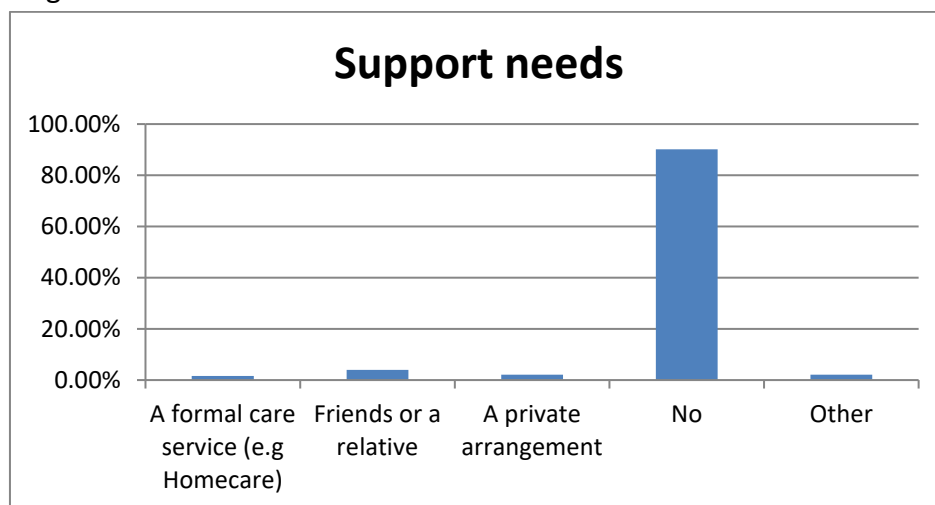
A large proportion of respondents (53.3%) were in two-person households with a further 28.9% living alone.



The proportion of individuals completing the questionnaire who were retired was 53.3%. The proportion in employment was 41.9%.

73.7% of respondents owned their own homes (with or without a mortgage). 13.5% rented from a private landlord and 10.4% from a social landlord. 48.3% of all responding households lived in a 2 or 3 bedroom house and 25.3% in a 2 or 3 bedroom bungalow. 23% of households lived in a property with 4 or more bedrooms.

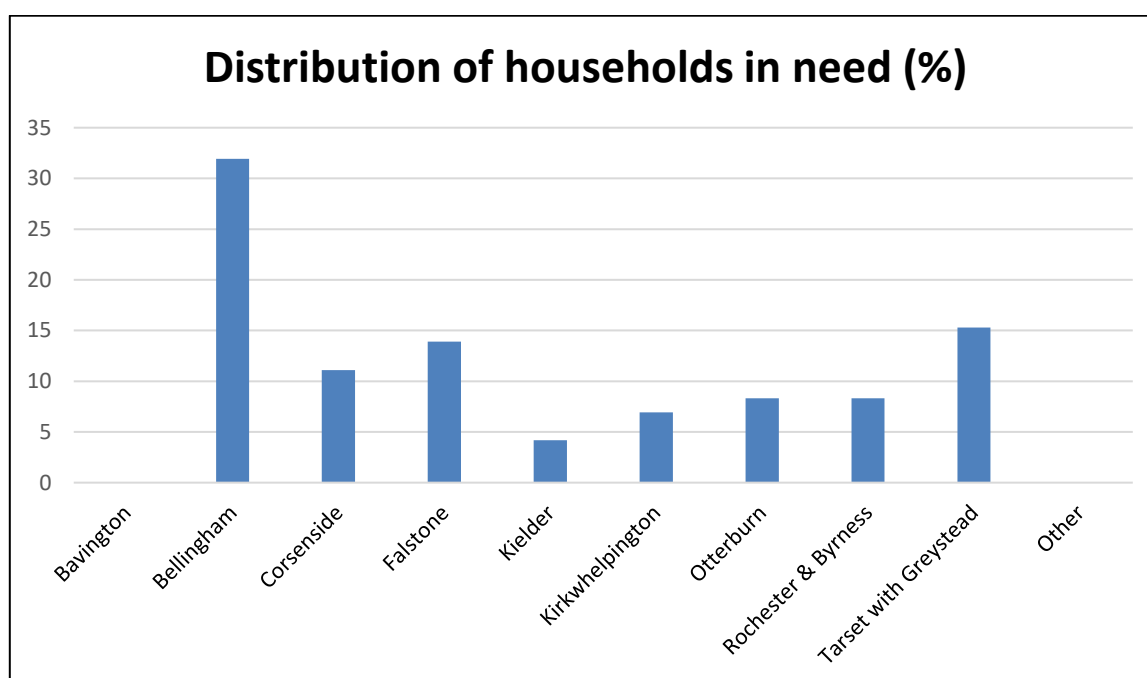
The overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that no member of their household currently receives support to live in their home (90.2%). A total of 17 responding households contain a household member who receives support from a friend or relative, 9 from a private arrangement and 7 from a formal care service.



Households in need

A total of 73 households who responded to the questionnaire indicated that their current home was not suitable for their household's needs over the next five years. The remaining elements of the questionnaire were only to be completed by these 73 households. The Research Findings below relate solely to these respondents.

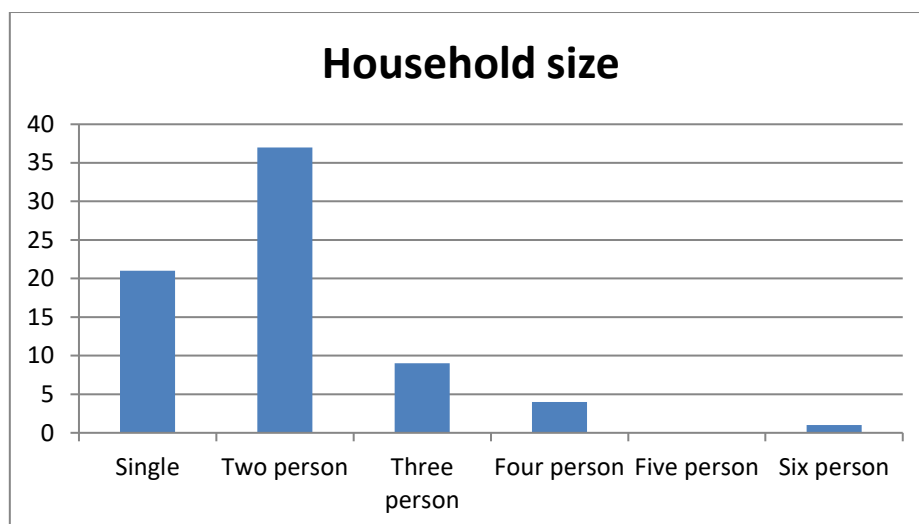
Households in need were spread around the area with particular concentrations in Bellingham (23 households), Tasset with Greystead (11 households) and Falstone (10 households).



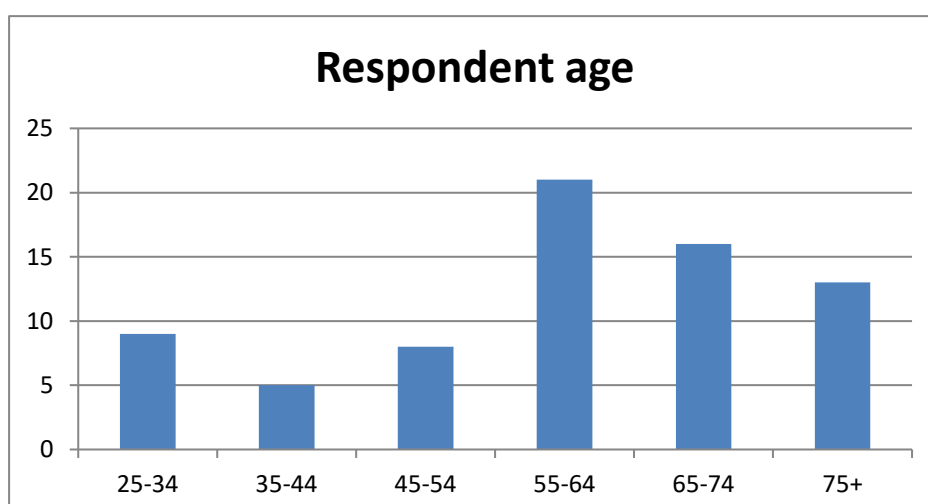
Characteristics of households in need

More households in need have close family (parents, children or siblings) living in the North Tyne area than the overall response rate – 62.5% compared to 47.7% - and more have at least one household member that works in the area – 56.5% compared to 44.6%.

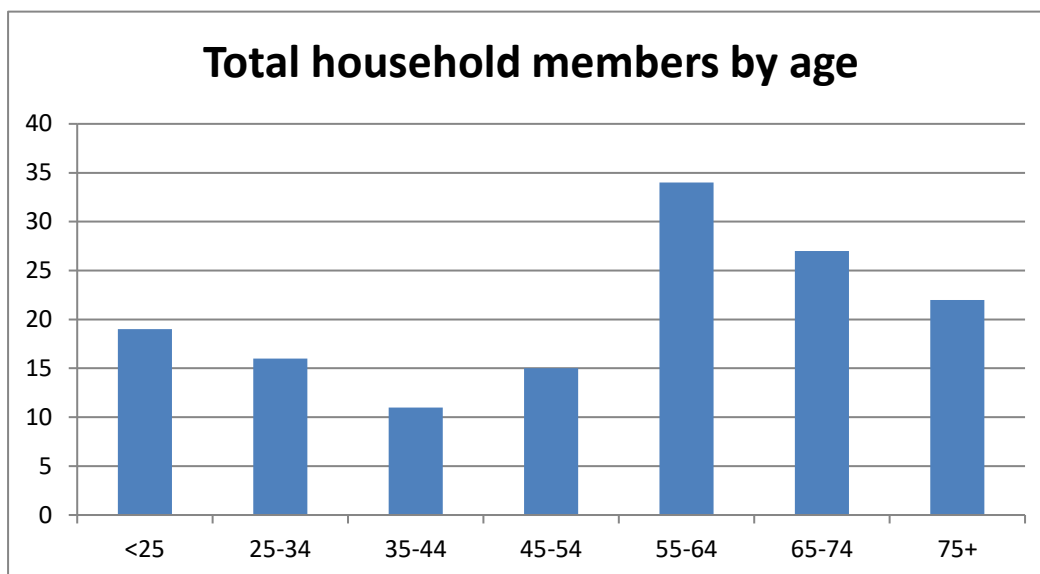
A large proportion of respondents (51.4%) were in two-person households with a further 29.2% living alone. 19.44% of households in need contained 3 or more people.



The proportion of individuals completing the questionnaire who were retired was 41.7%. The proportion in employment was 54.2%. The age profile of those completing the questionnaire is shown below.



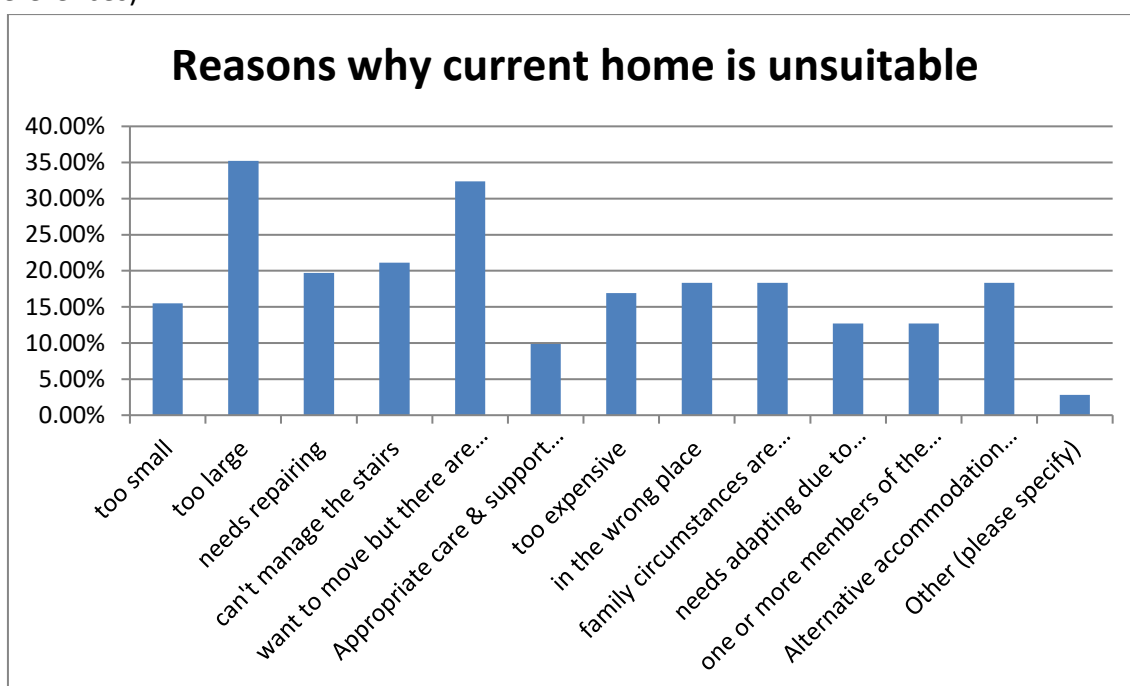
Those households indicating a need were home to a total of 19 people under the age of 25 and also 49 people 65 or over. The table below shows the total number of people living in the respondent households by age.



A total of 10 households in need stated that at least one member of the household currently receives support to live in their home.

Type of need

The reasons why households indicated that their current home is unsuitable for their needs were varied. The main reasons for housing need were that existing accommodation is too large (25) followed by no suitable homes are available locally (23), can't manage the stairs (15) and the current home needs repairing (14). The percentage of respondents indicating each area of need is shown in the table below (NB: respondents could indicate multiple preferences).



The survey included an opportunity for respondents to explain their reasons for needing to move in more detail. Responses to this question break down into a range of broad categories shown in the table below.

Response	%
Health issues (current and future proofing)	20
Current property too remote from services	15
Son / daughter requires separate accommodation	12
Poor current state of property repair	4
Current property too large	3

Thirteen of those households who expressed a need, stated that new accommodation was required to house additional household members (a parent, child, spouse or other).

Overall, responses indicate clear issues relating to:

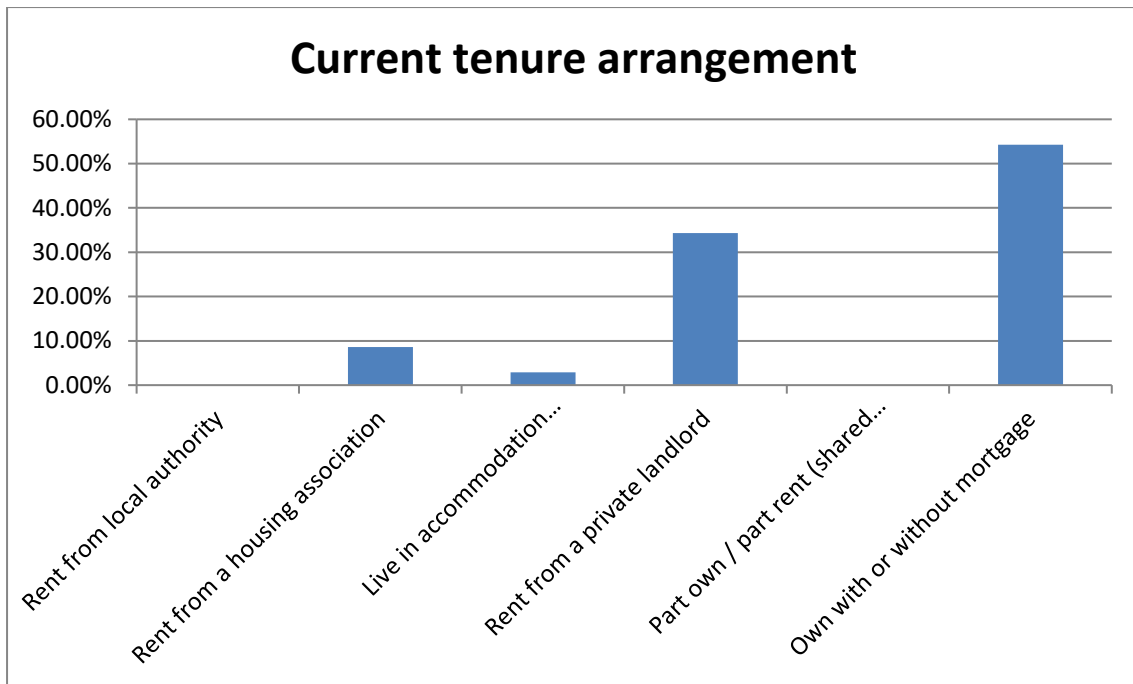
1. The need for improved access to services, particularly as people age
2. Households containing young people requiring their own accommodation and households requiring larger accommodation as they grow.

The text map below indicates some of the key words used in responses regarding housing need.

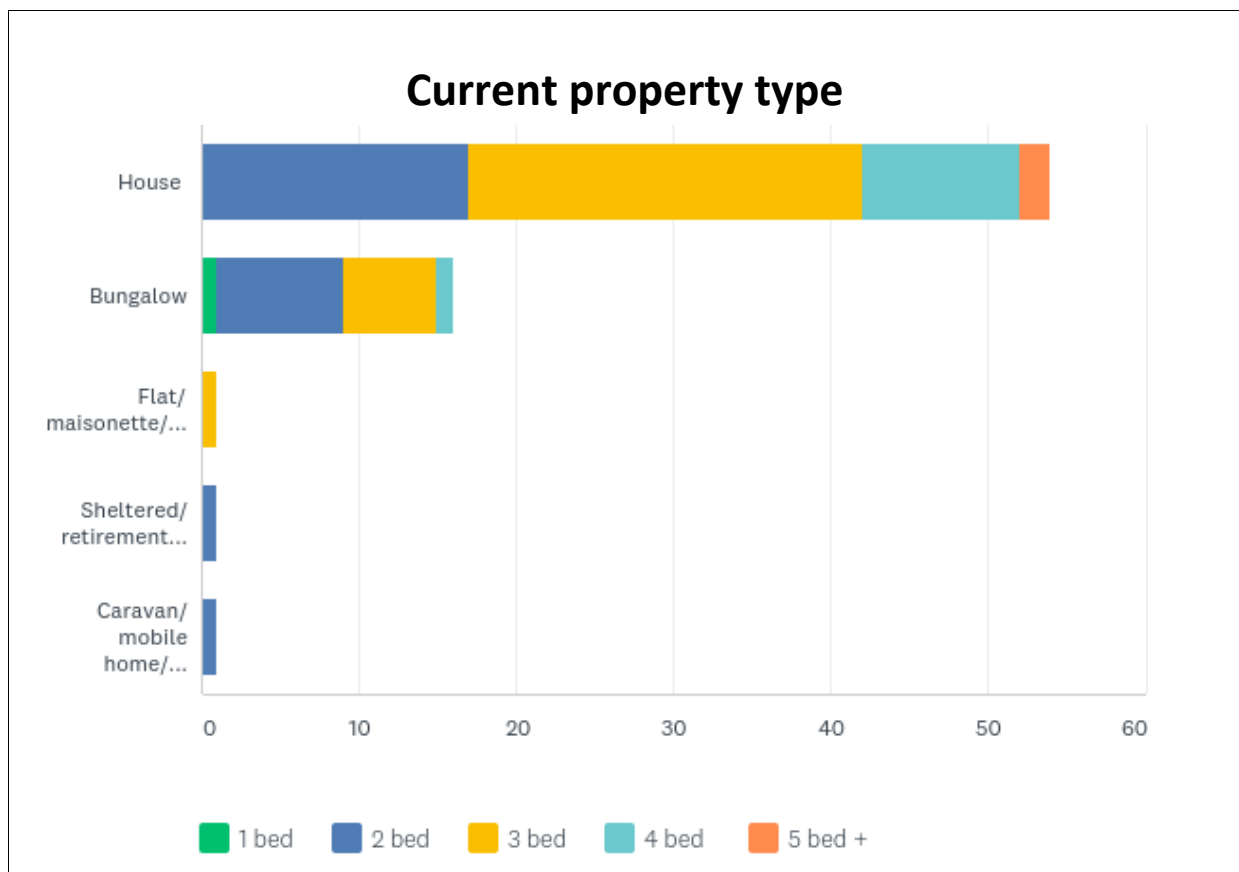
move Also public transport need move rent access property bus service
 family stairs home bungalow house years need
 better live son shops afford will doctors suitable nearer closer
 larger bedroom older

Existing tenure and property type

Just over half of all respondents (54%), who expressed a housing need, were owner occupiers. 34% rented from a private landlord whilst 9% rented from a housing association. An additional 3% live in accommodation provided by their employer.



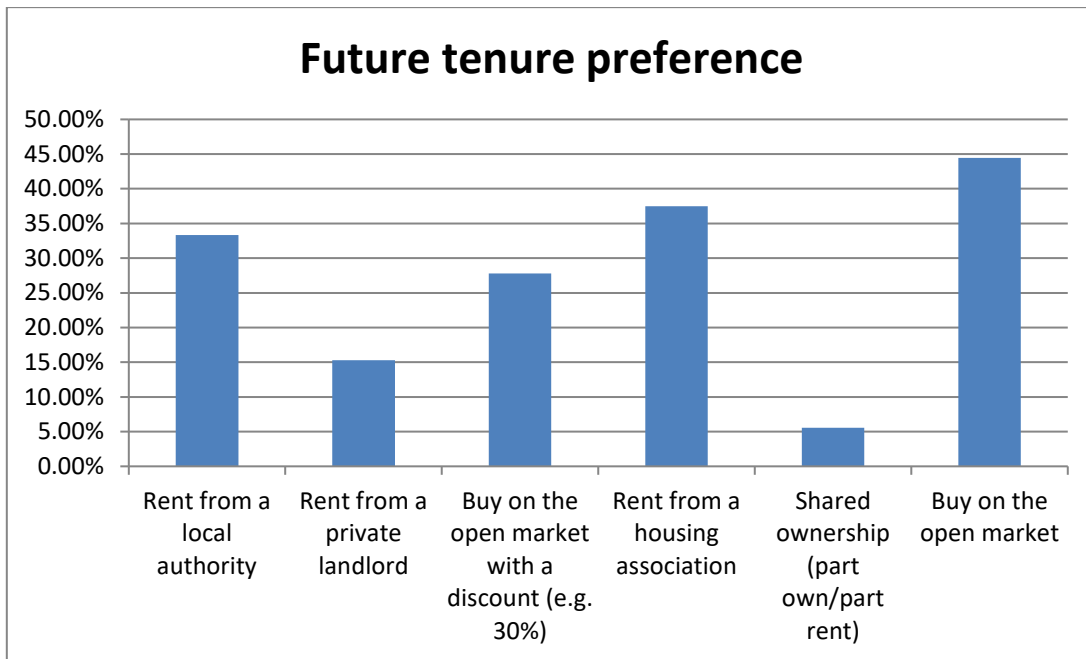
The majority of respondents (74%) currently live in a house. 22% currently live in a bungalow with the remainder split across other accommodation types. The most common type of existing accommodation is a three-bedroom house (34% of all respondents expressing a need.)



Future tenure preferences

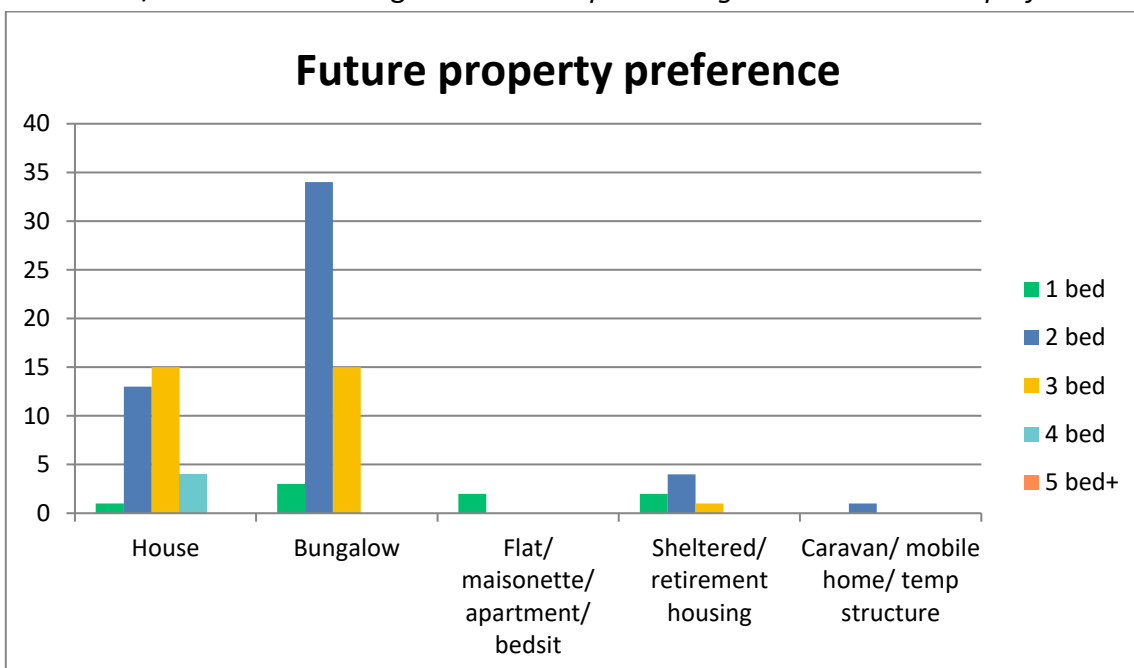
Buying on the open market was the preferred option for 44.4% of those households expressing a housing need. 37.5% indicated a desire for affordable rented homes from a Housing Association (27 households) and 33.3% from the local authority (24 households). A significant proportion (27.8%) indicated a preference for discounted purchase (20 households) and 15.3% would be happy to rent from a private landlord (11 households).

NB: respondents could indicate multiple preferences.



Future property type preferences

The largest demand is for two-bedroom bungalows (34 preferences in total) followed by three-bedroom houses and bungalows (15 preferences each). 7 preferences were expressed for sheltered/retirement housing. *NB: some respondents gave more than one preference*



Specific health, accessibility and other needs

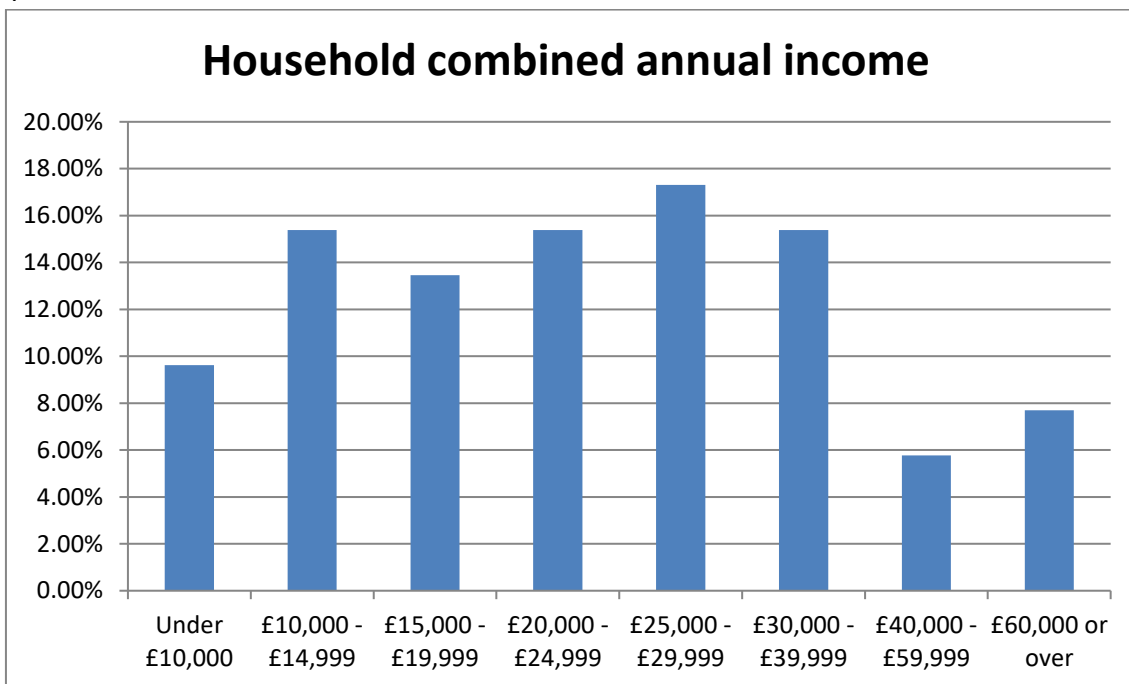
18 respondents expressed specific health or accessibility issues which would require a specific type of accommodation. Six responses related to the need to avoid stairs, three responding households included a household member with learning difficulties and the remaining nine responses all related to specific health conditions.

Northumberland Homefinder register

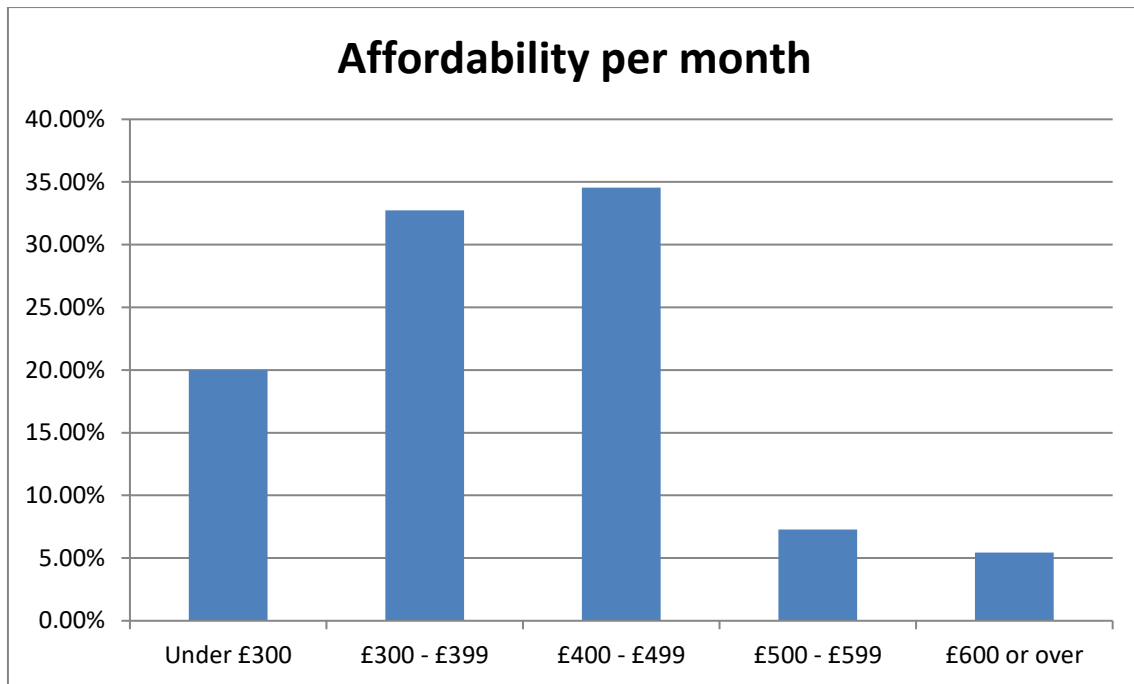
Only 7 of the households who expressed a housing need were registered with Northumberland Homefinder. Of these households, only one indicated that they had bid for a property in the last 12 months. This confirms the view that data from the register only relates to a small subset of the actual need which exists.

Household income and affordability

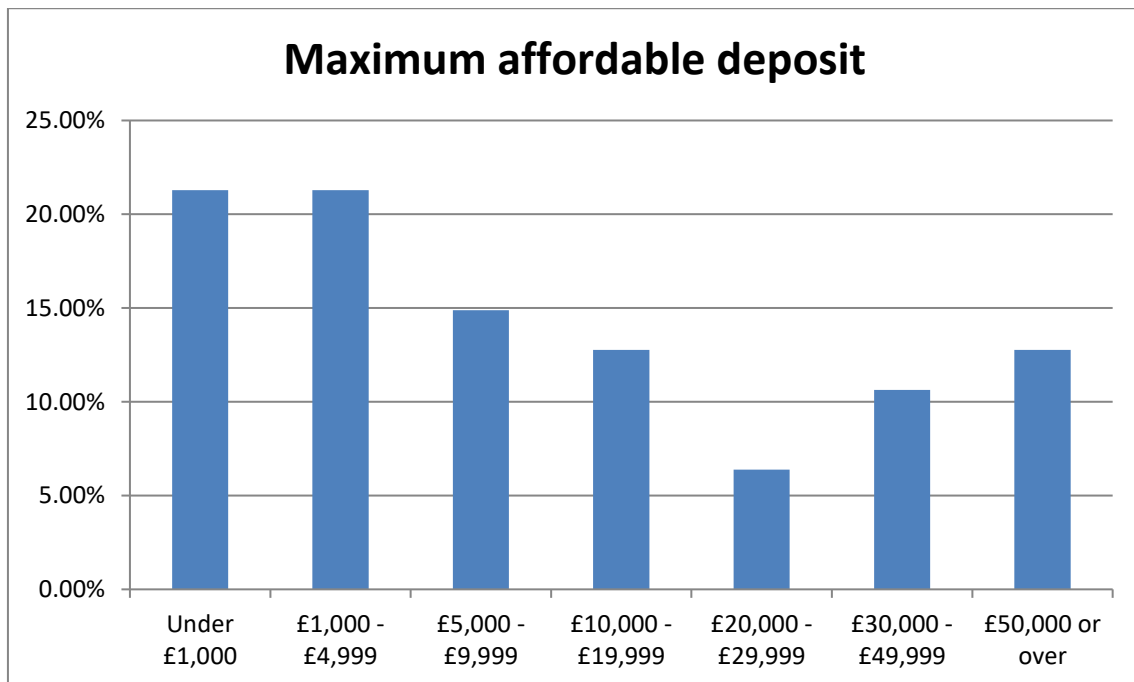
54% of respondents, who indicated their household income and expressed a housing need, indicated an annual household income of less than £25,000 (28 households). Only 13% of respondents indicated an annual household income above £40,000.



In terms of the amount households could afford to pay for their housing, 52.7% could not afford more than £400 per month. In total, 87.3% could not afford £500 per month (see chart below).



In terms of a deposit, 21.3% of respondents who indicated their household income and expressed a housing need, could not afford £1000. In contrast, 42.6% could afford a deposit of £10,000 or more.



A selection of individual responses

"As one ages living remotely becomes virtually impossible as well as stressful."

"We would love to buy our own house but trying to save for a house to live in while paying for a house is impossible."

"A lot of elderly people have low income and health problems. These need to be given consideration."

"We will be moving to another area as house prices are too expensive."

"All 3 residents receive benefit due to disabilities/carer. It would be of interest if there were available accommodation in the area for our son as he requires a home where he can live with support but still near family."

"I would have liked to buy a small cottage but the prices are high."

"More opportunities to self-build would help to provide exactly what people need within a budget."

"I DESPERATELY need to be near a bus service."

"Current home remotely situated and not connected to the grid - rely on a generator. Rely on solid fuel/logs for heating - awkward as we age."

"The accommodation is not suitable for myself or my son. I have mental health problems, arthritis and I can't manage the stairs for my knee and ankle."

"We would like to buy a bungalow outright."

"The house is very damp and I have severe asthma. Rents are very high in the area."

"Overcrowded - daughter needs a house of her own."

"Will be retiring soon and will need more affordable housing."

"Now aged 84 [where I live] is somewhat isolated hence the need to move to similar type accommodation in Bellingham."

"To be closer to family and gain access to public transport."

"Deteriorating health means stairs and becoming more difficult. Mobility will be an issue in a few years."

"I live alone, I don't drive. I have a disability. There is no direct bus service to Hexham any more."

Key messages from the survey

This was a survey of existing residents and, therefore, is an expression of the needs and desires of these residents reflecting the current age profile of Bellingham and the North Tyne area. Key messages from the survey include the following:

- The survey area covered 17% of the area of Northumberland. The area has an extremely low population density and high levels of private renting of accommodation (22%).
- A relatively high proportion of respondents had at least one member of their household who worked in the area (45% compared to much lower proportions in recent surveys carried out in other rural Northumberland communities).
- 59% of respondents said they would be happy to live in Bellingham. 41% would not.
- 73 households expressed some form of housing need, in particular reflecting the need for improved access to services as people age, and the need to move to smaller, cheaper to run accommodation. A level of need was also expressed for young people requiring their own accommodation and growing families.
- The largest numbers of households expressing a housing need were found in Bellingham, Tarncliffe with Greystead and Falstone.
- The survey reflected a spread of age groups, those retired and those in work. Most households contained either two people (51%) or one person (29%).
- Buying on the open market was the preferred option for 44% of households expressing a housing need. 37% indicated a desire for affordable rented homes from a Housing Association and 33% from the local authority. A significant proportion (28%) indicated a preference for discounted purchase and 15% would be happy to rent from a private landlord.
- The largest demand is for two-bedroom bungalows (34 preferences in total) followed by three-bedroom houses and bungalows (15 preferences each). 7 preferences were expressed for sheltered/retirement housing.
- 18 respondents expressed specific health or accessibility issues which would require a specific type of accommodation. Responses related to the need to avoid stairs, accommodating a household member with learning difficulties and specific health conditions.
- As expected, local use of the Northumberland Homefinder register is very low (just one response indicated that they had bid for a property in the last 12 months).
- 54% of respondents, who indicated their household income and expressed a housing need, indicated an annual household income of less than £25,000 (28 households) and 53% could not afford more than £400 per month to pay for their housing.

Credits

Sincere thanks go to the residents of all the North Tyne Parishes for their participation in this survey.