Homelessness Research Privacy Notice

The Council is working with central government to try to better understand what causes homelessness, how well our current services help our residents, and how we can do better in the future.

To be able to do this, we need to ask you about things like –

- How our Customers become homeless (or are threatened with homelessness),
- Our Customers' housing histories,
- What our Customers need help and support with, and
- Other public services and benefits our Customers might be receiving.

Because we're asking you for information, you are entitled to know about how anything you tell us will be used. We hope this notice answers any questions you might have.

Who is the Council working with?

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) for this research study.

What does the research want to learn?

The research wants to understand whether –

- Housing services help prevent homelessness,
- People return for help and/or move regularly,
- Existing services and programmes reduce homelessness and rough sleeping in the longer term,
- There are other causes of homelessness and outcomes, such as poor health, and
- Understand more about the contact households have with public services.

Are you allowed to do this?

Yes – the Data Protection Act 2018 allows us to use personal information for research purposes, provided we respect matters such as privacy, ask only for information we need, keep any information safe & secure and don't use the results in ways that unfairly affect individuals.

What do you need to know?

We need to know about all people asking for help with homelessness and rough sleepers accommodated during covid, including –

- Your experiences of homelessness
- Your support needs
- Whether you have spent time in local authority care, and
- Your current employment status.

What happens then?

Whatever you tell us will only be used for research. It will be anonymised, so the researchers will not know whose data they have. What the research learns will come from what real people have told us, but it won't know who those people are.

How will that work?

Information you give us will be sent to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) using a secure IT system where it will be kept secure and safe. ONS will match this information with records held by other government departments and health agencies to build a 'picture' of you and your experiences.

Then, information that identifies you will be removed by ONS and replaced with a research reference number to produce an anonymous 'research picture' that will be used in the actual research work. *It will tell researchers about you – but it won't be able to tell researchers who you are.*

Will my information be safe?

Yes – your information will be processed in a secure system (the DLUHC DELTA System) and can only be accessed by people allowed to under the research project.

Will my information be used for anything else?

No – your information will be strictly confidential and will not be used to make any decisions about what benefits you get, services you use, now or in future, or used to identify fraud. It can only be used for research.

Researchers looking at the data on homelessness and data from other departments and agencies will not know whose data they have.

How long will you keep my information?

ONS and DLUHC will keep your information in the secure DELTA System for 5 years initially. This will then be reviewed, and if there is no need to keep it any longer, it will be securely deleted.

Sunderland City Council will retain your data for 7 years.

Do I have to answer your research questions?

No – as this is an "opt out" process you can choose whether or not you answer, but if you do then the information you provide can help us improve services and support in the future.

What if I have more questions later?

We're happy to answer any other questions you might have about the research project – please feel free to contact us at 0191 520 5551.

There is also an expanded DLUHC Privacy Notice available that has more information should you require it.