Stepping Stones North Service Review

Contents

Executive Summary

This report sets out the findings of a review of the Stepping Stones North service. This review examined the service's alignment with contractual requirements and objectives and evidence of impact through measurable outcomes, including the effectiveness of current arrangements for referrals, support and reporting.

The review drew on:

- Monitoring data collected
- Site visits to properties within the service.
- Conversations with tenants and staff to gather qualitative insights.
- Feedback from Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) referrers, social workers, and other stakeholders.

The following findings highlight the service's strengths, challenges, and areas for improvement:

Delivery Against Requirements

The service effectively targets its intended population, supporting individuals aged 18 and over with Learning Disabilities, Mental Health conditions, Autism, or Physical Disabilities, with all 178 tenants meeting at least one eligibility criterion. The provider records the referral reason from the four eligible reasons for each referral received. Most tenants are aged 18–35, aligning with the service's focus on younger adults transitioning to independence.

Accepted referrals come from appropriate sources, with the Council accounting for 25% of accepted referrals in Quarters 2 and 3 this year and Moving Forward (which itself has limited referral routes) accounting for 46%. Two people (8%) stepped down from higher support accommodation and one person was referred direct from hospital. Communication between the Housing with Support team and Stepping Stones has improved over time, but further work could be done to embed this provision more strongly and more strategically into supported accommodation pathways.

The provider is unable to meet the ambition to support people to move on within six months. Whilst it is recognised that this was an ambitious target, a key reason for people not moving on is difficulty with access to independent tenancies. For others, the journey to independence requires more time, or achieving stability in Stepping Stones is a success in, itself, and move-on to independence is not realistic. This reflects the experience of Stepping Stones South. The combination of a more flexible approach and a targeted piece of work with District Councils is recommended.

The 80% utilisation target is based on there being a steady flow of people through the service. **The service consistently exceeds the target of 80% utilisation. Even taking account of lower than planned throughput, current utilisation is in line with expectation, although there are pockets of difficulty with voids in Bassetlaw.**

Evidence of Impact from Feedback

The outcomes reported identify positive outcomes for a significant number of people across a range of measures. From areas of most common need, e.g., 103 people supported to achieve improved skills and confidence to access other services and support, through 71 people saying that support had enabled them to improve or stabilise their mental health, to less common, but still impactful, areas such as 10 people securing employment.

An identified issue with outcomes recording is that it limits the reporting of multiple successes in any one outcome areas. It is recommended that adjustments to the recording system could address this, whilst the capture of more stories of difference would add a richer narrative.

Feedback from people supported reflects overwhelmingly positive experiences with the service. Tenants highlighted the structured support they receive, helping them transition to independent living, manage daily tasks, and build confidence. For example, one tenant shared, "The service helped me rebuild my confidence and taught me how to manage my home."

Staff reported high levels of job satisfaction, citing effective team dynamics, professional development opportunities, and supportive management. **The commitment of staff to fostering tenant independence and creating a safe, empowering environment is consistently recognised by tenants and Nottinghamshire County Council stakeholders.**

Value for Money

This block contracted provision costs £127.25 per week for an average of 5.5 hours of support per person – equivalent to £23.13/hour (2024-25). This provision is cheaper than Stepping Stones South, which consists of just one site and is provided by NCHA. The specification requires the provider to be flexible to enable people with slightly higher needs to be additionally supported with additional hours funded via a direct payment, but there are no examples of this having happened.

A range of recommendations can be found at the end of this report.

Overview of the Service

The Stepping Stones North service, delivered by Framework Housing Association since August 2020, provides short-term support to individuals aged over 18 with a Learning Disability, Mental Health condition, Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC), or Physical Disability, across 63 units of accommodation across Mid-Nottinghamshire and Bassetlaw. The accommodation details are set out in Schedule 1.

The service provides an average of 5.5 hours of support per week, Monday to Friday and delivers personalised support which aims to build stability, confidence and the independent living skills required for long-term success.

A target has been set for people to move on within 6 months.

A framework of thirteen outcomes is in place that requires the provider to measure progress against identified areas of support in three domains:

- Developing skills to live as independently as possible in their own home
- People are better able to manage their health and emotional wellbeing
- People are able to achieve a role as an active community member

The service employs a strength-based enablement approach where support workers collaborate with tenants to:

- Explore and secure permanent housing options.
- Develop personal skills, such as budgeting, household management, and financial planning, to support independent living.
- Enhance physical and mental health management.
- Facilitate access to education, employment, and training (EET) opportunities, fostering long-term self-reliance.

An integral goal of the service is to foster community engagement, helping individuals:

- Reconnect with families and friends.
- Reduce social isolation.
- Increase confidence and self-esteem.
- Build resilience for future challenges.

The service is outcomes-focused, with expected outcomes including:

- Tenants achieving and maintaining tenancy stability and independence, such as securing long-term housing, developing reliable payment habits, and demonstrating the ability to manage their homes effectively.

- Tenants developing financial literacy and achieving financial stability, such as creating and following a budget, reducing debt, and saving for future needs.
- Tenants improving or stabilising their physical and mental health, such as managing chronic conditions, accessing mental health resources, and developing healthier lifestyle habits.
- Tenants are active community participants through education, employment, training, volunteering, community engagement, or building social connections.

This focus aligns with the strategic priorities of Adult Social Care by promoting transitions to independent living, reducing reliance on higher-cost interventions, and ensuring holistic support tailored to tenant needs.

Strategic Alignment with Departmental Goals

The Stepping Stones North service is designed to align with the strategic priorities of the Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH) Department by promoting independence, resilience, and community integration among tenants. It aspires to reflect ASCH's core values of respect, equity, and collaboration by providing tailored, person-centred support that aims to prioritise tenant dignity and empowerment.

As a preventative model, the service focuses on addressing tenants' needs early and providing short-term accommodation with support to reduce the likelihood of crises. This approach aims to help individuals regain stability, reducing risks that are higher amongst people with mental health difficulties, learning disabilities or autism, such as poor access to housing, debt, poorer physical health and social isolation. Tenants are supported in developing skills such as managing their tenancies, budgeting, and improving their health, fostering opportunities for long-term independence. Early interventions can empower tenants to build confidence and reconnect with their communities, contributing to overall well-being. This aligns with ASCH's commitment to prevention by equipping individuals with tools for sustainable independence and resilience.

Through facilitating community engagement and transitions to independent living, the service seeks to support long-term resilience and self-sufficiency. The service is a cost-effective alternative to Supported Living or Residential Care. Evidence of tenant progress, including increased independence, improved health, and successful move-on, highlights the potential of the service to contribute to ASCH's strategic goals of creating sustainable care pathways and reducing reliance on higher-cost living solutions.

Review

People Supported by the Stepping Stones North

The Stepping Stones North service is designed to support people aged over 18 with a Learning Disability, Mental Health condition, Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC), or Physical Disability. Analysis of Stepping Stones North monitoring data up to October 2024 shows the primary support need of people accepted into the service as:

- **Mental Health:** 134 individuals
- **Learning Disabilities:** 25 individuals.
- **Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC):** 25 individuals
- **Physical Disability:** 6 individuals

Of the total 178 referrals accepted, all align with the service's eligibility criteria and some, additionally, had an eligible secondary support need.

Beyond primary support need, all people referred to Stepping Stones should demonstrate that they need this supported accommodation option for at least one of the following reasons:

- They are leaving a more institutional care or setting (i e hospital ward, residential care) as part of a planned programme of resettlement
- They are stepping down from more intensively supported housing
- They are at risk of abuse or self-neglect
- They are at risk, as a result of insecurity of accommodation or are unable to remain in their current accommodation (e.g. carer breakdown)

The reason for each referral is recorded in the service monitoring.

Analysis of monitoring data confirms that most accepted referrals meet at least one of these reasons, although sometimes 'other' is selected. On balance, there is confidence that the service is effective in targeting its intended population.

Additional demographic information tells us:

- **Age:** Most tenants are aged 18–35, reflecting the service's success in targeting its primary demographic focus of younger adults transitioning to independence (Q2 2024/25 data). This distribution aligns with the service's goal of equipping younger individuals with the skills needed for sustainable independence.
- **Gender:** The service predominantly supports males (70%). The reason for this is not understood but there might an opportunity to explore this further with referrers and to consider whether the service design is creating inequity.
- **Ethnicity:** The majority of tenants identify as White British (91%), this largely reflects the county's demographic composition, where 90% of residents

identify as White British (2021 Census). However, approximately 50% of referrals lack recorded ethnicity data, limiting the ability to assess whether other ethnic groups are adequately represented. Improving data collection on ethnicity would help identify and address potential gaps in inclusivity and ensure the service meets its equity goals (Q2 2024/25). This was challenged during the review and has already improved.

Referrals

Nottinghamshire County Council is one of a number of referrers to the service and, over the course of the contract, has accounted for 30% of the accepted referrals into the service (Living Well teams - 24%, Housing with Support – 5%, CSC – 1%). In addition, 17% of accepted referrals have come from the Moving Forward service, access to which is limited to social care and health for support people with diagnosed mental health conditions, and who have a role in supporting mental health hospital discharge. A further 1% come direct from hospital referrals. Of the remainder, 14% are referrals from other commissioned services – Brighter Future (now Connect) and Connect, 8% are from Framework's homelessness services and 3% from District Councils. 26% of referral sources were categorised as 'other', although this has been reducing. Across quarters 2 & 3 of 2024-25, of 24 accepted referrals, only two were categorised as 'other' and one of these was leaving hospital, 6 were Living Well, 2 were stepping down from more intensively supported accommodation, 11 were via Moving Forward, 1 from Connect, 1 from a District Council and 1 from homelessness provision.

In considering improvements that will support the best use of this provision going forwards, a number of actions could be taken:

- **Increasing Awareness**: Changes to, and turnover within teams is likely to mean that there would be benefit from further promoting this service amongst social care teams.
- **Void Communication**: Strengthening processes for sharing information about up-coming voids with the Housing with Support team and social care teams will create a more proactive approach to identification of potential applicants.

The Assessment Process

Once a referral is received, the assessment process determines suitability and identifies their specific support needs. Feedback indicates the process is largely thorough and effective in setting clear expectations and aligning support from the outset. However, notable challenges include:

- **Data Quality**: Gaps in the information provided at referral, such as histories of arson or antisocial behaviour, make accurate assessments difficult and can lead to delays or inappropriate offers.

- **Evolving Needs**: There are instances where the full scope of a person's needs, particularly for out-of-hours support, is different from the presentation during initial assessments.
- **Underestimation of Needs:** There have been instances where tenants with high needs were placed in properties that could not provide the required level of support, especially outside regular office hours. Staff indicated that the current assessment process may not always capture the full support requirements. Nottinghamshire County Council staff shared similar views, suggesting that the service could also function as an extended assessment period to account for tenants' evolving needs.
- **Communication Delays**: Inconsistent information exchange with referral agencies, particularly district and borough councils, can impede the process.

The specification requires the provider to work flexibly to enable some support needs to be met through use of a direct payment, where this might enable Stepping Stones to be a viable supported accommodation option. This hasn't been utilised, although informal feedback from social care staff would suggest that this would be helpful.

Demand

There is demand for Stepping Stones North, with waiting lists in place. This is variable across the provision but is highest is respect of Victoria Street in Newark, where there is an anticipated wait time of 5-6 months.

Outcomes & Performance

Outcomes

The service reports on support required and then progress and achievement against a framework of thirteen outcomes measures across three domains. Outcomes data from service commencement shows that the outcomes most commonly identified as areas where people identify a need for support include:

OUTCOME	**No of people supported to achieve goal**
Develop skills & confidence to access other services or support	103
Able to maintain a tenancy and carry out daily household tasks	90
Able to identify and take necessary steps to move to appropriate accommodation	114
Improve or stabilise mental health	71

Fewer people identify a need for support and then achieve outcomes in other areas, but these are, nonetheless, impactful for those people:

OUTCOME	No of people supported to achieve goal
Improve or stabilise physical health	26
Build stronger networks of family and friends	39
Access further education, training or volunteering opportunities	22
Access employment	10

What Outcomes Look Like for People:

- **Improved Independent Living Skills:** Many tenants develop crucial skills, such as managing a household, budgeting, and cooking, which are essential for independent living. Successful move-on is marked by tenants securing their own accommodation and maintaining their tenancies.
- **Enhanced Mental Health and Wellbeing:** Tenants report feeling more stable and confident, with reduced anxiety and improved coping mechanisms. Access to therapy, structured support, and community integration activities has been effective in achieving these outcomes.
- **Social Integration and Reduced Isolation:** Increased participation in community activities, voluntary work, and social engagement are common positive outcomes. This contributes to tenants' overall wellbeing and sense of belonging.

Whilst the outcomes for service users reflect significant progress in areas such as independent living, mental health, and social integration, leading to successful move-on, the current system for recording of outcomes is limiting and do not allow the capture of the full impact of the service, as only one outcome can be captured in each outcome area. This information should be supplemented with stories of difference for consideration at contract review meetings, but these have not always been requested or provided – something that can be addressed.

Feedback from staff and tenants across all properties showcases the transformative journey that entering the service has had on individuals. Staff also commented on the impact of being flexible around the support provided, responding to often fluctuating needs.

Story of Difference

A 57-year-old woman, with mental health needs, alcohol dependency and a history of domestic abuse, was referred after a spell in hospital as her accommodation was of poor quality and lacked security. At this stage, her GP indicated that her health was critically compromised, and her mobility and cognitive function were severely affected.

After moving to Stepping Stones, she found that the secure and supportive environment enabled her to make transformative changes. She is now alcohol-free, her mobility has improved significantly, and her cognitive function has returned to normal. She feels supported, has personalised her living space, and engages with her community. While internal support is gradually reducing, she has been connected to external organisations like Women's Aid for ongoing assistance. Her aspirations include securing a permanent home and continuing her journey toward stability and independence.

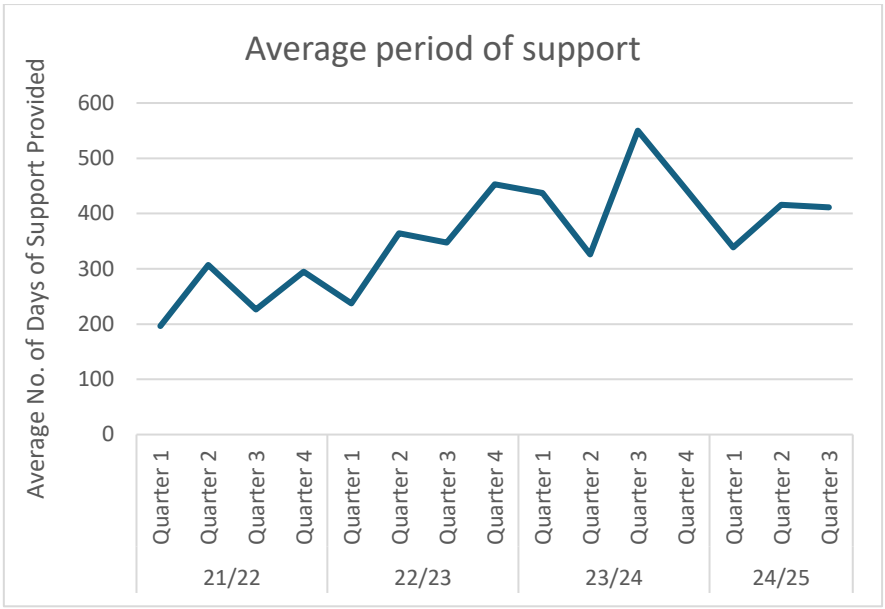
This story highlights the importance of Stepping Stones as a preventative and transitional service, addressing immediate needs and working towards long-term goals.

Additionally, during the review, support plans were looked at. Developed during the assessment process and reviewed and adjusted regularly to reflect changing needs and progress, these showed that a structured approach to support planning is in place. However, the language used in support plans could be improved to reflect a sense that the aim is to support people to own and achieve their identified goals, rather that to set out how what the service will do to 'help' the person. Further work could be done to improve personalised goal-setting.

Move-on Outcomes

Clearly important to meeting the aims of a short-term, accommodation-based service, is the ability to support people to secure and move into move-on accommodation. A target was set out for 90% of people supported to achieve this within six months. It was acknowledged that this target was ambitious.

Feedback received indicates that this is not always realistic and might need adjusting for people who are not ready, removing a pressure from both staff and people supported, to act hastily around identifying suitable move-on options. Achieving this six-month goal is also proving increasingly challenging due to difficulties experienced by people trying to secure permanent housing solutions. This can be seen in an upward trend in the average period of support provided to people moving on from Stepping Stones North.



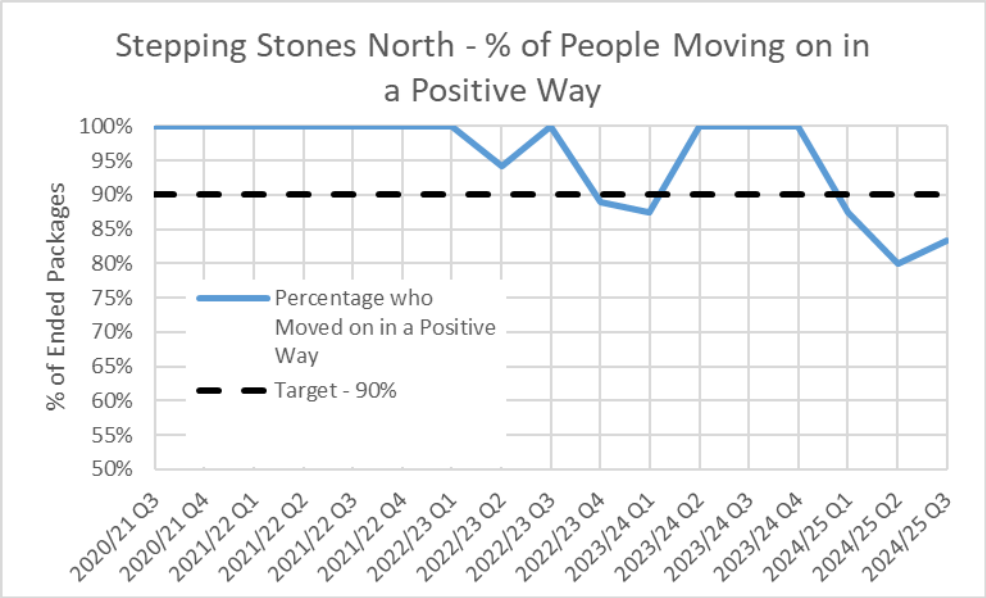
People experience a range of barriers to move-on:

- **Lack of Affordable Housing:** A primary barrier to moving on is the shortage of affordable and suitable housing options. This issue is exacerbated by long waiting lists for council housing and limited availability of private rental properties.
- **Financial Constraints:** Many tenants face financial barriers, so the need for deposits, guarantors, and rent in advance for private rentals becomes out of reach. This makes it difficult for them to secure independent accommodation even if they are otherwise ready to move on.
- **Support Needs:** Tenants with multiple needs or ongoing support requirements often find it difficult to move on, as suitable housing options with appropriate support are limited. This can result in delays or placement in accommodations that do not meet their needs.

Staff Feedback: Staff from multiple properties highlighted that external housing market conditions are a significant barrier to achieving desired outcomes for tenants. Staff indicated ongoing challenges in finding suitable move-on options within the local area; while opportunities exist, they are often not aligned with tenant needs or financial capacity. There are limited move-on opportunities due to the shortage of affordable housing and also some people are reluctant to move into shared or lower-quality housing options. This highlights the need for more local move-on options that meet the financial and support needs of residents.

When people do move on, where they move on to is also an important indicator of success. Against a 90% target for positive move-on outcomes, the service has

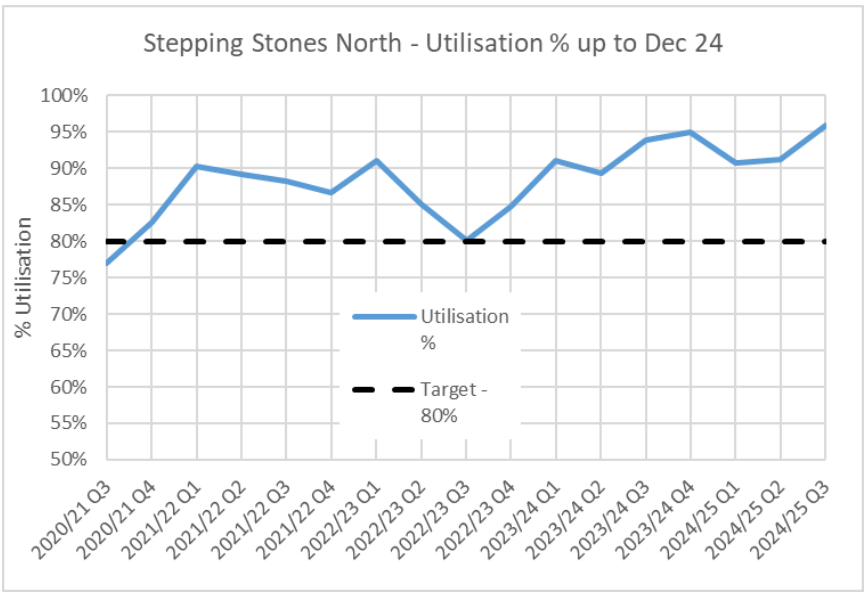
historically performed well. Performance appears to have dipped more recently, but this can happen if the number of people moving on is quite low in the quarter. If there is one negative outcome amongst fewer than 10 people moving on, this will bring performance to below 90%.



Other Performance Metrics

Utilisation Rates and Voids

A low target for utilisation (i.e. the extent to which the service is fully occupied) was set based on the thinking that each person would move on after six months and that a vacancy would then follow while a void was filled.



The service performs above target of 80% for service utilisation, but throughput is much lower than anticipated and so this position would become expected. With an average length of stay most recently recorded at around 400 days, a 90% utilisation rate might demonstrate effectiveness. This has been achieved or exceeded over the past two years. Prior to this, throughput was higher.

There have, however been some issues with voids, particularly in Bassetlaw. When the service was tendered, whilst there were designated accommodation schemes already secured in Ashfield, Mansfield and Newark, the provider was tasked with securing a minimum of seven units of self-contained accommodation in Bassetlaw, ideally in a single block, else in close proximity to each other. Framework brought an offer of eight dispersed accommodation units that were intended to be an interim solution, but these are still the units being used. Amongst those units were two, two person flats and these have proved more difficult to find people for, experiencing void periods five times longer than properties in Ashfield, Mansfield and Newark. Bassetlaw District Council have also presented some particular challenges for Framework around prematurely and excessively trying to implement the proposed changes to housing benefit for supported accommodation. So, for a period, one flat was held vacant whilst this issue was being resolved.

The service has implemented measures to minimise void durations, including:

- Negotiating same-day property surrender to reduce overlap with housing benefit payments.
- Pre-notification of up-coming voids to social care teams and Housing with Support Team.
- Streamlining internal processes to accelerate tenant move-ins.
- Enhancing communication with landlords to expedite void work.
- Voids are tracked through weekly reports, which are reviewed to identify trends and address issues promptly.

Despite this, voids can still present a significant challenge, particularly when the time required to complete void work varies across landlords. Whilst void works can be completed promptly at times, delays have been experienced due to permissions for listed properties, extensive work or landlord inefficiency. Delays can also be caused by having to match people in shared accommodation.

The provider has identified a plan to hand back one of the two person properties to the landlord, which would leave them one unit short of the specified requirement and two units short of their bid offer, which now forms part of their contract. This requires addressing.

Value for Money Considerations re: Stepping Stones

When weighing up the value for money of the Stepping Stones North provision, a number of things have been considered:

- A comparison of hourly rates against supported living services
- A comparison of costs against Stepping Stones South
- The opportunity created through this provision to avoid higher costs or worse outcomes
- The risk that cost is incurred in respect of people to whom we might otherwise not offer anything.

Comparison of Hourly Rates

The 2024-25 annual contract value for Stepping Stones North is £418,496. This enables an average of 5.5 hours of support per person across 63 supported accommodation places.

The equivalent hourly rate of £23.13 sits above the standard supported living rates of £21.57, below the enhanced supported living rate of £25.59 and within the current outreach rates.

There are a number of differences in requirements of the provider:

- There are lower staffing levels in each service location.
- There is higher turnover in Stepping Stones.
- In Stepping Stones, the provider is responsible for supporting people's progression to and search for alternative accommodation.
- On a quarterly basis, the provider returns monitoring information on all people referred, accepted and supported by the service.
- A block contracting model creates a reduced administrative burden on the Council.

Stepping Stones Comparison

The Stepping Stones North service costs were also compared with the Stepping Stones South service costs:

Scheme	Capacity (Units/Flats)	Annual Contract Value	Cost per Person per Week
Stepping Stones North	63	£418,496	£127.40
Stepping Stones South	13	£105,855	£156.17

This position may be reflective of the larger scale of the Stepping Stones North contract. The Stepping Stones South contract is delivered by a different provider, NCHA, having been awarded following a separate tender exercise with an aim of securing additional accommodation provision in the south of the county. An option for the future would be to consolidate these contracts into one to achieve economies of scale.

Opportunity to avoid higher costs

The Stepping Stones provision creates a different level of offer that can be an appropriate option for people who might not need supported living, but might otherwise be at risk and, who, without an effective short-term intervention could experience an escalation of difficulties and support needs.

As reported above (referrals), in the middle two quarters of 2024-25, two people were supported into Stepping Stones from higher supported accommodation and one person was supported out of hospital, enabling more effective use of system and Adult Social Care resources as well as supporting people in a least restrictive setting with clear goals towards independence. Outcomes data tells us that people do successfully move to independent accommodation with no support, even when that had been living with support prior to moving to Stepping Stones

Risk of Over-providing

There is a natural concern, with a service that does not work to social care eligibility criteria and with less control in place over the allocation of places, that resources could be directed in ways that do not offer good value in terms of preventing, reducing or delaying the need for more intensive, costly and restrictive offers.

Whilst it is not possible to know what would have happened had Stepping Stones not been offered to people, the access criteria and outcomes framework are designed to target and focus the services with a prevent, reduce, delay approach and the service monitoring sets out this is the approach being work to.

Stakeholder Feedback

From Social Workers:

Social workers recognise the Stepping Stones service as a valuable resource that provides a supportive and structured environment for tenants with low to moderate needs to build independence. They commend the professionalism and dedication of staff, noting their proactive approach and strong communication. However, they also identify systemic challenges, particularly around the six-month target for move-on,

which they describe as unrealistic given the financial and logistical hurdles tenants face. Many believe the duration of stay should be extended to two years to allow tenants more time to stabilise and prepare for independent living.

Social workers also highlight gaps in the service's ability to support individuals with complex mental health needs, suggesting a stronger partnership with local mental health services and clearer pathways for those requiring higher levels of support. However, the predominant primary support need recorded for tenants is mental ill-health (134/178, 75.3%). There is a call for more robust preparatory work for tenants upon moving in, as well as increased focus on securing sustainable long-term housing options. Despite these challenges, the service is acknowledged as an essential stepping stone for many vulnerable individuals.

Examples of feedback:

1. **General Support and Communication**:
    - "In my experience, the staff that support people are very approachable, proactive, and persistent in their efforts to engage with the people they support."
    - "I have experienced great communication with the team and managers regarding the people I have been involved in supporting."
2. **Challenges and Suggestions**:
    - "I feel unsure about the preparatory work that's initially done when someone moves in and the work thereafter around regular bidding on general needs accommodation or pursuing other routes."
    - "My personal view is that Stepping Stones stay time should be increased to up to two years, as realistically no one is going to be offered general needs accommodation within six months."
3. **Specific Needs**:
    - "I understand it is a low-level service, but quite often they are quick to refuse a place for anyone being supported with their mental health."

From Tenants:

Tenants' experiences reflected a mix of gratitude for the support provided and frustration with certain limitations of the service. Many describe their time with Stepping Stones as transformative, with some attributing significant improvements in their mental health, independence, and overall quality of life to the guidance and safety it offers. The service is especially praised for its flexible support, which is tailored to individual needs, and for creating an environment where tenants feel valued and understood.

On the other hand, tenants expressed concerns about the pressures associated with moving on before they feel ready, as well as the limited availability of suitable long-term housing. Some find the six-month target particularly daunting and unrealistic, leading to stress as they prepare for the next steps in their housing journey. Despite these challenges, tenants generally see the service as a critical lifeline during a transitional period in their lives, providing stability and hope for the future.

Examples of feedback:

1. **Positive Impact**:
    - "Support has made a difference: less coddled, flexibility, control, and space, not pressure. Been able to develop some independence – clean my own bathroom, manage my space."
    - "Support from Chloe kept an eye on me. Knowing there is someone around for help if needed."
2. **Personal Experience**:
    - "If not here, I'd be dead by now."
    - "I moved off ESA (Employment and Support Allowance). Since moving in, I've gained confidence and feel more able to cope better."
3. **Suggestions for Improvement**:
    - "The only complaint is that there are not many vents—I don't like opening windows."
    - "I would like a washing line and more specific targets within my support plan."

Staffing and Management

Staffing and management within the service are generally effective, with a stable and well-trained team providing high-quality support to tenants. Strong team cohesion, supportive management, and a focus on professional development contribute to a positive work environment and effective service delivery. However, there are areas for improvement, particularly in crisis support and managing complex cases, which could further enhance staff effectiveness and wellbeing. Overall, the staffing and management structures in place provide a solid foundation for the continued success and growth of the service.

1. **Staffing Levels and Stability**:
    - **Current Staffing Situation**: The service is currently fully staffed, with a stable team in place across all properties, many of whom have been in post for 10+ years. This stability has been achieved despite sector-wide challenges, such as high turnover rates and recruitment difficulties.
2. **Training and Development**:
    - **Training Opportunities**: There is a strong emphasis on training and professional development. Staff have access to a range of training

programs, including mandatory courses and additional specialised training based on their roles and areas of interest.

- **Specialist Roles**: Each staff member has their own specialist area, which enhances the overall competency of the team and ensures that a diverse range of needs can be addressed effectively.

3. **Team Dynamics and Support**:
    - **Strong Team Cohesion**: Staff report a positive team dynamic, with good communication and support among team members. This is particularly important in managing complex cases and providing consistent support to tenants.
    - **Remote and Onsite Working**: The flexibility of remote and onsite working arrangements has been beneficial for both staff and tenants, allowing for more adaptable support delivery while maintaining team connectivity.
    - **Focus on Wellbeing**: The service has made efforts to support staff wellbeing, including access to counselling, flexible working arrangements, and a supportive work environment. This focus has contributed to high staff retention rates.
4. **Management and Leadership**:
    - **Responsive and Supportive Management**: Managers are generally perceived as approachable and supportive, fostering a positive working environment. Staff feel that their concerns are listened to and addressed in a timely manner.
    - **Challenges in Consistency**: There have been some challenges related to leadership changes and interim management roles, Staff noted the impact of leadership changes on service stability, though the situation has improved with recent appointments.

Recommendations

1. **Referral and Assessment**:
    - Ensure consistent communication between Stepping Stones North and referrers from Nottinghamshire County Council to improve efficiency and effectiveness.
    - Provide training for referrers to enhance understanding of the service's scope and eligibility criteria.
    - Promote the service to frontline staff to reduce void times and increase awareness of available properties.
    - Develop a communication plan to improve stakeholder engagement and streamline the referral process.

- Examine further whether there are access barriers for non-white/non-males that could be addressed.

2. **Support Planning**:
    - Revise support plans to focus on people's tenant goals and achievements.
    - Work with the provider around the option of supporting people with slightly higher needs through additional hours funded with a direct payment.

3. **Refine Move-On Targets**:
    - Adjust the six-month move-on target to better reflect housing market conditions:
        - Tenants should demonstrate improved independent living skills and well-being within six months.
        - Balance could be achieved by adjustment to the target % achieving move-on in an adjusted move-on target period. There could be multiple targets e.g. 75% of people move on within ten months and 90% withing one year.
4. **Enhance Monitoring and Reporting**:
    - Review the collection of monitoring information with an aim to:
        - Enable the capture of all outcomes, even if there are multiple goal in one outcome area
        - Enable self-defined goals within the outcomes framework
        - Introduce self-scoring to track progress
        - Ensure qualitative narratives, such as stories of difference are captured alongside quantitative data

5. **Reassess Bassetlaw Provision**:
    - Meet with the Provider to explore barriers to delivering the accommodation requirements for Bassetlaw in line with the specification, in particular, the re-provision of shared units.

Schedule 1 - Stepping Stones North Accommodation Overview

Location 1: Bassetlaw

There are currently 8 units in Bassetlaw, spread over 6 locations including 1 and 2 bedroom flats. Stepping Stones are in the process of handing back Grafton Street, a two-bedroom property due to concerns around utilisation within Bassetlaw. These properties are standalone and do not have any staff office space physically attached to them.

Accommodation Units

Flat 2, Old Brewery House, Potter Street, Worksop, S80 2AQ (1-bed unit)

The unit at Flat 2, Old Brewery House, Potter Street, Worksop (S80 2AQ) is located within a short walk from several key amenities. ASDA and Morrisons are about a 10-minute walk away, providing convenient options for groceries and everyday needs. The town centre is also within easy reach, offering a variety of shops, cafes, and healthcare services. Newgate Medical Group and several dental practices are located nearby, making healthcare accessible. Additionally, the area is well-connected with public transport options, as well as Worksop Post Office and Library all within a mile of the unit.

3 Dennis Street, Worksop, S80 2LL (Shared 2-bed property)

The unit at 3 Dennis Street, Worksop (S80 2LL) is conveniently located approximately 15 minutes on foot from Morrisons on Kilton Road and around 20 minutes from ASDA Worksop Victoria. The town centre, with its range of shops, cafes, and essential services such as Worksop Post Office and Library, is also within walking distance. This area provides easy access to public transport and various amenities, making it ideal for residents looking for convenience and accessibility.

33 Crown Place, Worksop, S80 1TS (1-bed unit)

The unit at 33 Crown Place, Worksop (S80 1TS) is situated within a convenient distance to several local supermarkets and amenities. It is approximately a 10-minute walk to both Morrisons on Kilton Road and ASDA on Sandy Lane, providing a range of grocery options. Additionally, Tesco Superstore on Gateford Road is around 15 minutes on foot, offering further retail and food shopping opportunities. The town centre is also close by, featuring various shops, cafes, and essential services for residents.

27 and 28 Lanchester Gardens, Worksop, S80 2PN (Two 1-bed units)

The units at 27 and 28 Lanchester Gardens, Worksop (S80 2PN) are within walking distance to several local amenities. Morrisons supermarket is approximately 0.7 miles away, taking around 15 minutes to walk. ASDA and Tesco Superstore are about 20-25 minutes on foot. The Worksop town centre is also accessible within a 20-minute walk, offering a variety of shops, cafes, and essential services.

Public transport is convenient with several bus stops located within 0.1 miles of the flats, such as those on Foxglove Close and Howard Street. The Worksop Rail Station is about 1 mile away, or a 20-minute walk, providing easy connections to nearby towns

23 Grafton Street, Worksop, S80 1UG (Shared 2-bed property- property being handed back to the landlord)

The unit at 23 Grafton Street, Worksop (S80 1UG) is conveniently located near several key amenities and supermarkets. Morrisons on Kilton Road is about a 15-minute walk (0.7 miles) from the property, offering a range of in-store services including a café and Amazon lockers. ASDA Worksop Victoria is also nearby, approximately a 20-minute walk (0.8 miles), providing various facilities such as Click & Collect.

The town centre is just 0.3 miles away, about a 5-minute walk, where you can find shops like Iceland, B&M Stores, and other local businesses. This makes it convenient for residents to access essential services and shopping options without the need for a car

Local Service Links

1. **Mind** – Mental health support.
2. **GPs** – Primary healthcare services.
3. **Homefinder** – Assistance with housing applications and finding properties.
4. **Adult Social Care** – Support with accessing social care services.
5. **Crisis Services** – Immediate support for mental health or other urgent needs.
6. **Libraries** – Access to information, resources, and community activities.
7. **Salvation Army** – Assistance with food and other basic needs.
8. **Food Bank** – Provision of food support for those in need.
9. **Community Prescribers (Social Prescribers)** – Connecting residents with local community resources and activities.
10. **Citizens Advice** – Free advice on legal, financial, and housing matters.

Location 2: Newark

33 Victoria Street, Newark, Notts, NG24 4UU (10 Units)

The property at 33 Victoria Street, Newark, is located approximately 10 minutes away from the Asda Newark Supercentre on Lombard Street, which offers a wide range of services including grocery deliveries, clothing, and home goods. Tesco and Waitrose are also nearby, each about a 15-20 minute walk. The town centre, within a mile, provides a variety of shops, cafes, pharmacies, and other amenities, including Iceland Foods and Boots for essential items. Additionally, the town's vibrant market and shopping areas, such as St Marks Place and Northgate Retail Park, offer more retail opportunities. The property has communal kitchen and basement areas as well as designated office space for staff.

Local Service Links

1. **Mind** – Mental health support.
2. **GPs** – Primary healthcare services.

3. **Homefinder** – Assistance with housing applications and finding properties.
4. **Libraries** – Access to information, resources, and community activities.
5. **Salvation Army** – Assistance with food and other basic needs.
6. **Food Bank** – Provision of food support for those in need.
7. **Digital Inclusion Team** – Support with accessing technology and digital resources.
8. **CGL (Change Grow Live)** – Support with substance misuse and addiction recovery.
9. **Victoria Centre** – Community hub offering various support and activities.
10. **Brighter Futures** – Mental health and wellbeing support.
11. **Community Prescribers (Social Prescribers)** – Connecting residents with local community resources and activities.
12. **GPW (Get People Working) Framework Service** – Employment and education support.
13. **Citizens Advice** – Free advice on legal, financial, and housing matters.
14. **Women's Aid** – Support for victims of domestic violence.
15. **YMCA** – Community services and support, particularly for young people.

Location 3: Mansfield

There are currently 22 units in Mansfield, across two locations. Both properties include communal indoor and outdoor spaces as well as designated staff offices.

Accommodation Units

30 Portland Street, Mansfield Woodhouse, NG19 8BG (10 units)

The property at 30 Portland Street, Mansfield Woodhouse (NG19 8BG) is conveniently located near several supermarkets and amenities. Morrisons on High Street is approximately a 10-minute walk (0.5 miles) from the property, offering a range of services including a petrol station, pharmacy, and café. Aldi and Lidl are also nearby, around 0.6 miles away, making them accessible within a 10-15 minute walk.

Public transportation options are readily available with several bus stops and Mansfield Woodhouse railway station close by. The town centre, with additional amenities such as Tesco Extra and Iceland, is about 1-1.5 miles away, providing further shopping and dining options.

Crowther House, 31 Teal Avenue, Mansfield, NG18 3SW (12 Units)

The property at Crowther House, 31 Teal Avenue, Mansfield (NG18 3SW) is well-placed for access to various local amenities. The nearest supermarket is Morrisons on Sutton Road, which is about a 20-minute walk (0.9 miles) away, providing a wide range of grocery items and in-store services.

For healthcare, the Oak Tree Lane Health Centre is located nearby, offering general medical services. Public transport is also accessible, with several bus stops located on Oak Tree Lane and Jubilee Way, facilitating travel to other parts of Mansfield.

Local Service Links

1. **Mind** – Mental health support.
2. **GPs** – Primary healthcare services.
3. **Homefinder** – Assistance with housing applications and finding properties.

4. **Libraries** – Access to information, resources, and community activities.
5. **Digital Inclusion Schemes** – Support with accessing technology and digital resources.
6. **CGL (Change Grow Live)** – Support with substance misuse and addiction recovery.
7. **Arena Church** – Community support and activities.
8. **Community Prescribers (Social Prescribers)** – Connecting residents with local community resources and activities.
9. **Citizens Advice** – Free advice on legal, financial, and housing matters.
10. **Age UK** – Support and activities for older people.
11. **Skills Plus** – Programs for developing skills and mental health support.
12. **Mansfield Meadow House** – Supported housing and community activities.

Location 4: Sutton-in-Ashfield

Chatsworth House is conveniently located near a variety of amenities. The closest supermarkets include ASDA Sutton-in-Ashfield, which is approximately 0.5 miles away (around a 10-minute walk), and Aldi, which is also within a similar distance. Additionally, the Sutton-in-Ashfield town centre is nearby, providing access to various shops, cafes, and essential services, making it a convenient location for residents.

Public transportation options are easily accessible, with several bus stops located nearby, facilitating easy travel to surrounding areas. The area also has healthcare services and schools in vicinity, making it suitable for a variety of needs. This provides a well-rounded environment for those living at Chatsworth House. The property does not have communal spaces for tenants, but it does have a large office space for staff, which tenants frequent during office hours.

Accommodation Units

Chatsworth House, Chatsworth Street, Sutton-in-Ashfield, NG17 4FR (23 Units)

Local Service Links

1. **Food Banks** – Provides food assistance for residents in need.
2. **Fair-Share Food** – Local initiative offering food support.
3. **Portland Pathways** – Employment and training services.
4. **Inspire Adult Learning** – Opportunities for education and skills development.
5. **Salvation Army** – Support services including food and community outreach.
6. **Christian Fellowship** – Local support groups.
7. **Charity Shops** – Offering low-cost essentials.
8. **Library** – Access to resources and community activities.
9. **Leisure Centre** – For physical activity and fitness programs.
10. **Hub in Idlewell Shopping Centre** – Community and support services hub