

Changing Futures

— Stoke-on-Trent —

Case Study: The Role of MaRG in Preventing Street Homelessness

Overview

This case study illustrates how the Multi-Agency Referral Group (MaRG) enabled rapid, coordinated action to prevent a vulnerable 53-year-old woman (“Customer B”) from becoming street homeless. Despite long-term housing instability, complex health needs, and multiple failed referrals, MaRG intervention resulted in a safe accommodation offer within 11 days of case allocation - after six months of stagnation.

Background and Housing History

Customer B had a long and stable tenancy history, having lived for 25 years in an Aspire Housing property in Bradwell. Following the death of her son, she downsized to a one-bedroom flat in Wolstanton but fell into rent arrears. She reports surrendering the tenancy while mentally unwell and acting on advice she believed was correct at the time.

In 2025, she was accommodated by Restart (Saltbox) in Middleport. She was evicted on 3 December 2025 following concerns about tampering with gas utilities. She was subsequently placed in interim temporary accommodation (TA) at the Verdon Guest House.

Delays and System Barriers Prior to MaRG

Despite being in TA since December 2025, progress stalled due to:

- An open Adult Social Care (ASC) referral that was closed without liaison with Housing.
- A requirement for a new ASC referral, delaying assessment.
- No support network and no active professional coordination.
- Housing Needs Officer made appropriate referrals but no face to face with client.
- Repeated unsuccessful attempts to secure supported accommodation.
- A finding of **intentional homelessness**, leaving her ineligible for the housing register.
- Imminent risk of street homelessness from **1 May 2026** when TA funding was due to end.

By early May, she had exhausted all pathways and was days away from rough sleeping.

Substance Use History

- No substance misuse disclosed in the last two years.
- Former heroin use 20 years ago; completed methadone programme.
- No current engagement with CDAS; declined referral.
- Restart staff reported occasional paranoia or suspected drug-induced psychosis historically, but no aggression.
- No concerns raised by Verdon Guest House during her six-month stay.

Mental Health and Cognitive Factors

- Historical diagnosis of post-natal depression (2006).
- Long-term low mood linked to bereavement, family breakdown, and homelessness.
- No current mental health support despite self-reported distress.
- Restart staff observed:
 - Memory difficulties
 - Poor time awareness
 - Missed appointments
 - Vulnerability to exploitation (frequent loss/theft of phone, giving money away)
- Referred to memory clinic but did not attend.
- ASC assessment (9 March 2026) concluded no eligible care needs; she manages daily living independently.

Physical Health

- Diagnosed COPD.
- Uses Fostair and Salbutamol inhalers.
- Easily breathless; limited mobility but walks unaided.
- Not under specialist respiratory care.

Safety and Accommodation Suitability

- Customer B reported feeling unsafe in shared accommodation due to “visitors and chaos”.
- Soft-spoken and struggles to advocate for herself.
- Did not want shared accommodation but accepted she must engage to avoid homelessness.

Referral to MaRG

- **5 May 2026:** Referred to MaRG by Housing Needs Officer.
- **14 May:** Case picked up by Changing Futures Case Coordinator
- Customer B had been in TA for six months with no progression.
- TA funding was due to end on **24 May**, creating a critical risk window.

MaRG Actions and Multi-Agency Coordination

MaRG rapidly mobilised partners to prevent homelessness:

Housing

- Escalated case internally.
- Secured a **7-day extension** to TA to prevent immediate street homelessness.
- Liaised with senior housing leads to clarify next steps.

Concrete

- Explored supported accommodation options.
- Liaised with Snow Hill; Customer B did not meet criteria.

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- Assigned a **six-week case coordinator** to:
 - Facilitate MDT meetings
 - Support appointments
 - Build engagement
 - Reduce risk of disengagement or missed opportunities
 - Advocacy with Housing providers
- Identified a **women-only, trauma-informed property**
- Property provides a pathway into supported accommodation with life-skills training and structured support.

Outcome

25 May 2026: Customer B was successfully housed in a women-only, trauma-informed supported accommodation setting—just **11 days after MaRG picked up the case.**

This outcome was achieved after:

- Six months of stagnation
- Imminent risk of rough sleeping
- Multiple failed referrals
- No existing support network

MaRG's coordinated intervention prevented homelessness, stabilised risk, and connected Customer B to a supportive environment aligned with her needs.

Why This Case Demonstrates the Importance of MaRG

1. Rapid Escalation of High-Risk Cases

Without MaRG, Customer B would have been street homeless on 1 May. MaRG enabled immediate action and accountability.

2. Multi-Agency Problem Solving

The case required input from:

- Housing
- ASC
- Supported accommodation providers
- Voluntary sector partners
- Changing Futures
- Expert Citizens

MaRG created a single forum to align these efforts.

3. Overcoming System Fragmentation

Prior to MaRG:

- Referrals were missed or closed prematurely.
- No one agency held the case.
- Customer B's vulnerabilities were not fully understood.

MaRG provided structure, oversight, and shared responsibility.

4. Trauma-Informed, Person-Centred Approach

The final accommodation offer matched her needs:

- Women-only
- Trauma-informed
- Skills-based support
- Safe, stable environment

5. Prevention of Repeat Homelessness

By addressing:

- Cognitive vulnerabilities
- Safety concerns
- Lack of advocacy
- Emotional and financial exploitation

MaRG reduced the likelihood of future tenancy breakdown.

Conclusion

Customer B's case demonstrates the **critical role of MaRG in preventing homelessness for people who fall between service thresholds**. Through rapid coordination, shared accountability, and trauma-informed decision-making, MaRG transformed a high-risk situation into a sustainable housing outcome.

This case evidences that **without MaRG intervention, Customer B would have become street homeless**, with significant risks to her health, safety, and long-term stability. Instead, she is now safely accommodated with appropriate support in place.