

CABINET

DATE	16th December 2019
REPORT OF	Councillor John Fenty, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Skills, Energy and Housing
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Clive Tritton – Interim Director for Economy and Growth
SUBJECT	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
STATUS	Open
FORWARD PLAN REF NO.	CB 12/19/01

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The delivery of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and associated action plan will play a key role in building Stronger Communities. The Plan will support our work to ensure that all people in North East Lincolnshire have somewhere to call home, where they feel safe and secure, and can enjoy good health and wellbeing. Our programme of housing related support promotes skills and learning, to enable people to firstly manage a tenancy and live independently, and then to improve employability and benefit from a strengthening economy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report presents the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 – 2024 and its accompanying action plan. The strategy's focus is: the prevention of homelessness; reducing rough sleeping; securing suitable accommodation and maintaining tenancies; and working with our partners to get the best outcomes for our residents. Preventing and relieving homelessness requires a partnership approach: our action plan highlights how we will work with social and private sector housing, advice and support providers to deliver housing solutions to our residents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 – 2024, and action plan is approved.

That minor amendments and updates to the strategy and action plan, be undertaken by the Director in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, should the need arise.

REASONS FOR DECISION

All Councils are required to publish a homelessness strategy. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 further required that local authorities take into account the additional duties introduced through the act and produce new or revised strategies by Winter 2019.

The strategy and action plan aims to address the challenges and opportunities in North East Lincolnshire around homelessness and housing advice and help deliver on the Council's vision and opportunity for a strong economy, sustainable communities, improved learning and skills, better health and wellbeing where people feel safe and are safe in their community.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

- 1.1 This new Homelessness Strategy and action plan sets out the vision and key actions for homelessness in the borough until 2024.
- 1.2 The document has four key aims:
 - Preventing homelessness** – early intervention, quality advice, timely assistance to help people maintain their accommodation;
 - Reducing rough sleeping** – effective outreach, accommodation and health pathways to assist those who are roofless;
 - Accommodation and support provision** – working with the private, supported and social sectors to secure and maintain tenancies;
 - Partnership working** – an effective Homeless Forum and multi-agency working to improve outcomes, advice and guidance.
- 1.3 The overriding objective is to appropriately prevent homelessness at the earliest opportunity.
- 1.4 Homelessness in the Borough should be reviewed and a revised strategy produced every five years or more frequently if circumstances in the district change. The strategy should link with other strategies and programmes that aim to address the wide range of factors that could contribute to homelessness in the local area. In this respect the recently approved Housing Strategy, for example, addresses the issues of housing supply.
- 1.5 The Homelessness Strategy reflects the views of the people living in North East Lincolnshire and agencies working in the field of homelessness. It also includes the findings of a cross-party Members' working group on rough sleeping and a study of the health impacts of rough sleeping carried out by our Public Health service. Consultation of the strategy took place with the NEL Homelessness Forum and with the general public during September and October 2019.

- 1.6 The Strategy consultation highlighted public concerns around begging and a common assumption that all beggars are rough sleeping. Homelessness services will work closely with the Council's Safer Communities team in their efforts to raise awareness of the issues of giving money to beggars, deal with anti-social behaviour arising from begging, implement preventative measures and promote engagement with the agencies who support people who are homeless and sleeping rough.
- 1.7 The strategy's Action Plan identifies the key actions and required outcomes we need to deliver effective homelessness and rough sleeping services. The plan will be regularly reviewed and updated and new actions and initiatives added to it as necessary.
- 1.8 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan:
- has been developed in consultation with key stakeholders;
 - recognises the key issues affecting housing in NEL and the impact these have on local residents;
 - demonstrates how the Council and our partners will respond to local housing issues;
 - sets out key challenges, actions, and milestones to measure progress
 - is outcome driven;
 - recognises the links with partnerships other key strategic plans.

2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- 2.1 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan will be externally monitored by the NEL Homelessness Forum which includes representation at a senior management level from the local authority and others from partner and voluntary sector organisations, social and supported housing providers and charities.
- 2.2 There is a risk that some elements of the Action Plan will become out of date during the five-year period; as national legislation and policy continues to change and funding opportunities present themselves. Where this happens, we will include a note on the Council's website explaining any updates.
- 2.3 There is a risk of not being able to deliver on our homelessness housing growth ambitions due to unforeseen government policy change and its potential impact on the General Fund. We will continue to monitor government announcements and will continue to look for innovative ways to work in partnership to develop new initiatives and interventions.

3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

It is acknowledged that the social, economic and political environment in relation to housing issues evolve at speed and homelessness strategies can become dated and require regular review. It is important that the Council continues to monitor external factors and demonstrates an understanding of

local housing issues in order to continue setting the strategic direction and appropriate action plan.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan provides clarity around how the Council will address homelessness and rough sleeping issues in the Borough.

4. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy demonstrates the Council's commitment to preventing and relieving homelessness using a multi-agency approach. Recent funding bid successes have led to positive communications, which included publicity around rough sleepers and begging. A clear communications plan, which will include partnering agencies and internal teams, such as Safer Communities' will be established to provide clear messages and justification on the actions taken to improve Homelessness and Rough Sleeping.

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Where actions cannot be achieved through existing funding, we will endeavour to bid for additional funding where possible and assist partners in accessing funding from other sources.

6. CONSULTATION WITH SCRUTINY

Communities Scrutiny commissioned the Rough Sleeping Working Group, so are very much aware of the issues around homelessness in the borough and the specific problems faced by rough sleepers. The findings and recommendations of the working group were incorporated into this strategy and action plan. The Portfolio Holder has been consulted and briefed.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 *The Council has a duty to implement the legislative requirements contained within the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, including implementing a strategy which takes into account the additional duties, by Winter 2019.*

8.2 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is one of the biggest changes to the rights of homeless people in England in 15 years. It effectively bolts 2 new duties to the original statutory rehousing duty and there are essentially 5 key changes, which are detailed within the attached strategy.

8.3 The strategy must be revised at least every 5 years, but should also be regularly reviewed in light of changes to legislation or policy.

9. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct HR implications contained within this report.

10. WARD IMPLICATIONS

All Wards affected.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 – 2024
HandRS Strategy Action Plan

12. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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Councillor John Fenty

**Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Skills, Energy and
Housing**

North East Lincolnshire Council

**Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
2019 – 2024**

**DRAFT FOR CABINET
APPROVAL**

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Our Strategic Partners

The following agencies are committed to delivering the aims and objectives of the strategy and are members of the North East Lincolnshire Homelessness Forum

- North East Lincolnshire Council
- Lincolnshire Housing Partnership
- Longhurst Group
- The Salvation Army
- Grimsby & Humber YMCA
- Doorstep
- NEL Women's Aid
- Humbercare
- Harbour Place
- Citizens' Advice Bureau
- Department of Work and Pensions
- National Probation Service
- Community Rehabilitation Company
- NEL Clinical Commissioning Group
- Northern Lincolnshire & Goole NHS Trust?
- Shelter (HMP Hull)
- Humberside Police
- Humberside Fire & Rescue Service
- CARE
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Tackling homelessness and addressing its causes is a long-term project that needs to draw on partners and organisations from across the public sector and cannot be solved by reactive homelessness services alone.

Foreword



Councillor John Fenty

Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Skills and Housing

This strategy outlines the Council's ambition to effectively prevent and relieve homelessness in our Borough and help people who have fallen into the desolation of rough sleeping. With the new duties placed on Councils under the Homelessness Reduction Act, and working together with our partners to provide advice, help and support, we aim to prevent homelessness whenever we can.

We will continue to work together with our partner housing and support organisations, local charities and the voluntary and community sectors to improve services to meet the needs of local people.

We recognise the problems of rough sleeping in North East Lincolnshire, and the public consultation of this strategy has told us that this is also of concern to our residents. A members' cross-party working group thoroughly investigated the causes of and issues faced by rough sleepers, and their recommendations have been included in this strategy. In addition, research conducted by our Public Health service has identified actions that can be undertaken to improve the health outcomes of this group of people.

We commit to:

- preventing homelessness;
- reducing rough sleeping;
- working with partners to provide accommodation and support;
- partnership working to solve housing issues.

I endorse the values and principles set out in this document and commend all the organisations working across our Borough who are committed to preventing homelessness from occurring, and assisting and supporting individuals and families who find themselves in housing difficulty.

Overview

Homelessness has increased both nationally and locally over recent years. The way that local authorities deal with and record homelessness has now changed, but the issues and numbers of people affected remain.

Housing problems can affect anyone. Loss of employment, relationship breakdown, debt, mental health or substance issues all make dealing with homelessness a challenge, especially if we do not have the skills or experience to manage it or do not know where to turn for help.

This strategy brings together the people, places and resources that can assist residents who find themselves in housing difficulty in our Borough.

We need to understand the causes and effects of homelessness: what we can do to prevent it happening; how we can assist when it does, and how we provide the most effective services and support to the people who need us.

We must ensure that we protect the most vulnerable whilst creating an environment where people are empowered to help themselves.

Our main focus will be on prevention and early intervention – the earlier we are able to intervene to prevent someone becoming homeless, the more successful we are likely to be.

The most visible form of homelessness is rough sleeping, though this affects a very small percentage of the homeless population. However, our new strategy specifically addresses this issue and incorporates the findings and recommendations of the Councillors' rough sleeping working group, which investigated this subject in early 2019. We have also included the findings and recommendations from Public Health colleagues, following research carried out around the health impacts of rough sleeping earlier this year.

We know that using our available resources to prevent homelessness is more cost effective than having to deal with its consequences. The Council and our partners face ever-increasing pressure to deliver services to increasing numbers of customers, using the same or reduced resources. The supply of affordable housing is limited and the private rented sector is facing its own viability challenges. Access to affordable accommodation is vitally important to many people in our area, and the ambition of development and economic growth in our other strategies will help us in our aim to reduce homelessness.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which came into force on 3rd April 2018, placed new duties on councils to assist people threatened with homelessness, regardless of their priority need (whether they are considered vulnerable or not).

The Act improved the 'assessment process' and focused on the Homeless Prevention team's efforts on prevention activities and agreeing personalised housing plans for clients. However, the main underlying causes of homelessness remain and the Act, in itself, does not prevent homelessness.

The main changes in the new Act are:

Improving advice and information

Everyone in the local authority's area should be able to access free information and advice on –

- Preventing homelessness
- Securing accommodation when homeless
- The rights of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and the duties of the Council
- Any help that is available from the Council or anyone else
- How to access that help

Extension of the period 'threatened with homelessness'

A person is threatened with homelessness if they are likely to become homeless within 56 days, or they have been served a valid section 21 notice that expires in 56 days or less (previously this was 28 days).

Introduction of new duties to prevent and relieve homelessness for all eligible people, regardless of priority need or intentionality

Previously, most prevention and relief work undertaken by a housing authority sat outside of the statutory framework. This led to many single homeless people only receiving limited information to support them to relieve their homelessness.

Under the new Act, all eligible people who are found to be homeless or threatened with homelessness will be entitled to more tailored support from the housing authority, regardless of priority need and intentionality. Support to prevent homelessness is also available to everyone regardless of local connection.

Additionally, all people found to be homeless and in priority need will be provided with interim accommodation. In determining who is in priority need, housing authorities will need to be aware that 'an applicant may be considered vulnerable

because of a combination of factors which taken alone may not necessarily lead to a decision that they are vulnerable (e.g. drug and alcohol problems, common mental health problems, a history of sleeping rough, no previous experience of managing a tenancy).’ Assessments of ‘vulnerability’ may require working with other agencies.

Applicants who have a priority need, were homeless unintentionally and whose homelessness has not been successfully relieved after 56 days, will be owed the main housing duty unless they have refused to co-operate. Applicants are owed a lesser accommodation duty if they are intentionally homeless.

Introducing assessments and personalised housing plans, setting out the actions housing authorities and individuals will take to secure accommodation

The assessment should include

- the circumstances that caused the applicant to become homeless or threatened with homelessness
- what housing the applicant needs, and what would be suitable and affordable
- whether the applicant needs support to obtain and keep accommodation

Encouraging public bodies to work together to prevent and relieve homelessness through a duty to refer

Effective prevention and relief of homelessness requires public bodies to work together to address the multiple factors that cause an individual’s homelessness.

Under the Act, public bodies in England will have a duty to refer an individual’s case (with consent) to a housing authority they identify. The duty provides an ‘impetus to develop effective referral arrangements and accommodation pathways that involve all relevant agencies to provide appropriate jointly planned help and support to prevent homelessness.’

The specified public authorities (see the Homelessness (Review Procedure etc.) Regulations 2018) subject to the duty to refer are (in England only):

- prisons
- young offender institutions
- secure training centres
- secure colleges
- youth offending teams
- probation services (including community rehabilitation companies)
- Jobcentres in England
- social service authorities (both adult and children’s)
- emergency departments
- urgent treatment centres
- hospitals in their function of providing inpatient care
- Secretary of State for defence in relation to members of the regular armed forces

Homelessness in North East Lincolnshire

The NEL housing market

North East Lincolnshire is an area of relatively low housing values and rents but also one of low incomes, which is the primary factor in making access to the housing market challenging for many people. We have a healthy private rented sector, with similar rent levels to homes in the social sector for certain areas, and many people move between the two tenures.

There are around 3,500 households on *Home Choice Lincs*, the housing register for North East Lincolnshire. Around 3,000 new households register every year, but with just under 1,000 applicants being housed annually, many people are unlikely to be successful in securing accommodation.

Whilst there is clearly high demand for social tenancies, some areas and some property types are of low demand and are offered on a first come first served basis.

Almost half of households on the housing register require one-bedroomed accommodation, of which there is a shortage in North East Lincolnshire due to a historic lack of investment in smaller units. Shared houses are often the only option for younger single people and projects around the selective licensing of houses in multiple occupation are aiming to raise standards in this type of accommodation.

The Council's Local Plan has set ambitious targets for the provision of new homes in the borough, although the number of affordable units required (for social rental or low cost home ownership) is limited due to viability issues, particularly in the town centre areas.

Another area of increasing housing demand is supported housing and move-on accommodation. Our commissioned services (YMCA, Salvation Army, Doorstep, Women's Aid and Longhurst) are consistently full to capacity and providing excellent services for people needing housing and support. An issue arises when clients are ready to move on: the lack of suitable affordable housing is often a barrier.

Household incomes and poverty

Some households in North East Lincolnshire face ongoing challenges in obtaining and sustaining accommodation due to pressures on household budgets. Benefit caps and delays of payment of Universal Credit also create problems in accessing accommodation.

The average household income in this area is £23,388 (2017*) and the average house price is £119,256 (2018), meaning that housing affordability in NE Lincs is challenging, with a ratio of over 5:1.

Welfare reforms, the benefit cap for larger families and the reduction of housing costs for under 35 year olds continues to add further pressure to households on benefits and those on low incomes with in-work benefits.

*source:

Child poverty in North East Lincolnshire is a significant issue: according to figures published in 2016, 8,800 children live in poverty – that is over 25% of the under 16 population. In our most deprived ward, this is as high as 41% of children.*

Unemployment in North East Lincolnshire has reduced by approximately 6% since 2012, however in the period from March 2018 to March 2019 unemployment has increased by 1% to 6.2%. The number of claimants of out of work benefits at July 2019 was 4,225 (4.4% of our local population).

However, insecure employment and underemployment affects relatively high numbers of households, with 33.8% of workers being in part-time employment (compared with 32.5% nationally based on 2017 NOMIS data).

Households needing housing advice and assistance

The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) in April 2018 changed the way the Council delivered services and recorded instances of homeless advice provided, homelessness prevented and homelessness relieved.

In 2018/19, over 3,000 households approached our service for advice and assistance around their housing problem. 276 households were successfully prevented from becoming homeless and in 375 cases where a household was already homeless, their homelessness was relieved.

The Council previously operated a 'drop-in' facility for housing advice, but had to cease this service due to not having suitable interviewing and waiting space to accommodate clients with challenging behaviour. As clients are now required to be offered a full interview, and this is by appointment, it may be that a drop-in is no longer needed – but we do need to ensure this is not a barrier to people contacting the service for help. A drop-in service is still available for debt advice.

Homelessness Prevention

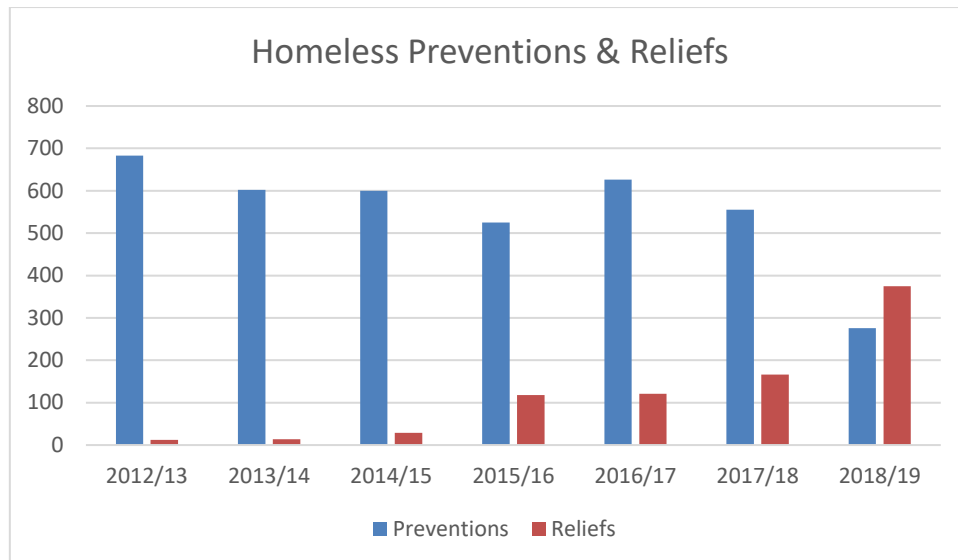
Under the HRA, the Council has a duty to prevent a household's homelessness for up to 56 days, regardless of whether they are priority need (vulnerable in some way) or have a local connection to our area. We must conduct an interview with that household and agree with them a tailored *personalised housing plan*. The plan will contain actions for the homelessness officer and for the client, in order to work together to prevent homelessness.

Clients are very often threatened with homelessness due to issues with rent payments: this may be due to benefit or debt problems or the property becoming unaffordable over time.

Our main causes of homelessness currently are:

- Being served with a section 21 notice – this is a 'no fault' eviction, but there is often an underlying reason, such as rent arrears;
- Relationship or family breakdown;
- Family and friends no longer willing to accommodate;
- Being released from prison.

*source:



The above graph shows prevention and relief activity in North East Lincs for the last eight years. Prior to the HRA there were relatively few relief cases (relieving someone's homelessness after they became homeless) as a statutory homeless decision would have been made once prevention work had not succeeded.

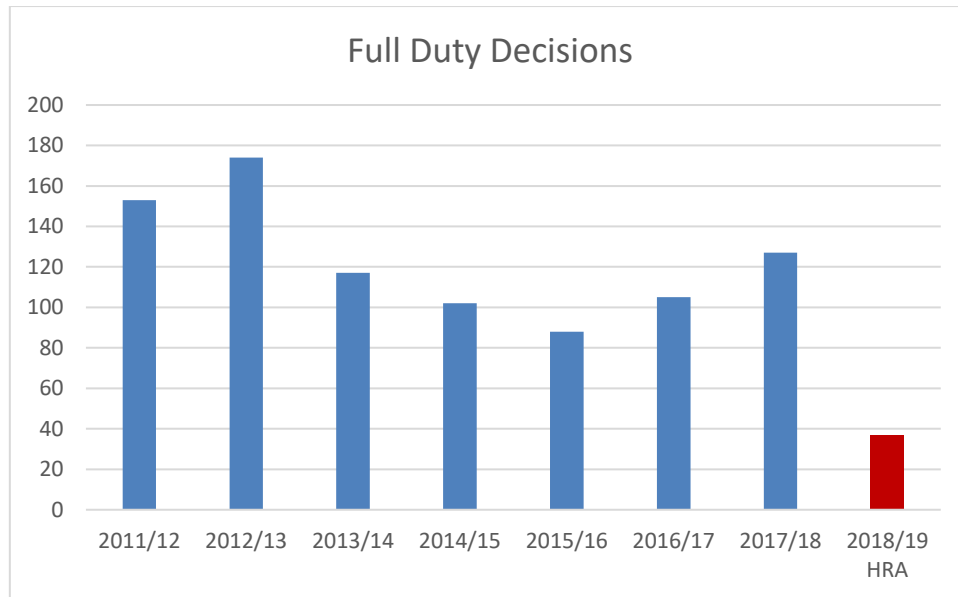
The service's aim is to prevent homelessness wherever possible. We do this using the following means:

- Negotiating with landlords or mortgagees, occasionally providing a loan or grant to clients if their financial situation can be resolved in the longer term;
- Resolving benefits issues;
- Discretionary housing payments (DHP) – awarding a sum of money in order to pay a deposit or assist with moving expenses to enable a client to relocate to a more sustainable property;
- Increasing banding on Home Choice Lincs – providing evidence of need to increase the chances of a client being housed through the housing register;
- Providing housing related support to enable a client to maintain an existing tenancy;
- Providing housing and legal advice to tenants threatened with eviction;
- Accessing supported accommodation for eligible people;

Statutory homelessness

The Council will owe the “full housing duty” (a duty to find settled accommodation) in cases where a household is eligible for services, homeless, in priority need, is not homeless intentionally and has a local connection to North East Lincolnshire. This decision is made once the 56 day Relief Duty has ended: it is hoped that as many homeless households as possible are accommodated before this formal decision is made.

Previous years' 'full duty' statistics are as follows:



In 2018/19, following the introduction of the new Act, just 37 households were found to be owed the full housing duty. It would appear, from the statistics, that statutory homelessness has been reduced by the new Act. However, households who are actually homeless have been assisted under the 56 day 'relief duty' before they have needed to receive a statutory homeless decision.

The main causes of homelessness

The main causes of homelessness among the households who present to the Council for assistance are:

- Losing a private sector tenancy
- Relationship breakdown
- Family/friends no longer willing to accommodate

The main underlying reasons for homelessness occurring are:

- Poverty – welfare reform, benefit cap, sanctions and the limitations of the local housing allowance
- Lack of affordable housing – shortage of available social tenancies and shortfall of development by registered providers
- Lack of affordable single person accommodation
- Lack of support – for mental health, substance misuse and general tenancy maintenance

Temporary accommodation

The Council has a duty to provide temporary accommodation in cases where a household is eligible, homeless and in priority need.

On 30th June 2018, the number of households in temporary accommodation in England was 82,310, up five per cent from 78,540 on 30th June 2017, and up 71 per cent on the low of 48,010 on 31 December 2010. Meanwhile the number of families in B&B style accommodation has more than tripled in the same period. This has drastic effects on already vulnerable people and is extremely costly. *

Local authorities in England spent £1.39bn on homelessness services in 2017-18. There are also significant knock-on costs. In 2015, Crisis estimated the average cost to the public purse, across a range of service areas, of a single homeless person rough sleeping for twelve months was £20,128. **

North East Lincolnshire has seen similar increases.

DRAFT

*source:

** source:

Rough sleeping

Rough sleeping is just the very tip of the homelessness iceberg, but it is the most visible form of homelessness and one that is a cause of concern for the public. The greater problem is one of 'hidden homelessness' – people who drift in and out of hostels and the night shelter, and stay on friends' sofas.

Nationally, rough sleeping has increased by 165% since 2010* – local figures are shown below.

Who is rough sleeping and why?

We currently have a cohort of around 40 people who drift in and out of rough sleeping between spells in the night shelter, in hostels and supported accommodation or on friends' sofas. Most have issues with drugs or alcohol, and many have suspected mental health problems.

The majority of rough sleepers are male, and the average age is 37 years. Many people in the current rough sleeping cohort have previously been assisted into accommodation and all are known to services, although some individuals refuse to engage with any services at all.

The Council and our partners carry out an annual estimate of the rough sleeping population (based on intelligence collected on one day in the year). In addition, colleagues at Harbour Place have also carried out a physical 'street count' over the last 6 months. The results are as follows:

Count / estimate	Number of Individuals
Autumn 2010 (informed estimate)	4
Autumn 2011 (informed estimate)	2
Autumn 2012 (informed estimate)	9
Autumn 2013 (informed estimate)	6
Autumn 2014 (informed estimate)	7
Autumn 2015 (informed estimate)	6
Autumn 2016 (informed estimate)	13
Autumn 2017 (informed estimate)	22
September 2018 (count)	18
Autumn 2018 (informed estimate)	13
January 2019 (count)	10
March 2019 (count)	8
May 2019 (count)	25
July 2019 (count)	17
September 2019 (count)	12
Autumn 2019 (informed estimate)	TBC Nov. 2019

*source:

The peak in rough sleeper numbers in 2017 led to the Government inviting North East Lincolnshire Council to bid for funding under the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI). The successful bid allowed the Council to support Harbour Place to expand and improve their night shelter provision for up to 15 people – The Hope Centre – and provide additional street outreach services, and some mental health and substance misuse in-reach services. This funding will assist the centre with running costs until March 2020.

Rough sleepers find themselves homeless for many of the same reasons as other homeless people: loss of a tenancy, relationship breakdown, release from prison and so on. The difference is that people sleeping rough then find it much harder to resolve their housing problems. This might be due to being excluded from accommodation due to behavioural issues or substance misuse or a general inability or reluctance to engage with services.

Services for rough sleepers

In 2018, the Council successfully bid for government funding under the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI). Working with our partners at Harbour Place, they extended their night shelter provision, permanently accommodating up to 15 rough sleepers each night. In addition, mental health and substance misuse support is being provided, as well as street outreach services.

The Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy

The Government published a Rough Sleeping Strategy in August 2018. The ambitious aim is to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and to end it for good by 2027.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/733421/Rough-Sleeping-Strategy_WEB.pdf

North East Lincolnshire benefitted from funding released through the government's Rough Sleeping Initiative, which enabled Harbour Place to expand their night shelter and street outreach provision.

The government's 2027 vision is: *Prevent, Intervene, and Recover*.

Key measures include:

- Providing funding for pilot projects around prison leavers and care leavers with complex needs;
- Reviewing legislation, including the Vagrancy Act;
- Improving understanding around LGBT individuals' experience of homelessness, and the links between modern slavery and rough sleeping;
- Ensuring that rough sleeper deaths or incidents of serious harm are investigated;
- Looking at affordability in the private rented sector;
- Additional funding for mental health and substance misuse treatment;
- New training for frontline staff;

- New funding for non-UK nationals who sleep rough and a Rough Sleeping Support Team.
- Also, funding for supported lettings, housing first pilots, and homelessness experts in every Jobcentre Plus.

Councillors' rough sleeping working group - January 2019

A councillors' working group to investigate rough sleeping was commissioned by the Communities Scrutiny panel, initially in response to concerns about begging but subsequently broadening out to focus on the growing number of rough sleepers.

The cross party group of Councillors, conducted interviews with Home Options staff, Homeless Forum members, supported housing and social housing providers, food bank and meal providers, Police and Safer Communities representatives, and drugs/alcohol and mental health workers. They visited the night shelter and various other services, and spoke to rough sleepers on the streets.

The Working Group was an opportunity for services and agencies who assist rough sleepers to feedback on their challenges and suggest ways in which, collectively, we can assist rough sleepers to get back on their feet.

The recommendations of the working group are as follows:

- That the Housing First model be explored to see if it will help deal with multiple and complex needs around rough sleeping in North East Lincolnshire;
- That external agencies be involved in discussions about certain individuals to improve communications between services based on the MARAC model of best practice;
- That the process for early intervention be explored to incorporate drug, alcohol and mental health services with social housing providers;
- That additional single person, move on and one bedroomed housing accommodation be considered;
- That the use of empty homes be explored further with our partner agency Engie, for the use of single/shared housing and Housing First accommodation;
- That a dual diagnosis service [for individuals with both mental health and substance misuse issues] be explored;
- That the use of social housing that is potentially being considered for demolition or disposal be explored to be used as move-on accommodation for rough sleepers;
- That the Council's Homeless Prevention Team explore how they can engage more with private landlords;
- That the potential to review historical debt with all providers be explored, as this is a barrier to all individuals trying to access social housing;
- That the Food Providers Forum be re-visited with additional support to help the forum be re-energised;
- That the Council's Safer Communities Team and Communications Team work together to produce publicity to deter people from donating to beggars.

- That the North East Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group be requested to review accessibility to GP and dental services, with a view to providing a list of practices offering services to rough sleepers;
- That services available to rough sleepers be identified if enquiring through the Single Point of Access (SPA)

Where these recommendations are not currently being delivered, they will be incorporated into the Action Plan accompanying this strategy.

Public Health Rough Sleepers' Needs Assessment: Summary & Recommendations

Rough sleepers are one of the most marginalised and socially excluded groups in society today. Evidence from national studies show that many rough sleepers have histories of poor mental health, disability, long-term health problems, being in care as a child, substance misuse, imprisonment, and unemployment. Rough sleepers therefore suffer from extremely poor health outcomes that are linked to their general socioeconomic and environmental circumstances, their restricted social and community networks, and the individual factors of their current lifestyle.

In 2018/19 the Public Health conducted the first needs assessment exploring the needs of rough sleepers in North East Lincolnshire in order to provide information on the backgrounds and current needs of local rough sleepers in our area, in order to inform local services and provide an evidence base for future commissioning. The full report of this needs assessment is available here:

<http://www.nelincsdata.net/strategicassessment>.

A summary of the findings and the recommendations made is provided below:

In recent years, North East Lincolnshire has seen a significant increase in the number of people known to be sleeping rough, from just four people on any given night in 2011, to a peak of 23 on any given night in 2017. This trend reflects the national scene with estimates showing an increase of 165% since 2010.

Survey work was conducted with 34 local rough sleepers between October 2018 and February 2019 exploring the backgrounds, lives, and health needs of rough sleepers in North East Lincolnshire.

Participants in the research tended to be British, local, and male, between 26 and 45 years old, many with a complex history and a range of issues which have eventually resulted in their present circumstances.

In particular it was found that the large majority had previously been in prison, many had spent time in care as a child and almost all had a drug misuse problem and were smokers. They were also found to have a wide range of health problems, in particular musculoskeletal, dental, mental health, hepatitis and respiratory problems.

There was also a much higher prevalence of epilepsy reported. Unsurprisingly the rough sleepers were high users of emergency care services despite most being registered with a GP practice.

Considering these findings, a number of recommendations were made around prevention, service design, health care, and substance misuse:

- North East Lincolnshire Council should work with partner organisations of the Homelessness Forum to oversee the production a small leaflet, which should contain vital information for rough sleepers, including the location, opening times and contact details for the major local services for rough sleepers.
- North East Lincolnshire Council should explore placing an advisor from the Homelessness Prevention Team within Harbour Place for a number of days per week, so that rough sleepers have direct, face-to-face access to the Homelessness Prevention Service.
- A pathway needs to exist between leaving prison and securing accommodation, with equitable support to manage the complex needs of released prisoners to prevent future homelessness and recidivism. This involves charitable and voluntary sector partners and statutory services including prisons, probation, substance misuse services and the council.
- Harbour Place should consider the possibility of re-opening their day centre service, either fully, reduced hours or only during periods of bad weather.
- North East Lincolnshire Council should work with Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust's Community Dental Service to do outreach work with rough sleepers.
- North East Lincolnshire's Community tuberculosis team should be involved in an outreach program into Harbour Place, either on their own or as part of a larger team, to carry out screening for tuberculosis amongst rough sleepers and Harbour Place clients.
- North East Lincolnshire Council and North East Lincolnshire CCG should work together to provide free flu vaccinations for local rough sleepers.
- Local services should work together to identify rough sleepers who inject drugs but have not received a vaccination for hepatitis B, and offer them a vaccination.
- Local services should work together to identify rough sleepers with hepatitis C but have either not been offered or have declined treatment. If barriers exist to completing treatment, services should consider ways of incentivising adherence to the full course of treatment.
- North East Lincolnshire CCG should work with local GP surgeries to ensure that making appointments is an equitable process for people with chaotic lives or with limited access to making appointments by phone.
- Local services should work together to set up a multi-disciplinary team outreach team, that can take health services – physical health, mental health and substance misuse – as well as housing support, to rough sleepers out on the street.
- North East Lincolnshire Council, Addaction and Harbour Place should evaluate the success of the programme that currently places an Addaction worker within

Harbour Place. If successful, the evaluation should recommend that this arrangement be continued.

Where these recommendations are not currently being delivered, they will be incorporated into the Action Plan accompanying this strategy.

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North East Lincolnshire Homelessness Forum

Members of the NEL Homelessness Forum, when recently asked for their views on the current housing and homelessness situation, gave the following feedback:

What is working well?

- Partnership working between local agencies and regular meetings to discuss clients;
- Harbour Place provision for rough sleepers;
- Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) being processed and agreed by the Homeless Prevention Team;
- Home Choice Lincs choice-based lettings system;
- Securing social properties for people over 50;
- The Support Gateway and provision of floating support;
- The ability to reconnect clients to their families or home towns;
- The Ugly Mugs scheme (identifying perpetrators of domestic abuse).

What needs to be improved / addressed?

- Access to accommodation, securing deposits;
- The ability to access services for/by chaotic and high needs clients;
- Enforcement action on illegal evictions and disrepair – empowering clients to complain;
- Earlier intervention to prevent homelessness;
- Easier/quicker access to mental health services;
- Increase the supply of one bedroomed accommodation;
- Better feedback to clients/agencies from the Support Gateway;
- Universal credit (UC) deductions rendering clients unable to afford a tenancy;
- Supported housing rents being too expensive for clients who gain employment;
- Agencies working together more closely;
- Council website can be difficult to navigate;
- Budgeting support for clients on UC who have difficulty in managing their finances;
- Floating Support provision does not suit everyone;
- The supply of suitable, affordable accommodation for single people under 35 years old, in all areas of the Borough;
- The provision of emergency accommodation;
- Better engagement with social housing providers;
- Better engagement with private landlords;
- Advice and assistance to reduce and prevent rent arrears;
- Accessing advice, information and signposting;
- Recognised housing pathways tailored to specific groups;
- Financial stability and service sustainability for housing and support providers;
- Understanding the effects of homelessness on children.

Strategic Aims and Priorities

The Council's focus when it comes to homelessness is: to offer high quality and timely advice to people in housing difficulty; to prevent homelessness wherever possible through early help and intervention; to offer support to enable people to help themselves, and to safeguard homeless vulnerable people.

We know there is a shortage of affordable housing in our Borough, particularly for single people/couples, people with disabilities and larger families. Our Local Plan, planning guidance documents and Housing Strategy address these issues. A revised Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) will further quantify the housing deficit. Delivery is a key challenge.

The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan gives details on how we, working with our partners, aim to prevent and relieve homelessness and assist rough sleepers.

Preventing homelessness

- To effectively discharge our duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
- To receive early approaches and referrals to the service to allow the opportunity to prevent homelessness rather than to relieve it after it has occurred.
- Ensure that accessible, timely, relevant and high quality advice and information is available from the Council's Homelessness Prevention Team to the general public and partner agencies.
- Ensure that our prevention activity focuses on the root causes of homelessness, such as loss of tenancies, debt and relationship breakdown.
- Work with the voluntary, charity and community organisations to support access to financial and welfare benefits advice.
- Promote access to support services that equip residents with the skills to sustain accommodation and promote wellbeing.

Reducing rough sleeping

- To support the provision of effective outreach services to identify, engage and assess the needs of rough sleepers.
- Facilitate the provision of emergency beds and supported accommodation.
- Support projects that provide accommodation and support for rough sleepers, particularly those who have multiple and complex needs.
- Work with accommodation providers to secure suitable move-on accommodation.
- Explore, with partners, the Housing First model and ways in which this model can be adopted in the borough.

- Ensure that adequate emergency beds are available, particularly during the winter months, to meet peaks in demand.
- Minimise street begging by working with partners to communicate to the public better ways of assisting the homeless community.
- To meet the health and welfare needs of people sleeping rough.

Accommodation provision

- Work with the private rented sector, housing developers, and providers of social and supported housing to increase supply.
- Work with Registered Providers to make best use of available social housing stock and ensure that the housing allocations policy recognises the housing need of households threatened with homelessness.
- Pursue affordable housing contributions on new development sites, in accordance with planning policy.
- Eradicate the use of B&B accommodation for families with children.
- Ensure suitable emergency accommodation is available for people with disabilities.
- Support partners to provide new or improve existing accommodation, particularly one-bedroomed units for homeless single people.

Support provision

- Ensure that Personal Housing Plans are effective in identifying housing and support needs of clients.
- Ensure that commissioned Housing Related Support services are relevant, meet client needs, are good quality and offer value for money
- Develop clear housing pathways for specific groups, for example, those leaving prison, hospital or social care
- Continue to develop multi-agency meetings to resolve complex homeless cases.

Partnership working

- Encourage wider participation in the North East Lincolnshire Homelessness Forum, establishing an independent chair and making it an effective forum for meeting the challenge of homelessness and keeping our strategy under review.
- Be an integral part of the Council's approach on assisting victims of modern slavery.
- Arrange suitable training for agencies and volunteers who are working with people who are homeless
- Ensure that organisations who have a 'Duty to Refer' are meeting these requirements and we are assisting them to do so.

- Revise and refresh existing homeless prevention protocols (for example hospital discharge, 16/17 year olds)
- Form closer relationships with social and supported housing providers to reduce the instances of tenancy failure and abandonments.
- Ensure that our information sharing agreements and consent forms are GDPR compliant
- Work collaboratively with partner agencies to ensure that information, advice and guidance is linked-up, consistent and accurate, and that vulnerable clients are referred to services as quickly as possible.

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Action Plan and Delivery

The commitments above are set out more fully in our Strategy Action Plan, which can be viewed or downloaded from:

[Weblink - TBC](#)

Monitoring

[Strategy monitoring arrangements - TBC](#)

Feedback/Suggestions

Please contact:

Samantha England

Home Options Manager

North East Lincolnshire Council

Telephone 01472 324995, Email: Samantha.England@nelincs.gov.uk

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy – 2019 to 2024

Our Vision

To prevent and relieve homelessness, at the earliest opportunity, by offering effective advice, assistance and support through a multi-agency approach.

To reduce the incidence of rough sleeping.

Action Plan Update

This action plan highlights the key challenges and priorities for the Directorate and recommended actions and activities that need to be prioritised and delivered, minimising potential risks and hazards to the service, while maximising opportunities available to the Council, delivering a strong services, benefitting the community and economy.

Delivering a robust Homelessness Action Plan will contribute to the Council's vision and priorities of;

Learning and Growing

All people in NEL fulfil their potential through skills and learning

Investing in Our Future

All people in NEL benefit from sustainable communities.

Vitality and Health

All people in NEL enjoy good health and wellbeing.

Economy and Strength

All people in NEL enjoy and benefit from a strong economy

Safe and Secure

All people in NEL feel safe and secure

How will this be achieved?

The ambition is to deliver the following objectives;

Preventing homelessness – early intervention, quality advice, timely assistance to help people maintain their accommodation;

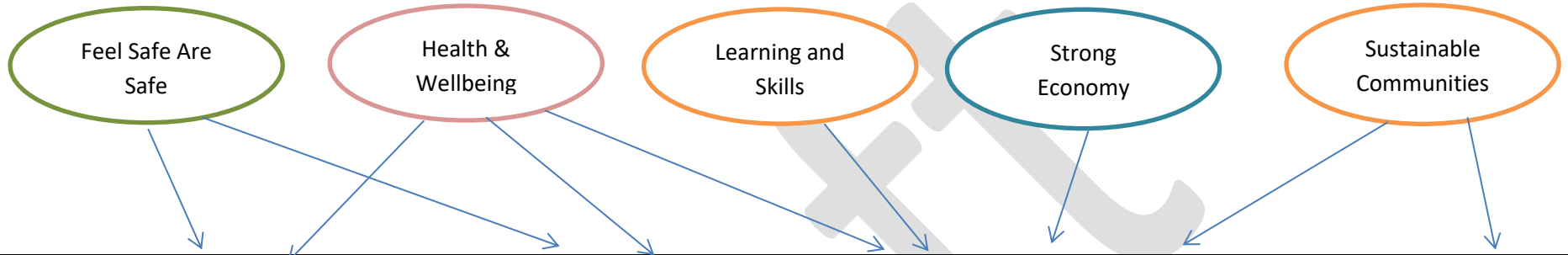
Reducing rough sleeping – effective outreach, accommodation and health pathways to assist those who are roofless;

Accommodation and support provision – working with the private, supported and social sectors to secure and maintain tenancies;

Partnership working – an effective Homeless Forum and multi-agency working to improve outcomes, advice and guidance.

The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan will help achieve these objectives by defining its main challenges, establishing key strategies and plans and scrutinising the required outcomes through appropriate consultation. Through engagement and collaborative working, we can ensure we are building and sustaining strong links locally with council colleagues, members, advice services, charities, Registered Providers and the Third/Voluntary Sector. We are keen to demonstrate significant progress, meeting housing objectives, underpinning NELs vision and priorities.

The interdependence of key housing priorities and NELs strategic outcomes



	Preventing homelessness	Reducing rough sleeping	Accommodation & support provision	Partnership working
NEL Housing Key Challenges	People in housing difficulty presenting to the Council.	Consistently high levels of rough sleeping, and the cohort having significant health and support needs.	A lack of affordable accommodation, particularly for single people. Many people requiring support in order to gain the skills to maintain a tenancy.	Homelessness can only be addressed by a multi-agency approach.
What we need to achieve	A reduction of the number of people in housing difficulty.	A reduction in the number of rough sleepers. Entrenched rough sleepers engaging with services.	Sufficient supply of suitable accommodation and a move-on pathway from supported accommodation.	Agencies working together to make the most effective use of existing resources.

Key Challenge	1. Preventing Homelessness			
Measures of success: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents have easy access to housing advice and support services Households in housing difficulty are referred to services at the earliest opportunity Homelessness preventions increase during the 'prevention duty' period The use of bed and breakfast and other temporary accommodation is reduced 				
Our housing outcomes		What we will do	Dates and Milestones	Lead
<p>To effectively discharge our duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.</p> <p>To receive early approaches and referrals to the service to allow the opportunity to prevent homelessness rather than to relieve it after it has occurred.</p> <p>Ensure that accessible, timely, relevant and high quality advice and information is available.</p> <p>Ensure that our prevention activity focuses on the root causes of homelessness,</p>	1.1	Internal audit on Homelessness Prevention Service	Completed 19 Sept 2019 Recommendations to be implemented by December 2019	NELC Internal Audit
	1.2	Review customer access to NELC housing advice services, by electronic means, over the telephone and in person. Ensure that access is easy for all members of the community.	Web site review	NELC Homelessness Prevention Team
	1.3	Ensure that the Home Choice Lincs allocations policy accurately reflects housing need for people threatened with homelessness, in line with the requirements and timescales of the Homelessness Reduction Act.	HCL Policy review and consultation Autumn 2019	Home Choice Lincs Partnership Board
	1.4	Work with colleagues in Engie to bring empty properties back into use for the benefit of homeless households.	To be monitored through Housing Strategy.	Engie / NELC

<p>such as loss of tenancies, debt and relationship breakdown.</p> <p>Work with the voluntary, charity and community organisations to support access to financial and welfare benefits advice.</p>	1.5	<p>Ensure that there are effective protocols in place for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prison release • Hospital discharge • Homeless 16/17 year olds 		NELC Homelessness Prevention Team
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Key challenge	2. Reducing Rough Sleeping			
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Measures of success:

- The numbers of rough sleepers is reduced
- Rough sleepers have access to the services that they need
- Emergency, supported and move-on accommodation is available for rough sleepers

Our housing outcomes		What we will do	Milestones and dates	Lead
<p>To support the provision of effective outreach services to identify, engage and assess the needs of rough sleepers.</p>	2.1	Implement a Rapid Rehousing Pathway for former rough sleepers.	Project to commence November 2019 (initially funded for 12 months)	NELC Homelessness Prevention Team
	2.2	Work with MHCLG Rough Sleeping Adviser to prepare bids for continuing rough sleeper initiative funding	Autumn 2019	NELC Homelessness Prevention Team
<p>Facilitate the provision of emergency beds and supported accommodation.</p>	2.3	Explore how the Housing First model of accommodation provision can be delivered in North East Lincolnshire		NELC Homelessness Prevention Team
	2.4	Work with and enable partners to provide additional single person, move-on and one bedroomed accommodation.		NELC Homelessness Prevention Team

<p>Support projects that provide accommodation and support for rough sleepers, particularly those who have multiple and complex needs.</p> <p>Work with accommodation providers to secure suitable move-on accommodation.</p> <p>Explore, with partners, the Housing First model and ways in which this model can be adopted in the borough.</p> <p>Ensure that adequate emergency beds are available, particularly during the winter months, to meet peaks in demand.</p> <p>Minimise street begging by working with partners to communicate to the public better ways of assisting the homeless community.</p>	2.5	Support the Food Providers' Forum to work in partnership to make the best use of available resources.		NELC CSSU
	2.6	Relaunch the campaign to deter member of the public from giving cash to beggars and promote the work of homelessness charities in supporting rough sleepers.		NELC Safer Communities/NELC Communications Teams
	2.7	Produce a small leaflet containing contain vital information for rough sleepers, including the location, opening times and contact details for the major local services for rough sleepers		NELC Homelessness Prevention Team
	2.8	Work with Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust's Community Dental Service to do outreach work with rough sleepers		NELCCG
	2.9	<p>NELC and NELCCCG should work together and with partners to look into the following provision for rough sleepers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • carry out screening for tuberculosis amongst rough sleepers and Harbour Place clients. • to provide free flu vaccinations for local rough sleepers. • to identify rough sleepers who inject drugs but have not received a vaccination for hepatitis B, and offer them a vaccination. • to identify rough sleepers with hepatitis C but have either not been offered or have declined treatment. If barriers exist to completing treatment, services should consider ways of incentivising adherence to the full course of treatment. • work with local GP surgeries to ensure that making appointments is an equitable process for people with chaotic lives or with limited access to making appointments by phone. 		NELCCG
	2.10	Local services should work together to set up a multi-disciplinary team outreach team, that can take health services – physical health, mental health and substance misuse – as well as housing support, to rough sleepers out on the street.		NELC Homelessness Prevention Team CCG

Key Challenge

3. Accommodation and Support Provision

Measures of success:

- A range of suitable accommodation is available for people in housing need, in the public and private sectors
- Social housing allocation policies recognise the housing needs of homeless households and those threatened with homelessness
- Strong multi-agency working finds solutions for applicants with multiple or complex needs

Our housing outcomes		What we will do	Milestones and dates	Lead
<p>Work with the private rented sector, housing developers, and providers of social and supported housing to increase supply.</p>	3.1	Establish improved working relationships with private sector landlords and investigate the feasibility of implementing an incentive scheme in order to secure more PRS tenancies for homelessness people.		NELC Homelessness Prevention Team
	3.2	Work with social housing providers to make the most efficient use of low demand/hard to let housing stock, and unused land, including possible transfers to partner housing organisations or community land trusts.		NELC Homelessness Prevention Team
<p>Work with Registered Providers to make best use of available social housing stock.</p>	3.3	Ensure that there are suitable units of temporary accommodation available for people with limited mobility/access issues		NELC Homelessness Prevention Team
<p>Eradicate the use of B&B accommodation for families with children.</p>	3.4	Ensure that B&B is only used as emergency accommodation in exceptional circumstances and that no families are placed in B&B.		NELC Homelessness Prevention Team
<p>Ensure that commissioned Housing Related Support services are relevant, meet client needs, are good</p>	3.5	Review the need for and effectiveness of current Housing Related Support contracts for the various client groups, in order to recommission the provision in Spring 2021.	New contracts to commence from July 2021.	NELC Homelessness Prevention Team

quality and offer value for money.				
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Key Challenge	4. Partnership Working			
Measures of success: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have a vibrant Homelessness Forum to promote, challenge and • We have effective protocols and procedures in place to deal with all groups • Housing providers, support providers and advice agencies work collectively to prevent and relieve homelessness 				
Our housing outcomes		What we will do	Milestones and dates	Lead
<p>Encourage wider participation in the North East Lincolnshire Homelessness Forum.</p> <p>Arrange suitable training for agencies and volunteers who are working with people who are homeless</p> <p>Ensure that organisations who have a 'Duty to Refer' are meeting these requirements and we are assisting them to do so.</p>	4.1	Elect a new independent chair to the NEL Homelessness Forum	New Forum chair appointed December 2019	NEL Homelessness Forum
	4.2	Develop a programme of training and knowledge sharing for staff and agencies involved in homelessness, through the Homelessness Forum		NEL Homelessness Forum
	4.3	Ensure that public sector agencies that have a Duty to Refer are aware of and discharging that duty		NELC Homelessness Prevention Team
	4.4	Promote the 'Commitment to Refer' amongst social and supported housing providers in order to reduce evictions in these sectors		NELC Homelessness Prevention Team

Revise and refresh existing homeless prevention protocols.

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