

Lincolnshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2022-2027



CITY OF
Lincoln
COUNCIL



North Kesteven
DISTRICT COUNCIL



SOUTH
HOLLAND
DISTRICT COUNCIL



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East Lindsey
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South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership



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Welcome

Welcome to the fifth Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy developed by all Lincolnshire Housing Authorities, in partnership with our stakeholders.

This strategy informs of the current position and challenges across the county and identifies the priorities and actions that together aim to prevent homelessness and reduce rough sleeping across the county.

Homeless is not just a term for someone that is rough sleeping, but covers those that are in temporary accommodation, are at risk of losing their home, are in unsuitable accommodation or cannot afford to remain in their current home.

Tackling rough sleeping and preventing homelessness is a challenge for all local authorities as homeless covers a wider range of factors and many caused by no fault of their own. Many of those rough sleeping or that are homeless are vulnerable due to having mental health issues, complex needs or substance misuse. These vulnerabilities need to be considered when planning to accommodate their needs. Additionally the impact of many economic and social factors including availability of accommodation, cost of living, housing affordability and individual circumstances which change over time add to these challenges.

Across Lincolnshire, there are many common challenges in tackling homelessness but also some more specific issues that only affect pockets of the county. As homelessness is not just about the provision of accommodation and is caused by many other factors, partnership working is key to responding to these challenges.

Having worked together as seven district councils along with Lincolnshire County Council, Housing Providers, Probation service, Voluntary and Community sector organisations and health professionals, there have been huge improvements to homeless services and many initiatives have been successfully implemented which have resulted in:

- A significant number of homelessness preventions
- Joint development of commissioned services
- Increase in access to funding opportunities
- An increase in the provision of specialist accommodation and support for those sleeping rough or at risk of becoming homeless
- More support to help individuals sustain their tenancies

Government policy focuses on the prevention of homelessness and the increasing funding available drives and enables services to be more proactive rather than reactive at point of homeless crisis. The specialist funding opportunities for rough sleepers has also contributed to reducing numbers of those on the streets.

The Covid-19 pandemic and the rise in the cost of living is now presenting new challenges especially around sustainment and availability of accommodation. The county recognises the need to continue to work together to maximise the impact of limited resources. This strategy aims to tackle these issues in a practical and effective way, recognising our roles and opportunities in working together.

We believe this strategy demonstrates that we are committed to the government's vision that homelessness should be rare, brief and non-recurring

Homelessness in Lincolnshire will be:

Rare

Brief

Non-recurring

1 Developing the Strategy

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires that all Local Authorities carry out a review of homelessness in their areas and formulate and publish a strategy based on the findings of this review. It is also required that the strategy is kept under review and consultation occurs with other local or public authorities and voluntary organisations before modifying or adopting a strategy.

The strategy should:

- Assess the levels of homelessness now, and the factors likely to impact on future levels of homelessness
- Ensure that there is sufficient accommodation available for people who are, or may become, homeless
- Provide services that help to prevent people becoming homeless
- Ensure that through effective partnerships, support services can be accessed for those people who are, or who may become, homeless – or to prevent them from becoming homeless again
- Promote a cultural change so that homelessness is viewed in a wider context than just lack of accommodation

This strategy has been formulated following the strategy review, with particular emphasis on the consultation with stakeholders on the achievements of the last strategy, and input into the strategic direction of this new strategy. A series of focus groups, one-to-one meetings and a survey collated vital feedback, which will enable this strategy to meet the aims of not only the seven district councils but also our partners. This strategy will be supported by a more detailed action plan that can evolve to reflect local and changing factors.

To allow us to form a collective and robust approach to homelessness, we will incorporate our Rough Sleeper Strategy into this document instead of having a separate document.

2 Legal Framework

As already stated homelessness is not something that can be tackled in isolation, this is reflected further in the key legislation for tackling homelessness:

- **Housing Act 1996 (as amended) Part 7.**

The overarching piece of legislation used by councils in determining the way in which they respond to homelessness. The Act has been amended by:

- **The Homelessness Act 2002.**

Included notable changes in the way Councils use temporary accommodation, with greater emphasis on the role of prevention.

- **The Homelessness Reduction Act 2018**

Brought new legal duties to Councils so that everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness will have access to support, irrespective of their priority need status, as long as they are eligible for assistance.

- **The Domestic Abuse Act 2021**

Introduced to address the needs of people experiencing domestic abuse, the act imposes a duty on local authorities to provide support in safe accommodation.

- **The Care Act 2014**

Sets out a wider framework with the expectation that agencies would work together to protect children, young adults and people with care and support needs

- **The Armed Forces Bill 2021**

Places a new Duty of Due Regard on statutory authorities to recognise the Armed Forces Covenant in their policies as well as the delivery of front line services

3 National picture

Over the last six years we have seen the introduction of new government policy and initiatives for rough sleepers throughout the pandemic.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) was the first major piece of homelessness legislation that was introduced in 15 years. The Act places new duties on local authorities to help prevent and relieve homelessness. It is designed to provide support for anyone threatened with homelessness.

Key measures include:

- Extending the period during which an authority should treat someone as threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days.
- A new duty to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants threatened with homelessness, regardless of priority need.
- A new duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible homeless applicants, regardless of priority need. This help could be, for example, the provision of a rent deposit or debt advice.
- A new duty on public services to notify a local authority if they come into contact with someone they think may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

The “Everyone In” initiative prompted by the Covid-19 pandemic accommodated over 37,000 individuals experiencing or at risk of rough sleeping between March 2020 and January 2021 across the UK. This early response is calculated to have prevented substantial numbers of COVID-19 infections, hospitalisations, and deaths among the target cohort.

Substantial reductions in rough sleeping of 37% and radically reduced reliance on the use of night shelters were also achieved as a result.

The pandemic response also improved joint working between the homelessness and health sectors.

The Protect and Vaccinate initiative prompted by the Plan B restrictions gave £24.9m to support all local authorities across England to find appropriate accommodation for people sleeping rough and boosting vaccination rates across this vulnerable population.

A further £3.2m was made available to encourage the uptake of vaccination amongst people sleeping rough and others at risk in the single homeless cohort.

4 Introduction to Lincolnshire



Lincolnshire is made up of 7 Councils all of which have unique characteristics and includes urban, rural and coastal areas. Due to the diverse nature of the county there are a number of challenges that all the councils face and some that are exclusive to one or two areas.

Lincoln being the city has a large University that impacts on the availability of accommodation and has high house prices due to the historic nature of the uphill cathedral area. There are many services and accommodation provisions available and many rough sleepers

migrate here to access them. This however adds pressures onto services creating supply issues.

Boston as a borough, has a high level of migrant and Eastern European workers creating a diverse population of cultures. The area has significant agricultural employment attracting seasonal workers and high levels of poor-quality housing but with disproportionately high rents. The borough has seen an increase in individuals who have no recourse to public funds, causing additional issues.

East Lindsey has coastal and rural areas presenting differing challenges of seasonal employment and access to services. The coastal towns of Skegness and Mablethorpe see an increase of rough sleepers over the summer months. The area is an appealing location for people to retire to which presents challenges in finding suitable adapted accommodation.

North Kesteven has one of the lowest rates of rough sleeping and has seen an increase in economic activity over recent years. North Hykeham which borders Lincoln is popular with developers and businesses for new housing and business parks which, has an impact on the affordability of housing. Sleaford in stark contrast has lower house prices but not many accessible services.

South Holland shares many characteristics with Boston with a high proportion of agricultural employment and migrant workers. Wages are low which presents affordability challenges. There are many employment opportunities in neighbouring Peterborough. Having seen an increase in housing development accommodation is still unaffordable to those in need which has led to an increase in rough sleeping.

South Kesteven has two main towns Grantham and Stamford which have very different housing markets and issues. Grantham has a higher level of deprivation and high numbers of rough sleepers with a variety of housing options. Stamford in contrast has very high house prices creating affordability issues.

West Lindsey also has one of the lowest levels of rough sleeping across Lincolnshire but with high levels of deprivation in some parts of the largest town of Gainsborough. House prices are lower in Gainsborough compared with the other market towns in the district but the villages on the Lincoln border present housing affordability challenges. Low turnover of social housing and lack of private rented housing presents issues with availability of suitable housing to rent.

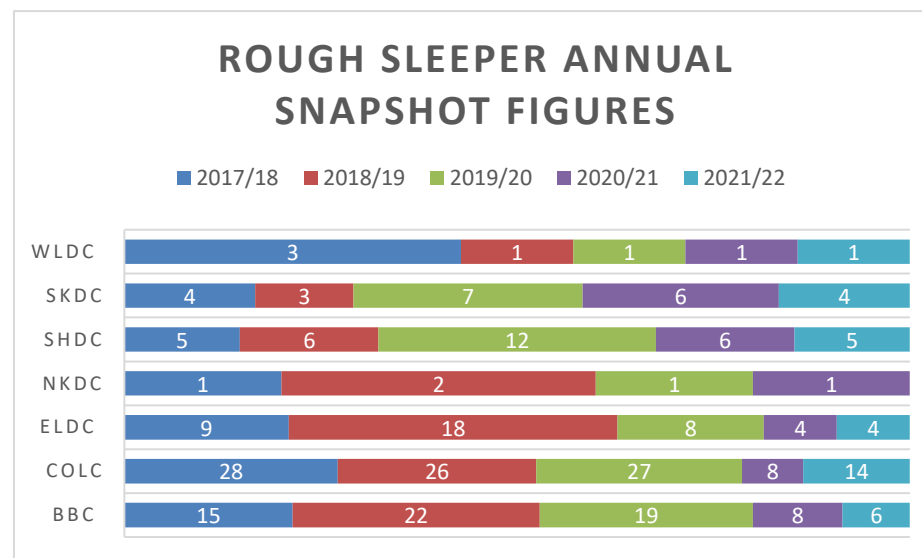
Adding to the unique challenges around access to housing and differences in housing markets, only four of the Councils still hold their own housing stock. West Lindsey, East Lindsey and Boston transferred their stock to registered providers. Despite this, all districts councils have secured new social housing including units specifically for rough sleepers and homelessness people. However, housing demand is still high and there is an ever-increasing reliance on the private rented sector for accommodation.

5 Our Data

This section provides key data to demonstrate the local position with homelessness. Reviewing the dataset of what Lincolnshire has achieved is important to identify our current position and what actions the strategy may need to address.

Rough sleeping

The number of rough sleepers is always fluctuating and cannot be predicted accurately due to the nature of homelessness and the variety of causes.



Numbers have decreased by over 50% since 2019 showing the success of initiatives to engage with individuals and to access more permanent accommodation and support. Lincoln and Boston have the highest rough sleeper numbers as they are the largest urban areas and have the most services available.

Rough sleeper numbers may be lower in Lincolnshire compared to other counties but still presents a challenge locally, particularly given the rural nature of the county in terms of provision and accessibility of services.

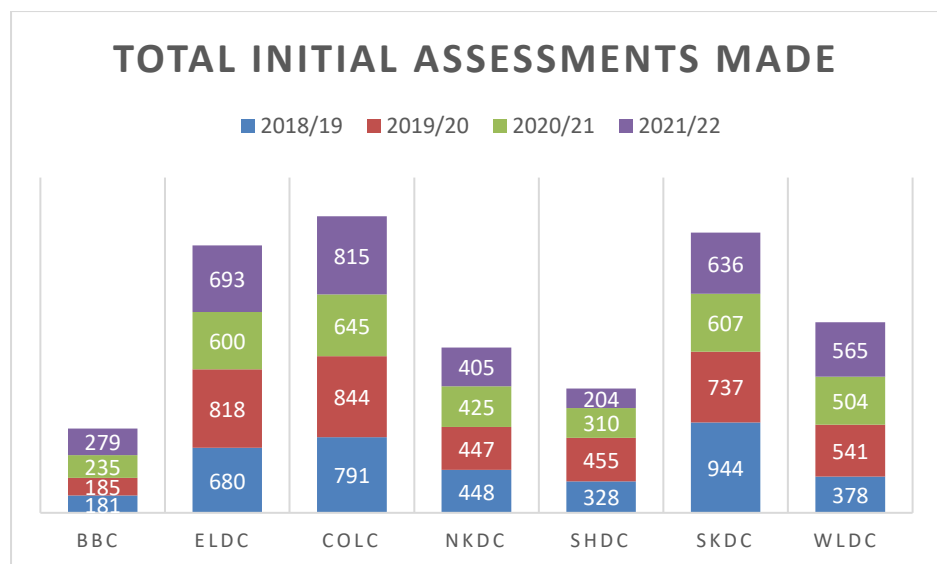
The issue, no matter how great needs to be addressed, and Lincolnshire has tackled this head on with three rough sleeper initiatives operating across the county.

Rough sleeper projections

Predicting the number of rough sleepers based on reported Rough Sleeper Autumn Count figures is difficult due to data being affected by the pandemic. Based on recent reported figures around 35-40 individuals are expected to be rough sleeping at any one time in Lincolnshire. It is worth noting that if any funding for Rough Sleeper Initiatives and/or partner organisations was reduced or unavailable then rough sleeping numbers would increase.

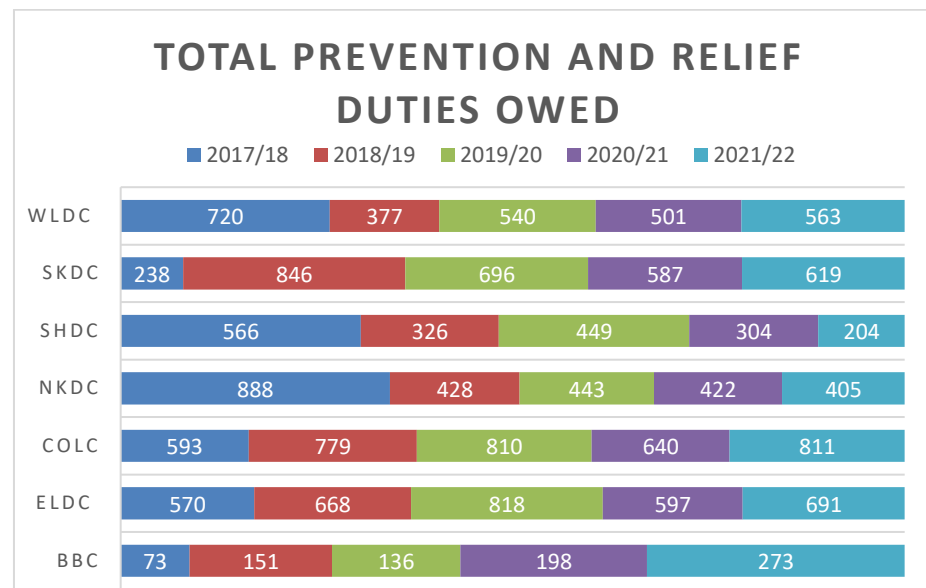
Initial assessments

A total of 14,700 initial assessments were completed between 2018 and 2021 to determine if a duty was owed to those presenting as homeless or threatened with homelessness. This performance indicator was not collected in 2017/18 so cannot be compared as a total for the 5 years with the other indicators.



Prevention and Relief of Homelessness

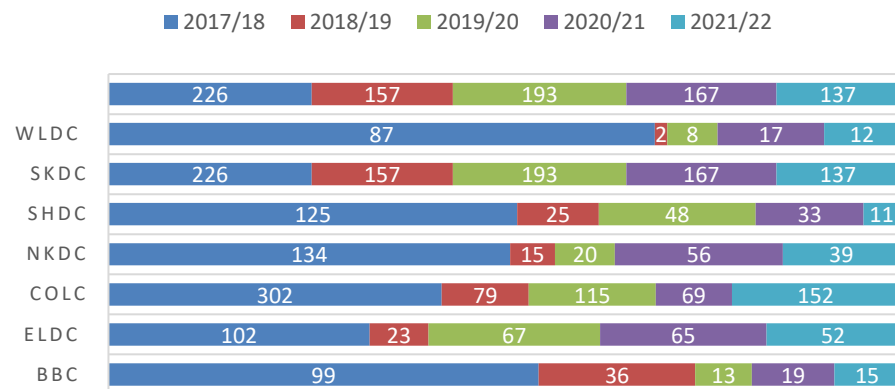
Following those initial assessments 17,930 cases were owed a prevention or relief duty to try and resolve their housing issue.



Homelessness Duty Acceptance Decisions

For those whose housing situation could not be resolved by prevention or relief duties, 2,720 cases were assessed to determine an acceptance of homelessness. This shows the impact prevention duties are making as only 15% of cases did not have their housing issue resolved by a prevention or relief duty, resulting in them presenting as homeless. The number of duty decisions made have also reduced by 60% over the 5 year period further demonstrating the impact of prevention and relief duties.

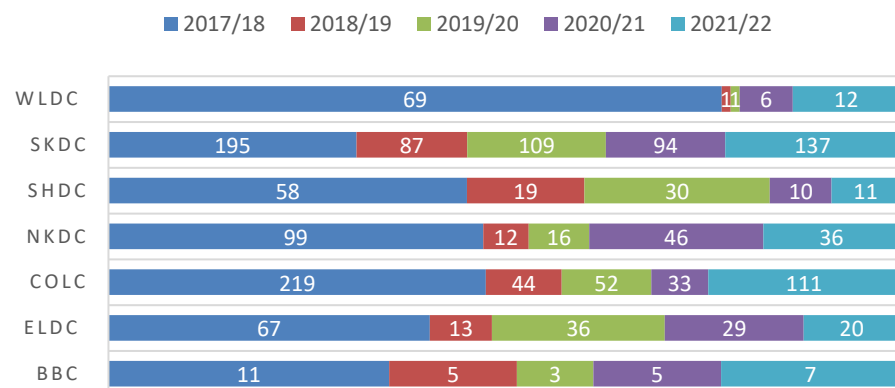
TOTAL HOMELESSNESS DUTY ACCEPTANCES MADE



Priority Need

Of those 2,720 cases presenting of homeless 1,703 were accepted as being homeless and in priority need and owed a duty. The number of those accepted as homeless and in priority need has decreased by 46% since 2017 showing the impact of homelessness prevention.

NUMBER ACCEPTED AS HOMELESS AND IN PRIORITY NEED



6 Strategic Context

To ensure this strategy is embedded into the local strategic context its themes and priorities will complement other strategies and workstreams within Lincolnshire including:

Housing Health Care Delivery Group (HHCDG)

A commitment to working together, across local government, housing, health, care, and voluntary and community sectors to understand and respond to current and future needs in Lincolnshire. A Delivery Plan has a number of collaborative actions that are supported by each subgroup relating to each theme including homelessness.

Lincolnshire Homes for Independence Blueprint

A call for organisations to work together with the vision for people to live independently, stay connected and have greater choice in where and how they live. Aiming to address the need for a safe and warm home, enabling independent living and addressing health inequalities that make it difficult for some people to maintain a home than others.

Lincolnshire Housing Health Co-ordination Group (LHHN)

A forum supporting HHCDG for the strategic co-ordination of housing activity across the county, to drive the delivery of the housing and health priority and objectives identified in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, HHCDG Delivery Plan and Homes for Independence Blueprint.

Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Lincolnshire District Councils are committed to developing an ambitious agenda for improving health and wellbeing in Lincolnshire. To achieve this, they are focusing on a strategic, long-term approach to improving outcomes, a sense of opportunity and ambition, district collaboration, a holistic view based on social determinants, and developing system leadership.

7 Partnerships

The prevention of homelessness can only be achieved through a partnership approach due to so many causes and complexities. More than one organisation often needs to work together to highlight and resolve an individual's housing situation. Often there are health issues that lead to an individual being at risk of or experiencing homelessness which needs a multi-agency approach. Prevention includes both preventing homelessness in the first instance and also preventing recurring homelessness, which need different approaches.

District councils along with Lincolnshire County Council, housing providers, Probation Service, voluntary and community sector and health professionals work together across the sector. Through the network and strategy group many successful initiatives have been implemented, detailed in section 8. Many partnerships underpin this wider network ensuring a robust approach to tackling the challenges the county faces together. The district councils are committed to ensuring partnerships are effective through attendance of many groups as detailed below:

Voluntary and Community Sector

The voluntary sector plays a vital role in supporting rough sleepers across the county as well as supporting those that could be at risk of homelessness through the provision of support, accommodation in some areas, day centers, food and clothing provisions, showers and food banks. In severe weather the sector provides accommodation in some areas and provisions, to ensure rough sleepers are not at risk of harm during the inclement days.

Many charitable organisations across the county provide specific support for those experiencing a crisis or mental health issues, that could be related to their housing situation or could lead to them being threatened with homelessness. The district councils work closely with the sector to refer individuals to access support and respond to those signposted to them for advice on their housing situation.

Housing Related Support (HRS)

Housing Related Support is commissioned by Lincolnshire County Council and delivered by the Lincolnshire Housing Related Support Partnership led by Framework Housing.

The Partnership delivers short term Housing Related Support interventions to vulnerable people who are either homeless or threatened with homelessness, with the aim of improving their health and wellbeing, and enabling them to sustain their own tenancy and live independently.

The service is targeted at the most vulnerable and eligibility is assessed through a triage form with a minimum threshold to access support. The triage form includes questions regarding physical health, mental health, risk to self and others, substance misuse and support network.

Support is tailored to individual needs and delivered by either floating support or accommodation-based support depending on the service user's housing circumstances and needs. Accommodation-based support is supplied by the provider and includes self-contained units in hostel accommodation and dispersed 2 and 3 bed houses.

Only district council housing teams can make referrals to Housing Related Support. Other agencies wishing to refer an individual to Housing Related Support must notify the relevant district council that they are aware of someone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness (this may be part of their Duty to Refer) and the housing team will refer as appropriate.

The Operational Effectiveness Operational Group meets regularly to review capacity, voids, referrals, share information and to discuss issues relating to the partnership.

Rough Sleepers Initiatives (RSI's)

There are 3 Rough Sleeping Initiatives covering all of Lincolnshire mainly funded by Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), working to relieve and prevent rough sleeping. One RSI covers Lincoln, the second East Lindsey and Boston and the third, Change 4 Lincs, covers West Lindsey, South Kesteven, North Kesteven and South Holland hosted by South Kesteven. All have a designated team that works closely within their district council areas, but also across the county as often rough sleeper migrate to other districts.

The service targets those not in priority need that may not have qualified for assistance before the introduction of the initiative. The aim is to identify and help new and existing rough sleepers to access suitable accommodation as soon as possible, as well as helping people who are at risk of sleeping rough.

Outreach services provide help and advice to those who are rough sleeping and homeless and to those who may be at risk of becoming homeless through:

- Referrals to partner agencies or support groups
- Providing details of faith groups and charities
- Help completing housing applications
- Help and advice to find accommodation
- Wellbeing and physical health support
- Help with life skills

Through the creation of person-centered holistic support plans to address barriers and build skills individuals can work towards independent living.

Care Leavers and Young People

Under a contract agreement Nacro Lincolnshire provide supported accommodation that can be accessed by homeless young people aged 16-17 and for care leavers up to 21 years. The service supports around 70 young people at any one time helping to prevent homelessness, and supporting the councils with more complex care leaver cases. They offer long term support to young people who the district councils may struggle to support and to aid a smooth transition into accommodation.

The Youth Homelessness and Care Leavers Protocol sets out the working arrangements for Nacro, the district councils and children's services to support young people and care leavers who need advice and assistance. The aim being to support these young people to live semi-independently.

The transitions panel which meets regularly to review outcomes, discuss challenges, share information and ensure appropriate move on plans are in place for complex cases.

Prison Leavers

The Lincolnshire Prison Release Protocol is an agreement between all Lincolnshire housing authorities, the prison and the probation service. The aims of the protocol are to contribute towards the government's aims of ensuring that at least 90% of people are in accommodation upon release from prison and that at least 80% of people are in settled accommodation either three months after their release or upon receipt of a community sentence. Prison leavers who will be homeless upon release are referred to a district council up to 56 days before release, to enable a personal housing plan to be agreed to try and prevent them from becoming homeless.

A task and finish group are monitoring the implementation and success of the protocol, through performance data and research from service users, to learn from experience and further improve.

Domestic Abuse

In partnership with Lincolnshire County Council support and accommodation is available for those impacted by domestic abuse. Refuge accommodation and dispersed units are available for those fleeing domestic abuse. Providing refuge accommodation has recently become statutory responsibility with funding made available, however, this provision has already been available in Boston, East Lindsey and Lincoln. The dispersed units can be accessed by males experiencing domestic abuse and also those with larger families and families with older male children who could not previously be supported by the refuge accommodation. Each council attends the MARAC meetings (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) to put plans in place to protect victims and including target hardening on the victims home.

Vulnerable Adults Panel

Multi-agency panels and neighbourhood teams have been established across each district. They enable a joint approach to addressing the needs and risks of vulnerable and/or complex individuals that are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The panel/team consider housing options in conjunction with identifying and managing risks.

The Panels/teams are represented by a range of service providers and teams including housing providers, mental health, substance misuse, Prison Service, Fire and Rescue Service, housing benefit, Lincs Police and Adult Social Care. The model has been successfully providing more holistic and sustainable housing solutions for vulnerable customers, but further improvement is still required.

Team Around the Adult (TAA)

The Team Around the Adult pilot launched in February 2021 and supports the approach offered through the Vulnerable Adults Panel and Neighborhood Teams and work with the particularly complex cases. Usually this is where a more creative approach is required to reach out to people in the community and 'go to them', particularly if they do not wish to engage with services.

The TAA process is overseen by an appointed coordinator, it will involve the appointment of a Lead Professional who will usually be the key worker, to engage with the individual, promote multi-agency working and utilise a shared IT system.

By having a creative multi agency approach towards working with complex cases, the aim is to achieve change where more traditional engagement and intervention methods have not been as successful as anticipated, or change may not have been maintained.

A task and finish group are monitoring the pilots progress and outcomes including an in-depth analysis of cases to better understand the presentation and referral pathways across the partner organisations services.

Non-commissioned accommodation

Each council needs to have access to a number of accommodation options to utilise for those that are eligible. Partnerships have been created to enable councils to have their own temporary accommodation either through homeless units owned by the council or a contracted provider.

Move-on accommodation can also be accessed through Framework and its contracted providers in some areas. Private landlords also play a vital role in facilitating access to accommodation and Private Sector Leasing is used in some areas to supplement the supply of temporary and move on accommodation.

Funded schemes such as Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme and Next Steps Accommodation Programme, has provided the ability to increase the provision of supported accommodation across the county, reducing the need for B&B use. However B&B's are still used regularly as the need for suitable accommodation outweighs the supply.

There are non-commissioned hostels in Lincoln, Boston and Mablethorpe providing provision and services for rough sleepers and other charitable organisations that offer accommodation for specific groups.

Drug and Alcohol Substance Misuse Service

Lincolnshire County Council has a drug and alcohol substance misuse service, and it is widely known that many rough sleepers are substance users. As part of the government's bid to end rough sleeping for good, a Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant (RSDATG) has been awarded to Lincolnshire County Council.

The grant will be used to deliver substance misuse treatment services for people sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough through an assertive outreach model. This will be delivered by the county's treatment and recovery providers in collaboration with housing, the voluntary sector and district councils. In addition to evidence-based drug and alcohol treatment, vital wraparound support will be provided to improve access to and engagement with treatment.

HHH

The Holistic Health for Homeless team in Lincoln works with individuals to conduct holistic reviews, and best support individuals with both physical and mental health. The team work alongside other clinicians and practitioners locally to ensure smooth transitions when accessing services. By having this multi-disciplinary team approach both within the small team but also linking to wider stakeholders, has ensured swift and timely responses for the individuals seeking care, reducing buffering between services and disengagement.

The team has evolved and developed since in introduction, reflective to the needs, trends, and themes they have been presented with. There are a range of clinical staff including Mental and Physical Health Practitioners, junior team members, psychiatry and GP support, administration function and a social worker too within the team.

8 Rough Sleeping

The government published a new national Rough Sleeping Strategy in 2022 setting out its vision of 'Ending Rough Sleeping for good.' The priorities in the strategy focus on four main themes-

- Prevent
- Intervene
- Recovery and transparency
- and a more joined up system.

The strategy calls for a whole system approach, recognising that rough sleepers interact with a range of different services, that need to work together to provide holistic support and collaborate across organisational boundaries.

Better prevention is needed through providing earlier support across the system aiming to ensure that nobody leaves a public institution to the streets. Lincolnshire's Prison Protocol will ensure Duty to Refer are made to secure accommodation before release.

Intervention should be swift and effective, so that people can report if they see a person sleeping rough and connect them to help to receive a tailored offer of support which meets their needs. Promotion of our RSI services and outreach model is working successfully to verify and create support plans for rough sleepers.

To aid recovery for those that need it, services need to continue to work together to deliver the help people need, to get off the streets and stay off the streets for good. The Rough Sleepers Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant will provide much needed support to break this cycle.

An increase in government funding for rough sleepers accommodation and support will be launched as part of the strategy, and recognises that provisions need to include tailored mental health and substance misuse support. This builds on the county's successful projects funded through the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP) and

Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP). The NSAP programme aimed to provide move on accommodation for rough sleepers that were accommodated throughout the pandemic. The RSAP scheme followed in its success to further increase provision. The need for support for rough sleepers to enable them to move on to sustain tenancies was recognised and formed part of both these programmes.

A joint county bid to secure accommodation through the RSAP to provide supported accommodation for those with complex needs was successful and will be implemented in 2023. This project alongside funding for substance misuse, should go a long way to stopping the cycle of rough sleeping across the county.

Working together there has been significant progress towards ending rough sleeping. Collective efforts at the height of the pandemic saw tens of thousands of people helped off the streets in the UK with two thirds moved into long-term housing. This highlights that a problem as intractable as rough sleeping can be solved with a shared commitment to succeed.

The county will continue to create a more transparent and joined-up system by ensuring effective and honest communication happens by everyone involved. Partners should be clear on their commitment and hold each other to account whilst sharing knowledge and exploring opportunities for joint funding and commissioning.

The challenge of rough sleeping is not an easy one and is not just about accommodation but requires a long-term solution to stop the recurrence. We know that many people rough sleeping suffer from poor mental health and substance misuse and others are caught in a vicious cycle between prison and a life on the streets. We need to identify the underlying causes that have led to rough sleeping, ensure individuals know they have other options and support them throughout their journey.

9 Review of current Homelessness Strategy

The last Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-2021, extended to December 2022, focused on five main priorities:

Priority One: Protect	Protecting the most vulnerable from experiencing homelessness including tackling rough sleeping.
Priority Two: Prevent	Preventing homelessness wherever possible to do so.
Priority Three: Partnership	Developing and maintaining strategic relationships and partnerships.
Priority Four: Place	Ensuring access to the right type of housing solution.
Priority Five: Possibility	Ensuring a sustainable future for supported housing.

We will use this section to reflect on these and our key achievements against these identified priorities:

Protect

- ✓ A decrease in rough sleeping by over 50% over the last 2 years
- ✓ Successful bid for government funding for 3 Rough Sleeper Initiative Projects that are working well across the county.
- ✓ Introduced a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol to provide emergency assistance for rough sleepers when weather conditions pose a risk to health.
- ✓ Increased the provision of single persons accommodation to improve housing options.
- ✓ During the pandemic a total of 215 rough sleepers were accommodated through the Everyone In and Protect and Vaccinate schemes
- ✓ Partners across the county system, went to great lengths to maximise take up of the Covid-19 vaccine amongst the homeless

cohort. HRS staff helped facilitate, promote, and encourage their service users to attend drop-ins too.

- ✓ Enabled all rough sleepers to have a postcode so that they can access post and the ability to setup a bank account
- ✓ Introduction of the Lincs Prison Protocol to ensure prison leavers have safe and suitable accommodation on release.
- ✓ Provision of Hospital and Housing Link Workers.
- ✓ Referring the most vulnerable to multi agency groups to ensure they can access the support they need.

Prevent

- ✓ Over 10,000 households prevented from becoming homeless over the last five years across Lincolnshire.
- ✓ Published a countywide Rough Sleeper Guide to demonstrate how accessible information contributes to homelessness prevention.
- ✓ Implemented the Controlling Migration Fund to allow EEA nationals access to work, who have no recourse to public funds and employed a countywide resettlement worker.
- ✓ Worked with private sector landlords to prevent households become homeless through a range of initiatives.
- ✓ Committed to Team Around the Adult to facilitate a partnership safety net approach for complex adults
- ✓

Partnership

- ✓ In partnership with LCC and providers implemented the Housing Related Support Service for supported accommodation and floating support for those either homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- ✓ Formed the Homelessness Strategy Partnership to work with housing providers, voluntary and community sector organisations, health professionals and Lincolnshire County Council to deliver together the actions of the Lincolnshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
- ✓ Fully engaged an effective Homelessness Cell working group to respond together to Covid-19 Everyone In and Protect and Vaccinate government initiatives.

- ✓ Raising awareness of the needs of people who are entrenched in rough sleeping and developing health services to meet their needs through the Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group.

Place

- ✓ Implemented countywide processes and protocols to meet Duty to Refer requirements, enabling timely intervention and preventing homelessness.
- ✓ Provided additional units of accommodation through - Housing First, Next Steps Accommodation Programme and the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme.
- ✓ Engaged with rough sleepers whilst being accommodated during the pandemic, supporting them into service provision and more settled housing.

Possibility

- ✓ Submitted a countywide bid for Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme funding to provide accommodation for those with complex needs with dedicated support.
- ✓ Delivered the ACTION Lincs project to provide long term life changing support for an identified group of vulnerable and complex need rough sleepers, across the county using Housing First principles.

10 Looking ahead, our challenges

Looking forward our aim is aligned with central government that homelessness should be **rare, brief and non-reoccurring**. The landscape of homelessness including government policy, funding initiatives and the social and economic positions means that within a five-year strategy period, much can and will change. This presents challenges to successfully delivering this strategy, however Lincolnshire has positioned itself to be able to respond to those challenges and adapt its approach as and when the landscapes change.

The nature of homelessness

Preventing and reducing homelessness and rough sleeping is a difficult issue to address due to the many factors that can cause people to become homeless. Every individual has different circumstances and needs which prevents a one size fits all approach, and it could take a period of time to understand a person's circumstances in order to assist them in the right way. Predictability of homelessness is also an issue as numbers fluctuate but do not follow any particular trends due to a number of factors that contribute to someone becoming homeless.

The main reasons people become homeless in Lincolnshire are:

- Friends or family unable to accommodate
- Relationship breakdown
- Debt, particularly rent or mortgage arrears
- Problems with a landlord, being threatened with eviction or served notice to leave including no fault evictions
- Domestic abuse, or other forms of violence, threats or intimidation
- Loss of accommodation due to addictions, mental health issues or having complex needs.
- Discharge from hospital, care, armed forces or release from custody, with no suitable accommodation available to them.
-

Prevention

With the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act in 2017 there is a focus on earlier intervention and duties to prevent and alleviate homelessness. Key partners have a Duty to Refer individuals for assistance. This change has allowed many households to resolve their housing issues before they become homeless and not need temporary accommodation.

With public authorities referring individuals within a 56-day period of potential homelessness this gives time for partners to work together to find suitable housing options. This has led to closer working between agencies and a commitment to assisting individuals. Lincolnshire has a protocol for both prison leavers and young people and care leavers demonstrating the willingness to work together.

Whilst the focus remains on preventing homelessness there are instances where it cannot be prevented, and a crisis situation arises. An assessment would then take place to access appropriate accommodation and support. However, there are some rough sleepers that do not wish to be rehoused and some that have become entrenched. In these instances, the RSI team and district council work together to continue to offer assistance and welfare checks.

Covid-19

The pandemic put more emphasis on service delivery to be more reactive. The key focus on accommodating and protecting rough sleepers brought together local authorities, housing providers, voluntary sector organisations and health professionals across the county to create a multi-agency approach.

Whilst many of the rough sleepers were accommodated this allowed engagement with services in a way that has not previously been available and has led to many of this cohort remaining in accommodation and not returning to the streets.

Availability of accommodation

The need to accommodate all rough sleepers across the county during the pandemic further highlighted the shortage of accommodation for single people, especially those with high support needs who struggle in a hostel environment. Without the assistance of hotels and B&Bs who weren't able to use their accommodation because of Covid-19 for normal use, councils wouldn't have been able to get everyone off the streets.

As well as an anticipated increase in homelessness there are competing demands for affordable accommodation from the government's various resettlement and refugee schemes for instance those presenting as homeless due to host relationship breakdowns from the Homes for Ukraine scheme. A dispersed scheme is also due to be introduced for Asylum Seekers which will further impact availability of private sector housing.

House prices and rents increasing but the Local Housing Allowance rates are not rising in line with these increases leaving more people being unable to afford housing. Government funding for newbuild affordable housing and accommodation for rough sleepers has been utilised but the demand for this accommodation far outweighs the supply.

Need for a joined up approach

Resources are limited and with demand increasing for accommodation and support services there is a need to consider ways we can take a joint approach. Service provision is time-bound to its funding duration and planning for future provision needs to be considered. Taking a partnership approach and considering joint commissioning can result in provision that is better value for money, whilst improving access and outcomes for all.

Our partners have expertise and knowledge that is needed to successfully attract and utilise funding for the benefit of those that

need it most. There are inequalities across the county in terms of access and outcomes, so working together to evaluate what works well and what needs to change will result in better efficiency of our services and meeting needs of our client groups.

Cost of Living

The cost of living is increasing and is set to increase further, this will see more people unable to afford their current housing and add pressure to the demand for social housing. A multi-agency approach is needed to identify those struggling at an early stage and signpost to financial advice and assistance where appropriate. Demand for private rented accommodation will increase but with competing demands and affordability issues, households could resort to unsuitable, poor standard and overcrowded housing.

Holistic identification of needs

Homelessness is not just a housing issue, and to successfully prevent and ensure instances do not reoccur there is a need to look beyond the individual's housing situation, and consider the underlying causes. It is widely known that there is a direct link between housing and health. The aim is not just to ensure someone has a roof over their head but to ensure their physical and mental wellbeing is taken into account.

When assessing individuals needs it is important to consider all factors and be flexible in the approach as some information may not be available at the first point of contact. Whilst we have pathways for each group, we need to highlight that these are not prescriptive and are only paths to access. Whilst many people fit into each group, a tailored approach is given following assessment of their needs. The provision of support and service will adapt to the individual's health and wellbeing.

Hidden homelessness

Whilst we are able to monitor the number of those that present as homeless and are rough sleeping, the extent of those 'hidden' is often unknown. This includes individuals who are:

- Rough sleepers that we are not aware of
- Those staying with family or friends
- Sofa surfers
- Squatters
- Those living in tents/caravans
- Those living in unsuitable housing
- Those released from prison, care or hospital with no suitable secured accommodation
- Paying guests in B&B's/hotels which could be funded through illegal means

Often these individuals do not know what services they can access and what starts out as a temporary measure can result in a long-term cycle often resulting in declining health and wellbeing. The challenge is to identify these people so they can be referred to appropriate partners and services including the RSI's to access suitable accommodation and healthcare.

Many individuals with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) are sleeping rough, squatting or in unsuitable housing as there are no immediate solutions within current government policy to resolve their housing issues. Council's will encourage those that are eligible to apply for EU settled status in order to access benefits and assist individuals to find work to resolve their financial and housing issues.

11 Our Priorities

Building on the successes of the last strategy and taking account of new challenges the priorities for the next five years are:

1. **Prevent** – identify those that are at risk of becoming homeless as early as possible and through the Duty to Refer to prevent homelessness or rough sleeping
2. **Protect** – identifying the most vulnerable and ensuring individuals are safe from harm, and have access to the support and services to maintain their health and wellbeing
3. **Partnerships** – strengthen and maintain relationships to bring together resources and knowledge to prevent and relieve homelessness
4. **Place** – ensure accommodation is both available and suitable for those that need it and explore opportunities to increase the supply of accommodation
5. **Plan** – take a proactive, joined up and flexible approach to tackling rough sleeping and homelessness and explore funding opportunities to ensure we meet the needs of all client groups

These priorities have been chosen to reflect the issues highlighted through the consultation process with our stakeholders and the challenges we face going forward.

12 Pathways

There are many people that can experience or be threatened with homelessness in their lifetime, all of which will have different reasons and circumstances. Whilst each person receives a personal housing plan specific to their needs, we can identify the main groups of people that this strategy aims to help and support;

- Single people
- Families
- Rough sleepers
- Those with complex and/or specific needs
- Care leavers and young people
- Prison Leavers
- Those experiencing Domestic Abuse
- Armed Forces Community
- Those with No Recourse to Public Funds

Identifying the main barriers that these groups are facing allows us to produce tailored approaches to ensure our services offer a personalised and consistent approach across the county.

Single people

There is a shortage of suitable longer-term financially affordable accommodation for single people across the county which will be one reason as to why single people end up rough sleeping. Many become homeless due to friends or family being no longer able to accommodate them or they are sofa surfing and many are not in priority need. Some will have accommodation but can't manage without appropriate support which is often required long term. Others are elderly with care and support needs.

Providing access to appropriate accommodation is crucial to break the cycle of homelessness that many experience. Many single people have vulnerabilities including mental health issues, complex or specific needs, substance misuse and/or chaotic behavior. This can lead to

them being vulnerable living alone and at risk of cuckooing or harm as they need support. For others, shared accommodation is not suitable due to their behavior caused by their vulnerabilities all of which can lead to loss of accommodation.

The Rough Sleeper Initiatives and Homelessness Reduction Act have increased options for those not in priority need allowing many single people to be accommodated. However, some have become entrenched rough sleepers and do not wish to be rehoused or find the transition difficult. Finding temporary accommodation is difficult for this group but long term stays in hostels and B&B's can lead to isolation and mental health issues which in turn result in loss of accommodation.

What we will do to help this group:

- **Prevent**
Work with individuals to assess options before they become homeless and discuss assistance RSI's can offer for those not in priority need. All efforts for the individual to remain in any settled accommodation will be prioritised over offering temporary accommodation.
- **Protect**
We will assess everyone to identify any support needs and refer/signpost to appropriate agencies for personal and tenancy related support. We will utilise multi-agency groups where required to access additional support.
- **Place**
Work with housing providers and private landlords to identify suitable accommodation options to meet individual needs. Opportunities will be explored to increase accommodation through government funding.
- **Partnership**
Work together to access funding to increase accommodation options for single people.
- **Plan**
Review this pathway to ensure accommodation and services can be accessed by this group.

Families

Many families are threatened with homelessness due to affordability issues, changes in circumstances or loss of secure accommodation, often through no fault of their own. Whilst this group fall into the priority need group, options for temporary accommodation are more limited in some areas. Whilst there is a shortage of social housing for all household types and waiting times can vary, the use of private sector housing is imperative for this group.

What we will do to help this group:

- **Prevent**
Work with households to prevent loss of accommodation through liaison with landlords, signposting and financial advice and promoting awareness to seek advice as soon as homelessness is threatened.
- **Protect**
Ensure access to financial advice and creation of personal housing plans that meet the needs of the household. Make referrals for tenancy and floating support where appropriate to sustain tenancies.
- **Place**
Identify all housing options and support for families to make informed and realistic decisions based on their needs. Work with private landlords and provide assistance where appropriate. Increase the supply of family temporary accommodation to minimise the use of B&B's.
- **Partnership**
Work with housing providers and the voluntary sector to ensure access not just to accommodation but food, furniture and support for all members of the household.
- **Plan**
Review and implement initiatives to assist with the rising cost of living and landlord issues.

Rough sleepers

Due to the issues already detailed many single people and some couples inevitably end up on the streets and often in a vicious circle of rough sleeping. Rough sleeping has many health and wellbeing impacts and efforts to prevent rough sleeping should be maximised. The Rough Sleeper Initiatives along with partners including the Voluntary and Community Sector have been successful in reducing numbers and many rough sleepers that were accommodated during the pandemic have been able to access more permanent accommodation.

What we will do to help this group:

- **Prevent**
Exhaust all options to prevent individuals ending up on the streets by encouraging early notification and promoting awareness of options to assist. Ensure Duty to Refers are responded to effectively and do not result in homelessness.
- **Protect**
Respond to all reports of rough sleeping through proactive street outreach and promotion of a single number for the general public to report sightings and concerns. Make offers of temporary accommodation or hostel placements and complete regular wellbeing checks on those that do not wish to be accommodated or are ineligible.
- **Place**
Identify suitable accommodation options and work with individuals to seek the support services they require to address health, wellbeing and tenancy needs. Investigate options for additional hostel and temporary accommodation alongside single person move on accommodation.
- **Partnership**
Work with partners to increase long term accommodation options for rough sleepers and housing related support to enable cycles of rough sleeping to be broken.
- **Plan**
Pool resources and share knowledge across the county to tackle rough sleeping. Explore future funding phases and joint working opportunities.

Complex/Specific Needs

Many individuals need specific housing or support through a tailored support plan which is identified through an initial assessment. A triage is completed to determine the level of an individual's need. There is a shortage of adapted and supported accommodation across the county so utilisation of Disabled Facilities Grants and floating support is key to meeting the needs of this group. There is a need to access suitable accommodation and appropriate support for those with complex and specific needs and those discharged from hospital and mental health inpatients.

What we will do to help this group

- **Prevent**
Identify needs that are contributing to an individual's risk of homelessness, put support in place to sustain their current housing. Understand why cases become complex and put measures in place to stop cases becoming complex and leading to homelessness. Ensure those discharged from hospital and inpatients do not end up homeless through early planning. Improve education for agencies to understand the needs of people with complex needs
- **Protect**
Work with support and housing providers to ensure individual's needs are identified and diagnosed at an early stage and first contact with LCC, CCG, LPFT and TAA, in order to access suitable support. Improve access to adaptations so that people can remain in their own homes and improve their physical and mental wellbeing.
- **Place**
Work with LCC to increase the provision of supported accommodation specifically for those with learning difficulties, autism and mental health issues.
- **Partnership**
Form a multi-agency approach to learn from previous experiences to ensure individuals can access support and accommodation that is

suitable for their needs and stop future episodes of homelessness. Progress the need for dual-diagnosis for those with mental health and substance misuse forming a joint approach from services.

- **Plan**
We will map services and accommodation across the county to identify areas needing an increase in provision, especially for unsupported or low-level support options, to ensure clients can move on successfully after supported accommodation.

Care Leavers and young people

Young people who are threatened with or become homeless for a variety of reasons will be vulnerable and are likely to have no support. Ensuring their welfare through the provision of appropriate support that is centered on the young person is essential to resolving their housing issues.

What we will do to help this group:

- **Prevent**
Respond to Duty to Refers in a timely manner working with LCC, Nacro and other agencies in line with our agreed protocols.
- **Protect**
Ensure adequate and appropriate support is available from the outset by checking their leaving care status (if under 25) and utilise early help and leaving care services.
- **Place**
Provide suitable accommodation to meet the young person's needs and offer flexibility regarding local connections and individual preferences with the aim of safeguarding their welfare.
- **Partnership**
Work with LCC and Nacro to identify the best approach to meet the young person's needs.
- **Plan**
Monitor and review protocols to streamline referrals and resolve issues through the Transitions Panel, to ensure all young people and care leavers are accommodated and supported

Prison Leavers

Prison leavers should have access to appropriate and settled accommodation on release. Not all of those seeking accommodation will be released from prisons within the county, so support plans should reflect the vulnerability of this group, and a proactive multi-agency approach is needed.

What we will do to help this group:

- **Prevent**
Ensure the Duty to Refer is made and responded to in advance of the release date in line with the agreed protocol. Use escalation points to ensure no one is released to the streets.
- **Protect**
Ensure access to housing support is available on release to give individuals the best chance to settle and sustain their tenancy, recognising that support needs can change over time as individuals settle back into the community.
- **Place**
Provide access to suitable accommodation avoiding the need for temporary accommodation where possible by forward planning. Work with Probation Service to explore joint working opportunities.
- **Partnership**
Work with Probation Service and partners to tailor our approach to suit individual needs referring to services when needed.
- **Plan**
Monitor the protocols to streamline referrals and resolve any barriers in accommodating and supporting these individuals.

Domestic Abuse

All those impacted by domestic abuse need access to support and suitable accommodation. Local connection rules are extended to those fleeing abuse so good partnership working is required to secure appropriate accommodation for those that need to move in or out of the county.

What we will do to help this group:

- **Prevent**
Respond to referrals in a timely manner ensuring appropriate advice, support, target hardening or accommodation is provided, working with the referring partner and other agencies in line with the Domestic Abuse Act.
- **Protect**
Make existing accommodation safe and secure where appropriate and ensure support is available. Consider vulnerabilities, risk and safeguarding making referrals made where appropriate. Refer perpetrators to programmes that can help them change
- **Place**
Provide appropriate accommodation which is safe and avoid temporary accommodation in line with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- **Partnership**
Engage with partners to form a multi-agency approach to support both those experiencing domestic abuse and perpetrators utilising funding available.
- **Plan**
Monitor any issues with referrals and plan to ensure adequate support and accommodation is available in line with demand.

Armed forces Community

Members of the Armed Forces community can also fall into multiple group descriptors and can become homeless due to relationship breakdowns during the transition to civilian life, domestic abuse, having complex needs due to mental health issues as well as those who leave the military at short notice.

What we will do to help this group:

- **Prevent**
Respond to all referrals in a timely manner working with the referring partner and other agencies in line with protocols.
- **Protect**
Ensure appropriate support is available to assist in the transition to civilian life and for those experiencing Domestic Abuse.
- **Place**
Identify those that are eligible using the 'think veteran' approach and avoid temporary accommodation where possible.
- **Partnership**
Engage with partners to form a multi-agency approach to meet individual needs and promote assistance we can offer.
- **Plan**
introduce protocols to streamline referrals and monitor any barriers in accommodating and supporting these individuals

Those with No recourse to public funds (NRPF)

There are individuals in some parts of the county with restricted eligibility who do not have access to public funding, they are unable to access housing and often end up rough sleeping. Some that are employed have access to accommodation, but this is often unsuitable. Many in this group were accommodated during the pandemic but are now not eligible for assistance, unless there is a risk to life.

What we will do to help this group:

- **Prevent**
Engage with individuals as early as possible to assess options to prevent them from rough sleeping.
- **Protect**
Ascertain immigration status and eligibility to apply for EUSS and assist with applications where needed. Explore options to enable individuals access to employment.

- **Place**
Provide temporary accommodation where individuals are eligible or if there is a 'risk to life.' Engage and encourage non publicly funded organisations to provide accommodation short term.
- **Partnership**
Liaise with supporting agencies and partners to assist with accommodation and support – NHS & GP Surgeries, faith groups, addiction support, and food banks.
- **Plan**
Implement a joint agency protocol for housing and support for no recourse to public funds.

13 Review and implementation plan

The strategy will be reviewed by both the Strategic Leads group represented by all district's councils, Lincolnshire County Council and the Lincs Housing Partnerships Manager.

An ambitions table in the next section has been produced using the feedback from the consultation, and review of the last strategy to inform on the outcomes we wish to achieve through this strategy. To ensure this document remains relevant throughout its lifespan, an implementation plan has not been included. Instead, a series of action groups for each priority will be responsible for the delivery of the ambitions, through more detailed implementation plans.

The groups will involve representation from a range of organisations including the seven district councils, Lincolnshire County Council, housing providers, voluntary sector and health professionals who together will achieve the aims of this strategy as we face the challenges set out in this document together.

Progress from the actions on the implementation plan will be monitored through the Lincolnshire Strategy Homelessness Partnership group and reported up to Lincolnshire Housing Health Co-ordination Group and Housing Health Care Delivery Group.

14 Ambitions

Priority	Activity Summary	What success will look like
Prevent	<p>Ensure Duty to Refers are effective</p> <p>Ensure pathways to housing advice and prevention assistance are well promoted</p> <p>Offer access to a range of tools to prevent homelessness</p> <p>Enable access to support to sustain accommodation and avoid recurrence</p>	<p>Homelessness prevention continues to overshadow crisis situations</p> <p>County wide service delivery that focuses on prevention of homelessness through a range of activities</p>
Protect	<p>Target assistance to those most at risk</p> <p>Continue to develop existing RSI partnerships</p> <p>Ensure rough sleepers can access primary and secondary care services</p> <p>Progress a dual-diagnosis service for substance misuse and mental health.</p>	<p>Vulnerability is identified at the earliest opportunity with appropriate safeguarding in place to minimise risk of harm or detriment to wellbeing</p> <p>All relevant services react quickly to prevent homelessness.</p>
Partnership	<p>Recognise homelessness as a multi-faceted issue and not just a housing problem, working together to address the underlying causes</p> <p>Strengthen existing relationships</p> <p>Review and adapt the partnership structure to reflect needs and ensure progress with a Strategy implementation plan</p>	<p>A Partnership structure with a clear purpose that achieves effective outcomes</p> <p>Homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring in Lincolnshire</p>
Place	<p>Map, review effectiveness and where appropriate remodel accommodation provision to meet changing needs</p> <p>Ensure there are a range of tools available to support households' access to suitable reasonable accommodation options</p> <p>Increase the provision of suitable accommodation across the county to meet identified needs</p>	<p>Suitable accommodation options available for all, with appropriate support to access and sustain that accommodation where required</p>

<p>Plan</p>	<p>Prepare and maintain datasets to readily support funding opportunities</p> <p>Actively seek funding opportunities to improve/increase service provision and/or resources in Lincolnshire</p> <p>Use of appropriate political structures to ensure awareness to local issues and access to funding opportunities</p> <p>Develop our understanding of the causes and effects of homelessness and/or sleeping rough through further research and data analysis</p> <p>Keep abreast of policy and guidance changes alongside examples of good practice across the county to ensure services can respond to change</p>	<p>Service delivery that is flexible to change in the future and meets the needs of those that need it</p> <p>A local political environment that is informed and supportive to maximise opportunities to the benefit of Lincolnshire residents</p> <p>Better understanding of needs and impacts so that service provision can be matched to demands</p>
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