

A pair of hands is shown holding a small, brown cardboard house. The house has a gabled roof and two rectangular windows. The hands are positioned on either side of the house, with fingers visible through the window cutouts. The background is a plain, light-colored surface.

# Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy

2017-2021

# contents

Welcome	4
Lincolnshire in context	5
Boston	6
City of Lincoln	8
East Lindsey	10
North Kesteven	12
South Holland	14
South Kesteven	16
West Lindsey	18
Reflecting on the previous Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2012 – 2016	20
Strategy introduction	23
Homelessness in context in Lincolnshire	37
Priorities, Delivery Plan and Governance	49



# welcome

Welcome to the fourth Homelessness Strategy produced by Lincolnshire housing authorities. The strategy sets out the key challenges, priorities and objectives for preventing and tackling homelessness across Lincolnshire over the next five years.

Local authorities and their partners face unprecedented change, economic challenges and significant welfare, housing and planning policy developments.

Over recent period the current government has introduced substantial and wide-ranging changes meaning that the period ahead will be one of the most challenging for local authorities and their partners.

Homelessness is a complex issue that cuts across many policy areas. Local authorities have long recognised that partnership working is the key to tackling homelessness. Now more than ever we need to work together to respond to an environment of rapid change. The potential impact of a wide range of policy changes on people vulnerable to experiencing homelessness cannot be underestimated.

The strategy is supported by a delivery plan which clearly sets out the short, medium and longer term activities to deliver an effective homelessness strategy for Lincolnshire. To ensure the strategy remains relevant and can respond to change, the delivery plan will be regularly

monitored by the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy Group and will be reviewed annually.

Over the past four years Lincolnshire has experienced both an increase in homelessness, alongside an increase in the complexity of the needs of individuals and households affected by homelessness.

During the lifetime of this strategy we will see significant changes which, without innovation, collaboration and partnership may lead to increased homelessness amongst vulnerable households. In order to respond to the challenges ahead we must build on our relationships with other statutory services, registered providers, employment and skills colleagues and financial inclusion services, all of whom will play a larger role in preventing homelessness over coming years. With continued pressures on the level of available resource across local authorities and their partners, we will have to be innovative in our approach to homeless prevention, develop further initiatives and make best use of our collective resources to improve the lives of those who are at risk of, or are experiencing, homelessness across Lincolnshire.

This strategy represents a partnership response to preventing and tackling homelessness. We would like to thank all of the individuals and organisations who have contributed to the development of the strategy.

# Lincolnshire in context

Lincolnshire is the fourth largest county in England, covering 5921 sq. km. It is also the fourth most sparsely populated. It is a county of contrasts, with a diverse landscape covering coastal, rural and urban areas with concentrations of population around the city of Lincoln and the key market towns of Gainsborough, Sleaford, Boston, Grantham, Louth, Skegness, Spalding and Stamford. Rural and coastal areas present particular homelessness challenges, with the coastal area characterised by high concentrations of deprivation and high levels of low paid seasonal work while rural areas have low population density areas, limited road networks and transport infrastructure coupled with social isolation.



5,921km<sup>2</sup>

743,400

Estimated population 2016



**Having some  
of the highest  
private rents  
in the region  
and lowest full  
time wages,  
Boston faces  
real affordability  
challenges**



# Boston

Covering an area of 362 square kilometres Boston Borough consists of the market town of Boston and 18 rural parishes. Boston is a sub-regional centre, second in the county to Lincoln, and provides retail employment and a variety of visitor attractions. It has a strong food and agricultural sector as well as a stable historic industrial base and a port. Its historic environment is recognised by English Heritage as one of the most important in England.

Shaped by agricultural and horticultural activity, the Boston area has seen one of the largest increases in population since the 2001 Census, nationally. The population of Boston Borough has increased by 19.3% (to 66,500) since 2001. A high proportion of the increase has come from economic migrants, particularly from Portugal and Eastern Europe, placing a strain on housing and local services. The population is forecast to grow further by 10,000 for the period 2014 to 2039.

In common with many other coastal communities, Boston faces significant challenges. These include geographical isolation, low wages, an economy over-reliant on elementary occupations and a poor skills base. Gross weekly full time pay is £411.20 compared with an East Midlands average of £492.00 (2015) while the proportion employed in elementary occupations is 20.3%, more than double the Great Britain figure of 10.8%. However, long-term unemployment remains below the England average.

Although local schools are of a generally high quality, the proportion of residents with NVQ4 Level qualifications and above is significantly below the East Midlands and Great Britain average.

Some 19.8% of the district's population falls within the 20% most deprived areas in England compared to a Lincolnshire average of 11.7%. Private sector rented accommodation is of generally low quality and rents are higher than the East Midlands average.



66,500

19.3% increase in population since 2001

£411.20

Gross weekly full time pay

Compared with an East Midlands average of

£492

# City of Lincoln

City of Lincoln has an estimated population of 97,065 residents across approximately 44,600 households, with the average Lincoln household containing 2.21 people.

In 2015 Lincoln had 10 areas that were in the highest 10% of deprived areas nationally. This has increased from seven areas in 2010 and five areas in 2007 according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation. The 10 areas equates to 16,014 Lincoln residents and 16.6% of the total City of Lincoln population.

Over the last 10 years there has been a rise in the number of properties within Lincoln. This is a result of an additional 2,110 flats being built in that time which equates to an increase of 11.2% in the number of homes within the city.

There has been an increase in private rented properties between 2001 to 2011 across Central Lincolnshire. In Lincoln this is partly due to the growth of the

university therefore resulting in an increase in the student population. This increase has raised concerns about the condition of the private rented properties, with estimates of up to 35.6% non-decency and 21% Category 1 Hazards under the Housing and Health Rating System.

Lincoln has a fast growing student population which is reflected in the age demographic which shows a higher proportion of younger people living in Lincoln, compared to other districts close to the area.

In 2012/13, the City of Lincoln Council accepted 199 people as homeless. Some 48% of these were aged between 25 and 44. In 2015/16 the number of acceptances had reduced slightly to 142, but 84.5% of these were acceptances from people aged 16-44. The City of Lincoln aims to reduce the number of homelessness acceptances over the forthcoming years by focussing more on homelessness prevention.



There is a higher proportion of younger people living in Lincoln, compared to other districts



97,065

Residents across approximately 44,600 households



2,110

flats being built



199

people as homeless

# East Lindsey

East Lindsey has an estimated population of 138,400 and covers approximately 1,765 square kilometres making it the second largest non-unitary District in England or the ninth largest overall if you include unitary authorities. Only four of its 189 parishes have a population greater than 5,000.

The population is expected to increase but below national levels. However the percentage of working age people is set to decrease significantly whilst the number of over 65's, which is already higher than regional and national averages, will continue to rise. The demand for adapted lifetime homes and health related services is already high and will continue to increase.

Employment, training and education opportunities are poor resulting in an out of work claimant count of 8,930 (11.6% of the working age population) for main out of work benefits including JSA, ESA & Income Support. The total claimant count is 12,580 (16.4% of working age population) which includes Carers, Bereavement and Disability benefits as well.

Average wages in East Lindsey have traditionally fallen behind regional and national levels but for full-time workers this gap has narrowed. Part-time workers continue to earn less than the

national average and this gap has widened. There are few major employers, and lots of self-employed and micro businesses.

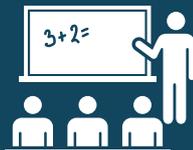
Being a coastal district, with circa 28,000 static caravans, brings many challenges. The population of Skegness area increases from circa 25,000 up to 250,000 during the summer months which generates income to individuals and the wider area but can also put pressure on public services. There are high levels of seasonal employment which creates financial uncertainty for many residents.

Overall, East Lindsey is ranked the 33rd most deprived local authority district area in England (out of 326) and there are approximately 4,500 children living in poverty. During summer months there is an increase in rough sleepers who generally migrate from the Midlands to the coast to make a fresh start.

Between 1st April 2008 and 1st April 2017, the Council enabled the development of 1351 new affordable homes. Opportunities for large scale housing development are limited due to restrictions linked to the Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), proximity to the coast and the risk of flooding and existing market town infrastructure.



**138,400**  
Estimated population



Poor employment,  
training and education  
opportunities

**11.6%** Adults claim  
key out of  
work benefits

# Being a coastal district, there are high levels of seasonal employment



High levels  
of seasonal  
employment



**28,000**  
static caravans bring  
many challenges



**1351**  
New affordable  
homes

# North Kesteven

North Kesteven has the lowest crime rate in the country and is ranked as the 34th best place to live according to Rural Quality of Life Survey. However, there are a range of issues that pose challenges for residents, businesses, district council and other public services. The 2011 census showed that North Kesteven was the fourth fastest-growing district in England and Wales. Latest projections indicate this is to grow a further 6% by 2021, which creates additional demand on accessible and affordable housing, support, education and health services. As well as the predicted growth levels, the age profile of the population will change significantly with a projected 44% increase in the 65+ population by 2031.

The NK Economy is built upon traditional strengths relating to agriculture and associated industries.

The district council has financial plans to invest in new social, affordable and private rented accommodation. In recent years the district has experienced growth in local economy and 277 jobs have been created or safeguarded and a further 131 local businesses have stated their intention to grow. Unemployment is below the national average but wage levels are not only below the national average but amongst the lowest in the country. Deprivation is lower than average, but approximately 2,200 children live in poverty. Locally we are experiencing an increase in mortgage lending, property sales and average houses prices but they remain below the national average. The private rented sector has also seen increases in rental charges but Local Housing Allowance rates remain unchanged for the second year.



922.6km<sup>2</sup>



44%  
increase in  
65+ by 2031



111,000  
Estimated population

# The District Council has financial plans to invest in new social, affordable and private rented accommodation



Growth in local economy and

**277**  
jobs created

**131**  
local businesses  
have stated  
intention to growth



**2,200**  
children live  
in poverty

# South Holland

South Holland has an estimated population of 92,000. The population has grown by c.20% between 2001 and 2011, driven by a combination of inward migration from other parts of the UK and further afield, alongside growth in the ageing population locally. Whereas unemployment remains consistently lower than national averages, lower earnings locally compound the issue of housing affordability within South Holland. The population of the district is anticipated to grow significantly over the next 21 years, with rates of population growth anticipated to reach the second highest levels of growth within Lincolnshire. Whereas there is a buoyant housing market in South Holland, driven by the district's excellent connectivity to places of high growth such as Peterborough, levels of growth have fallen short of local targets. Market rents in South Holland are high, and are comparable with those in Cambridgeshire to the south of the district. There is a notable gap between Local Housing Allowance rates and local market rents.

The number of applications for assistance with homelessness to the council has increased over the past 12 months, leading to corresponding increases in temporary accommodation use. The district has also seen an increase in rough sleeping over the past few years. In response to these challenges, South Holland District Council is seeking to play an activity role in increasing supply of new housing within the district. The authority has set up Welland Homes Ltd (a private company with a remit to develop new housing for market rent), alongside pursuing a number of new affordable housing developments through the council's Housing Revenue Account. The council is also planning for major housing growth through two Sustainable Urban Extensions within Spalding; the largest settlement within the district. Growth is also planned for Crowland and Holbeach.



**39.2%**  
own their own  
home without a  
mortgage



**33.3%**  
home owners  
with a mortgage



**12.7%**  
privately rent/rent  
within  
social housing

# The population is expected to increase significantly over the next 21 years



6,250+  
new homes  
planned over 2  
major sites



20%  
population  
increase since 2001

# South Kesteven

South Kesteven is a district of divides. Stamford in the south of the district is very affluent yet areas of Grantham in the north of the district rank among the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country. In 2013 the Sunday Times voted Stamford as the Best Place to Live in Britain. Many households cannot afford to buy a house in Stamford.

The Office for National Statistics data shows that South Kesteven will see the highest increase across the county of the 75+ age group between 2012 and 2037. This means that the demand on accessible and affordable housing will increase whilst the number of people of working age and paying tax for much needed services will decrease.

The district council intends to invest approximately £8m on affordable housing over the next four to five years. The number of unemployment claimants has reduced by more than a half in the last four years. Between April 2015 and April 2016, there was a drop in claimant rate of over 4%. The median average house price across the whole of South Kesteven in 2012 was £156,500. Between 2009

and 2013, there has been an increase in the house prices in all areas of South Kesteven. The increase has ranged from 4% in Market Deeping to 14% in Stamford.

The Local Housing Allowance rates have remained the same in South Kesteven for the last five years. Only about half of two and three bed private rental properties available to let in Grantham are at or below Local Housing Allowance rates; most if not all of the rental properties in Stamford and Bourne are above the LHA rate and all 4+ bed properties are above the LHA rate (Rightmove figures as at 2016).

The Peterborough Sub-Regional Strategic Housing Market Assessment shows that the indicative income required to buy a property at the lower quartile purchase price is: £37,100; for a lower quartile private rent: £19,400; for an affordable rent: £15,500 and for a social rent: £13,400 (figures as at 2013). These statistics show that many households are priced out of private homeownership and many households who need to rely on welfare benefits are priced out of the private rental sector.



**Stamford is a very expensive place to live, making housing unaffordable to many households**



**Stamford**  
best place to live in Britain  
Sunday Times 2013



SK will see the highest increase across the county of 75+ age group



**£8m**  
on affordable housing over the next 4 - 5 yrs

# West Lindsey

The district of West Lindsey covers the area immediately north of Lincoln and forms the north west gateway to Lincolnshire. The district is predominantly rural and has a diverse housing market with significantly higher levels of demand and higher house prices and affordability challenges in villages closer to Lincoln compared to the main market town of Gainsborough. This is also reflected in the levels of deprivation and unemployment across the district.

Whilst some of the West Lindsey villages are amongst the least deprived in the country, the South West Ward of Gainsborough is one of the most deprived. This area is characterised by a dense private rented sector requiring a number of council initiatives to improve housing standards and reduce vulnerability. The Council is working hard to tackle empty homes and has recently introduced a selective licensing scheme to improve the standards and management of private sector properties. A number of successful multi-agency approaches to tackling the wider issues that contribute to deprivation and vulnerability across the District are underway.

Varied micro markets across former Ministry of Defence villages, rural villages and market towns within the district present very different housing challenges.

Gainsborough has been identified as an area in which there will be significant growth and development over the next few years. Gainsborough is one of the few areas of the Country to have achieved Housing Zone status, with ambitious plans to develop a minimum of 800 new homes on brownfield sites within the town. Further land is allocated to accommodate an additional 3635 which represents 12% of the total growth planned for Central Lincolnshire

Over the last 10 years, West Lindsey has experienced 4.3% growth in population and it is anticipated that by 2030, the population will increase by 30% which is the highest level of growth in the county and compares with a regional level of 20% and a national level of 15%.

West Lindsey has an ageing population. Some 21% of the population in the census was of retirement age compared with 19% in the rest of the country. It is envisaged that this will rise to 32% by 2037. This is also reflected in a lower than average proportion (75%) of people who are economically active. This means that the demand on accessible and affordable housing will increase whilst the number of people of working age and paying tax for much needed services will decrease.

West Lindsey District Council's housing stock was transferred to Acis Group in 1999.

# The district is predominantly rural and has a diverse housing market



4.3% growth  
in population  
30% increase  
by 2030



21%  
of population in  
the census was  
of retirement age

# Reflecting on the previous Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2012 – 2016

Lincolnshire's Homelessness Strategy 2012 – 2016 focused on five key priority areas:

- Priority 1: Prevention
- Priority 2: Partnership working
- Priority 3: Welfare reform
- Priority 4: Young people
- Priority 5: Rough sleeping

Through working together, the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2012-16 achieved the following key outcomes:

- Prevented in excess of 9,700 households across Lincolnshire from experiencing homelessness
- Secured around £1 million of additional homelessness-related government grant for Lincolnshire, which has been used to fund services and initiatives that have contributed towards the prevention of homelessness

The strategy and partnership also secured the following achievements which made a significant contribution to reducing homelessness across Lincolnshire:

## PREVENTION

- We focused our resources to target the most vulnerable enabling them to remain in their own homes or obtain suitable alternative accommodation, mitigating as far as possible the impacts of welfare reform. The range of measures deployed include the use of discretionary housing payments, charitable funding, government grants and rent deposit schemes to prevent homelessness
- We delivered a 'Breaking the Myths' communications campaign, that sought to dispel the myths about homelessness through various media in Lincolnshire.

## PARTNERSHIP WORKING

- We established a genuine collaboration to broker additional local and central government funding to deliver services such as the rough sleeper outreach team to redirect the lives of over 1,200 individuals
- Following a successful partnership bid of £430k we secured the provision of new accommodation and support, introducing specialist accommodation for male domestic abuse victims
- Through closer working with criminal justice agencies

we enhanced our understanding of the links between homelessness and offending to achieve better risk management and enable more settled housing solutions

- Together with statutory and voluntary partners, we developed our Vulnerable Adult Panels across Lincolnshire to assist in meeting the needs of complex and chaotic households

### WELFARE REFORM

- We have worked closely in partnership with the Department of Work and Pensions, Citizens Advice and Credit Unions to prepare for and mitigate against the impact of welfare reform
- Lincolnshire has taken a lead for the Universal Credit 'pilots', training over 500 advisors on the implications of Universal Credit and how to identify support needs for customers, together with the setting up of digital hubs across Lincolnshire managed by trained volunteers

### YOUNG PEOPLE

- We worked in partnership with Lincolnshire County Council to develop a model of early intervention and prevention to reduce youth homelessness and developed a joint protocol to meet the needs of young people at risk of homelessness
- With a focus on early intervention to prevent youth homelessness, we commissioned a successful drama programme in schools. A total of 278 shows were performed during the life of the strategy to 16,589 young people. The project has since been commissioned by 10

other local authority areas across the country.

- Our youth homelessness prevention work is cited as best practice by the Department for Communities and Local Government

### ROUGH SLEEPING

- We developed and supported implementation of rough sleeper outreach service operating across Lincolnshire and Rutland, redirecting the lives of 1,395 individuals
- Lincolnshire received national recognition from Homeless Link for best practice when tackling rough sleeping across multiple local authority areas
- Our partnership working had a significant impact on reducing rough sleeping across Lincolnshire by 47% in the first year of the outreach service
- We encouraged members of the public to play an active role by reporting and referring people sleeping through implementation of a dedicated 0800 rough sleeper hotline
- 279 EU Nationals were connected back to their local communities and support networks
- Recognising the important contribution that this service made to vulnerable rough sleepers, an extension for the funding for this service was secured for a minimum of three years through discussions with Public Health



# Strategy introduction

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires housing authorities to take a long term strategic approach to preventing and managing homelessness. Councils are required to carry out regular reviews of the homelessness situation in our local authority areas, taking account of the activities and services available to prevent and tackle homelessness in addition to taking account of relevant national and regional policies and to develop a strategy based on the findings of these.

Lincolnshire's Homelessness Strategy 2017 – 2021 sets out how the seven Lincolnshire housing authorities, together with a range of partners, aim to prevent and tackle homelessness over the next five years. This is Lincolnshire's fourth joint homelessness strategy; a combined strategy between the seven Lincolnshire district authorities who, although managing very diverse housing and homelessness pressures and needs, have committed to working to common goals to prevent homelessness across Lincolnshire.

This strategy has been developed through engagement with stakeholders of the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy Group, elected members and service users. It has been informed by the findings of a homelessness review undertaken during 2016 and 2017.

Engagement has taken place with statutory and voluntary sector partners to ensure our homelessness strategy is effective and relevant. Consideration has been made of

local and wider sub-regional plans and regional plans and strategies. Therefore a series of engagement events and surveys were held to assist in the collation of data.

It is important to acknowledge this strategy has been developed at a time of considerable change in the housing sector. Legislative changes being introduced at the time of writing are being implemented and will likely have significant implications for local authorities and our partners in tackling homelessness.

## **NATIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT AND DRIVERS FOR CHANGE**

Over the next five years there are a number of challenges that are likely to impact heavily upon those who are vulnerable to experiencing homelessness, alongside those who work to prevent homelessness. These challenges include changes to government policy where careful management of the possible impacts are required, a continuous demand on resources in the face of tightening budgetary pressures, a fragile national economic picture and various policy areas that have the potential to impact on preventing and tackling homelessness but are not necessarily coordinated. In order to successfully prevent homelessness going forward, the homelessness prevention agenda across Lincolnshire will need to prepare those vulnerable to homelessness and the services that support

them for the challenges that may lie ahead. This section sets out the national, countywide and local context that surrounds some of these challenges.

A national government focus on supporting home ownership, and a likely corresponding reduction in the supply of new homes for affordable rent

Since the May 2015 General Election there has been a notable shift in central government policy in relation to affordable housing. Whereas previous government policy was strongly focused on increasing the number of homes available for affordable rent, prevailing government strategy has seen investment and policy directed towards increasing the supply of affordable homes designed to help households into home ownership. Early indications following the June 2017 General Election suggest that supporting households into home ownership will remain a key theme of the government's focus in relation to affordable housing.

The government has sought to do this in a number of ways. The government has consulted on proposals for local authorities to secure a higher large proportion of new housing on new housing developments as 'low cost home ownership housing (e.g. shared ownership and shared equity housing) as opposed to low cost rented housing. The government is also seeking to direct higher levels government grant for affordable housing into 'rent to buy' housing; a product aimed at working households who can afford a market rental property, but as a result do not have the available income to save for a deposit to buy.

The government has also applied a constraint on the income that social landlords can derive from rented housing between 2016 and 2020. This has had the impact of encouraging

housing associations to build a higher proportion of homes for market sale and rent, as a means of cross-subsidising the delivery of rented housing. Whereas cross-subsidisation is helping housing associations to deliver rented housing, the investment priorities of many housing associations have drifted away from rented housing as a result.

Whereas this shift in government policy will undoubtedly generate opportunities to support households into home ownership across Lincolnshire, these changes are likely to result in the delivery of fewer rented homes for affordable rent. This creates challenges for local authorities in relation to how they plan to meet the needs of those for whom home ownership is not a viable housing solution.

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR STRATEGY?

A decrease in the supply of new social housing has the potential to significantly impact on the ability of Lincolnshire local authorities to meet their statutory duties in relation to homelessness households. The reduction in supply which may result from these policy changes may also limit our ability to utilise social housing to prevent and/or alleviate homelessness before it arises, and also to limit the options available for those in need of independent accommodation (such as those presently residing in supported accommodation).

Over the next four years, it will become vitally important to the success of this strategy to ensure that the available supply of affordable rented housing is prioritised for the most vulnerable, and that those who can meet their housing needs through alternative tenures are supported to do so.

Home ownership opportunities will be varied across

Lincolnshire. One of the biggest challenges in Lincolnshire is to understand how many households will be able to afford low cost home ownership products – for some, this will present a new opportunity for home ownership however for others and in some parts of the county, this will not be viable. Lincolnshire’s ageing population presents additional challenges, with some households being unable to access high street borrowing options to enable home ownership. Housing providers will need the flexibility to be able to develop a range of home ownership products and must also consider how best to ensure that social rented stock prioritised for those in the greatest need.

A likely reduction in the size of the existing pool of available affordable housing for rent

In addition to limiting the supply of new affordable housing to rent, a number of new government initiatives may also result in reducing the existing stock of affordable rented housing across Lincolnshire. Such initiatives include the extension of the Right to Buy for housing association tenants (affording housing association tenants the right to buy their home at a discount), alongside an plans to introduce a policy which will compel stock-owning local authorities to sell their higher value stock in order to fund the replacement of homes purchased through the extended Right to Buy scheme.

### **WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR STRATEGY?**

As with the potential decrease in the supply of new affordable housing for rent, any reduction of the existing pool of homes to rent is likely to limit the ability of Lincolnshire local authorities and their partner organisations to utilise social housing to meet the needs of all but the most vulnerable households. Once again, it will become vitally

important to the success of this strategy to ensure that the available supply of affordable rented housing is prioritised for the most vulnerable.

A likely increased reliance on the private rented sector to meet housing need amongst vulnerable groups, and other PRS reforms

With the government placing a strong emphasis on supporting home ownership, there are a number of factors that are likely to impact upon the supply of new and existing affordable housing for rent. Lincolnshire local authorities and their partners rely heavily upon the existing stock of affordable rented housing within the county to meet the needs of the most vulnerable households, including those who are either threatened with or have experienced homelessness.

If the supply of new affordable housing for rent decreases, and the pool of existing stock for rent shrinks, it is likely that over the lifespan of this strategy there will be an increased reliance upon the private rented sector across Lincolnshire in order to meet the housing needs of those whose needs would have previously been met through a housing association or local authority home.

This comes at a time when central government is seeking to encourage a higher quality private rented sector by introducing new standards in relation to fire safety, new standards in relation to lettings practices and bolstering consumer rights for tenants and also through utilising the tax system to encourage landlords to become more ‘visible’ and adopt more formal business arrangements. It also comes at a time when many local authorities are exploring becoming private landlords themselves, as a means of setting a higher

standard for within the sector locally in terms of management practices and quality of accommodation. South Holland District Council is one local authority within Lincolnshire who has established itself as a market rented landlord.

### **WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR STRATEGY?**

There is evidence of a high level of demand for private rented housing across all of the major towns in Lincolnshire. The quality and affordability of the private rented sector offer is however, hugely varied across Lincolnshire.

Our evidence suggests that the private rented sector plays an important role in meeting housing need and demand across the county, however, consistent with the national picture, the ending of a an assured shorthold tenancy in the private rented sector continues to be a leading reason for households approaching local authorities as homeless.

Increased reliance on the private rented sector to meet housing need will require those working in homelessness agenda across Lincolnshire to consider how we best engage with the sector as a means of supporting households to access private rented accommodation, in addition to supporting private landlords to provide accommodation for those who will come to rely upon it. Supporting vulnerable households in accessing the sector will become a key focus of our strategic approach to addressing homelessness over the course of this strategy.

A government welfare reform agenda with a strong emphasis on supporting access to employment

Since the 2010 and 2015 General Elections, there has been

a strong government focus on reform to the Welfare Benefits system. There have been a number of national drivers for these reforms, including a tightening of government expenditure on welfare budgets and a policy focus on encouraging and supporting households to take up employment opportunities as opposed to being reliant upon welfare payments to meet housing and living costs.

The government's Welfare Reform agenda includes a number of key policies, most notably the introduction of Universal Credit (which consolidates a range of existing welfare payments into a single monthly payment) and the introduction of caps and limits of the benefit that households are entitled to in order to cover their living and housing costs. There are some specific elements of welfare reform which pose potential challenges to the homelessness agenda at a national, county and local level over the lifetime of this strategy. These challenges include the following:

### **THE DESIGN OF KEY ASPECTS OF THE UNIVERSAL CREDIT SYSTEM**

A flagship policy of the government's welfare reform agenda, the Universal Credit system seeks to pull together six means tested benefits into a single welfare payment. The government's view is that the Universal Credit scheme, which will see a single payment of welfare benefit paid to households on a monthly basis, will support households in the transition into employment by simplifying the benefits system from the perspective of the claimant (thus making it easier for the claimant to understand how their benefits may change if they enter employment) whilst also preparing claimants for life in employment by mirroring the typical monthly pay cycles associated with paid work.

A large number of housing and homelessness charities



**Lincolnshire local authorities and their partners rely heavily upon the existing stock of affordable rented housing within the county to meet the needs of the most vulnerable households, including those who are either threatened with or have experienced homelessness**

have raised concerns about some elements of the design of the Universal Credit scheme, and how these elements may heighten the risk of vulnerable households claiming the benefit from experiencing budgeting challenges, debt issues and homelessness. Concerns relating to scheme design issues include the monthly payment of benefits (which will require households to effectively manage their income over a month long period, ending the current fortnightly arrangement), and the ending of direct payment of rent to social landlords (which will lead to claimants in the social sector being required to take responsibility for ensuring the housing elements of Universal Credit are paid to their housing provider). Claimants of Universal Credit will also be required to enter into formal arrangements with the Department for Work and Pensions in relation to their commitment to find employment. Those who cannot satisfy the requirements of the DWP in relation to expectations around finding employment may be subject to benefit sanctions.

Whereas there is broad political consensus that the welfare system should be reformed to better support households into employment, a number of housing and homelessness charities have raised concerns about the sanctions system and how it may adversely affect vulnerable individuals and those who live chaotic lifestyles.

At the time of writing, there are 2300 Universal Credit claimants in Lincolnshire. Whilst new claimants moving onto Universal Credit will do so only in line with the eligibility criteria, any change in circumstances for those claimants will not lead to a move away from Universal Credit, therefore there will be people in receipt of Universal Credit with varied circumstances and needs.

### **THE LOWERING OF THE BENEFIT CAP FROM £26,000 TO £20,000**

Another flagship policy of the government's welfare reform system relates to the lowering of the national household benefit cap. The benefit cap, which limits the total annual value of welfare entitlement that a household can claim, was lowered from £26,000 to £20,000 in November 2016.

Whereas the original £26,000 cap introduced in April 2013 broadly only affected larger out of work families, the proposed £20,000 cap has affected a larger number of households nationally, especially those in higher value areas where housing benefit is being claimed to support accommodation costs.

### **THE CAPPING OF HOUSING BENEFIT ENTITLEMENT FOR THOSE IN THE SOCIAL RENTED SECTOR AT LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE RATES, AND THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO THE 'REMOVAL OF THE SPARE BEDROOM SUBSIDY'**

As part of the 2015 Comprehensive Spending Review, the government introduced a national policy to cap the entitlement of tenants in the social rented sector (such as housing association or council tenants) to the same benefit levels of households residing in the private rented sector (benefit levels termed the 'Local Housing Allowance').

Whilst some protection has been proposed for supported accommodation, this policy poses potentially significant financial challenges for those under the age of 35 who are living in, or would benefit from living in, housing association or local authority housing. This is because, in the private sector, households under the age of 35 are only entitled to

claim a level of housing benefit sufficient to cover to the cost of a room in a shared house. This level of entitlement can be substantially lower than the actual cost of a self-contained one bedroom property in the affordable rented sector, meaning that those residing in one bed housing with a housing association or local authority are likely to experience a large shortfall between their housing benefit entitlement and their actual rental cost.

In addition to this policy, the government remains committed to the continued removal of the 'spare bedroom subsidy' for those claiming housing benefit whilst residing in affordable housing. This welfare reform, introduced in 2012, requires tenants in the social rented sector to make a financial contribution to their rent where the property that they occupy is larger than what their family requires. Whereas many housing providers and local authorities have sought to mitigate the impact of this policy by reviewing how they allocate and manage affordable housing, it remains a financial challenge for many tenants residing in social housing where their ability to move to smaller accommodation is restricted. There are proposals to extend the policy to include those of pensionable age who were previously exempt.

### **WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR STRATEGY?**

The government's strong and continued emphasis on utilising welfare reform as a means to encourage households to enter employment presents a number of challenges for the homelessness prevention agenda across Lincolnshire over the lifespan of this strategy.

The government's use of Universal Credit to encourage greater personal responsibility in relation to budgeting

requires those working in the homelessness agenda across the county to consider the importance of budgeting advice and financial inclusion as a tool to protect and mitigate against vulnerable households experiencing debt and homelessness.

The policy focus on capping the welfare entitlement of many out of work households will lead to many households being compelled to find employment or move to less expensive housing, in order to meet their accommodation and living costs, including households who are presently furthest away from the jobs market.

The changes to the welfare entitlement of those under 35 will create challenges for local authorities and their partners in how they plan to meet the housing needs of this age group, specifically in relation to those whose needs are best met in self-contained accommodation as opposed to shared housing in the private sector.

Preparing households for the impacts of welfare reform will form a key component of our strategy to prevent homelessness over the coming four years.

### **A shifting role for social housing in meeting housing need**

A key theme of emerging government policy in relation to housing is the shifting role of social housing in meeting housing need, with a strong focus on social housing starting to play the role of a 'stepping stone' to alternative housing tenures as and when the circumstances of the tenant improve to a point that allows them to move out of publicly subsidised accommodation.

# Debt



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This shift is demonstrated through the Housing and Planning Act 2016, which has paved the way for secondary legislation to be introduced which, if enacted, will bring to an end the automatic granting of ‘lifetime tenancies’ for those in local authority housing.

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR STRATEGY?

The government’s agenda in relation to the shifting role of social housing in meeting housing need presents both challenges and opportunities for the homelessness agenda across Lincolnshire. In relation to the opportunities, measures which assist housing providers in directing social housing to those in greatest need have the potential to ensure that opportunities are created for vulnerable households to benefit from a scarce resource. It will be necessary to revisit and review housing allocations policies and tenancy strategies to ensure that the social housing resource is prioritised for those in the greatest need.

A growing call for local authorities to do more to prevent homelessness

Nationally there is a growing call for local authorities to go beyond their current statutory duties and play a more direct and proactive approach in preventing homelessness and to improve the help that single people receive under the homelessness legislation. These calls have not only come from leading housing and homelessness charities, but also from Parliament itself.

In August 2016, the cross-party Communities and Local Government Committee published the findings of its enquiry into homelessness. The review explored the factors contributing to homelessness, the present role and

performance of local authorities in supporting those who lose their accommodation, and the experiences of the system of those who have become homeless. Much of the work has also drawn on the experiences of the revised homelessness legislation in Scotland and Wales, leading to consideration of whether any of the lessons learned and changes made could be applied in England.

In addition to making several recommendations in relation to government welfare and housing policy, the committee called on the government to amend the existing homelessness legislation. As such The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 became law in 2017 and will go live in April 2018. The Act will amend Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 and is far reaching in its ambitions.

Key measures in the Act include:

- An extension of the period during which an authority should treat someone as threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days, and clarification of the action an authority should take when someone applies for assistance having been served with a notice to leave market rented housing. These provisions represent a shift in focus to early intervention, and aim to encourage local housing authorities to act quickly and pro-actively, addressing some concerns that some previously only intervened at crisis point.
- A new duty to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants threatened with homelessness, regardless of priority need. This extends the help available to people not in priority need, with local housing authorities supporting them to either stay in their accommodation or help them find somewhere to live and should mean fewer households reach a crisis situation.

- 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. Those who have a priority need will be provided with interim accommodation whilst the Local Housing Authority carries out the reasonable steps.
- 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. It is hoped that this measure will ensure that a person's housing situation is considered when they come into contact with wider public services, and encourage public services to build strong relationships based on local need and circumstances.

The legislation reflects a recognition that tackling homelessness is not simply a matter of increasing housing supply, and instead that an effective national strategy to tackle homelessness will need to be developed across a wider cross-government programme of work. At a national level, homelessness policy currently sits within the Department for Communities and Local Government, but is influenced by policy from many other Government departments including Department for Works and Pensions, the Department of Health and the Treasury. The committee recognised that policies from these departments have impacted on homelessness through the absence of joined up working and at times, as a result of contradictory policies. A wider, cross government strategy on homelessness prevention has been recommended by the committee report, including a focus on early intervention and a duty for public services to cooperate. The committee also set out a view that legislative change will only deliver ambitions to reduce homelessness if implemented as part of a

coherent, workable, long-term national strategy for ending homelessness. The committee reported the view that a successful strategy would review the impact of national policy on homelessness trends and bring together local housing, health, justice and employment partners.

The committee also set out a need to address the increasing gap between household incomes and rising rents and allow councils to protect and build more affordable homes.

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR STRATEGY?

The extension of the statutory duties that local authorities have to homeless households to include a wider group of people beyond the most vulnerable is likely to result in increased costs for local authorities, requiring a renewed emphasis on homelessness prevention across Lincolnshire.

#### Proposed changes to the future funding of supported housing

Supported housing, such as refuges and hostels, play a vitally important role in mitigating and preventing homelessness.

Nationally there have been widespread concerns amongst homelessness charities and local authorities that efforts to reduce the cost of welfare benefits, such as proposals to cap housing benefit entitlement at Local Housing Allowance rates, will have a disproportionate impact on the supported housing sector. These concerns led to a government review into the way that supported housing is funded. In September 2016 government announced a series of proposed changes to the funding regime for supported housing, within the context of the government's wider welfare reform agenda.

**The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is far reaching in its ambitions and includes a new duty to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants threatened with homelessness, regardless of priority need**



The key features of the government's proposed approach to the funding of supported housing are as follows:

- A proposal to apply a planned 1% per annum rent reduction for supported housing between April 2017 and March 2019
- A proposal to exclude supported housing from the proposed 'Local Housing Allowance cap' until 2019
- A proposal to exclude supported housing from the 'shared accommodation' rate which is applicable in general needs housing, thus enabling those under 35 years of age to achieve a higher level of housing benefit to fund stays in supported housing
- A proposal that, post 2019, local authorities will receive funding to support the additional costs of providing supported housing in their area once the Local Housing Allowance cap is introduced.

The outcome of a formal consultation, held during early 2017, is due to be published focussed which will address matters such as:

- The projected future need for supported housing in local authority areas
- The model for funding the development of new supported housing
- The mechanism for ensuring that top up funding continues to be spent on developing and providing supported housing
- The level of funding required to enable local authorities to administer the new arrangements
- The options available to reform the regulation of supported housing in an effective and proportionate way.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR STRATEGY?

There remains a great deal of uncertainty at the time of

drafting this document. The period in which the detail around the mechanisms to support the proposals that will be developed will be one of uncertainty for providers and it is important that this time is used effectively and that we engage pro-actively, to ensure that the needs of Lincolnshire residents, providers and stakeholders are met and that commissioning intentions are coordinated and aligned with local needs.

One of the biggest challenges in Lincolnshire is how to meet the housing needs of vulnerable young people under 35 with many locations across the county having little or no shared accommodation. The exemption to the shared accommodation rate in supported housing for this age group is to be welcomed. It will be important to ensure that young people are prevented from becoming homeless through being able to access supported accommodation to meet their housing and support needs.

It is presently unclear as to what costs the ring-fenced funding will cover, or how the proposed top up fund will be administered or to which tier of local government this will be provided. Either way, it will be important that commissioners, housing authorities and supported housing providers play a key, collaborative role in shaping this initiative, including through forthcoming consultation on the subject.

Depending upon the outcome of the consultation relating to the future funding of supported housing, the future provision and sustainability may prove challenging with such significant constraints placed on providers' revenue. The Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy Group, in addition to its constituent partners and local authorities, will seek to play an active role in the national discussions relating to the proposed changes to the funding of supported housing.





# Homelessness in context in Lincolnshire

The term homelessness is broad, and in this section we consider key matters impacting on homelessness.

Some forms of homelessness are governed by law and this is commonly known as statutory homelessness. The law is complicated but covers households which do not have accommodation they have a legal right to occupy, is accessible and physically available to the household and it would be reasonable for them to continue to live in.

Local authorities have a duty to provide free advice and assistance to all households threatened with homelessness, although in practice authorities often go beyond this to proactively attempt to prevent or relieve homelessness.

Rough sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness and in line with government advice, a count of people sleeping rough is undertaken each autumn.

An increasing number turn to the council for assistance with their homeless crisis.

Between 2010/11 and 2016/17, 6,286 homeless applications were made to the seven housing authorities across Lincolnshire. A total of 3,969 of these applications led to a full homelessness duty being accepted.

Between 2010/11 and 2016/17, the number of decisions made by Lincolnshire authorities rose by 46.5%. Discounting East Lindsey where the number of decisions made fell (15.9%), decisions rose by 79.8%. This is a considerable rise when viewed against the national rise in decisions of 6.26% and evidences the lack of affordable alternatives across the county.

## Homelessness Decisions 2016/17

SKDC	BBC	ELDC	WLDC	COL	SHDC	NKDC	Totals
268	94	127	101	243	95	89	1078

Not all homeless applications are approved by authorities. Some applicants are found to be not homeless or to be homeless but have no priority need, or to have made themselves intentionally homeless. Applicants falling into these categories are provided with advice and assistance to obtain alternative accommodation or to remain in their current accommodation where possible. Nevertheless, the number of applications that were awarded the full main duty has risen across Lincolnshire by 46.5% over the period.

## Homeless Duty Acceptances 2016/17

SKDC	BBC	ELDC	WLDC	COL	SHDC	NKDC	Totals
197	12	77	65	164	42	150	707

Many homeless households are literally homeless, requiring the council to find temporary accommodation whilst enquiries are progressing or until a more settled home is secured.

The following tables do not show all households provided with temporary accommodation by the authority over the year. Instead, they show the numbers accommodated at the end of March 2017. For those households who require temporary accommodation, the majority (53%) are housed within local authority stock.

**No. in TA (snapshot end of Q4) 2016/17**

SKDC	BBC	ELDC	WLDC	COL	SHDC	NKDC	Totals
22	11	29	2	14	28	12	118

**Type of TA (snapshot end of Q4) 2016/17**

TYPE	SKDC	BBC	ELDC	WLDC	COL	SHDC	NKDC	Totals
B&B / hotel	0	0	1	0	5	0	6	12
Other nightly paid, privately managed accommodation	0	0	17	2	4	0	0	23
Hostel	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	5
Women's refuges	0	0	4	0	1	0	1	6
PRS/RP	0	6	7	0	0	0	0	13
LA stock	22	0	0	0	4	28	5	59

**Acceptances/1000 population 2016/17**

	SKDC	BBC	ELDC	WLDC	COL	SHDC	NKDC	TOTAL
2011 Census population figure	133,788	64,637	136,401	89,250	93,541	88,270	107,766	713,653
Acceptances	197	12	77	65	164	42	89	646
Acceptances per 1000 population	1.47	0.19	0.56	0.73	1.75	0.48	0.83	0.91

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR STRATEGY?

There is a long term trend of a rise in homelessness both nationally and locally. Every homeless application made comes at a cost to the local authority in terms of staff time and potentially for temporary accommodation whilst enquiries are being made or whilst more settled accommodation is being secured.

Homelessness Reasons 2016/17	SKDC	BBC	ELDC	WLDC	COL	SHDC	NKDC	%
Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate	30	1	0	1	6	2	8	7.43
Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	11	0	9	2	11	8	6	7.28
Relationship breakdown – non violent	22	0	6	9	14	5	21	11.92
Violence	12	6	15	21	54	5	16	19.97
Harassment, threats or intimidation	1	1	2	0	1	0	3	1.24
Mortgage arrears	1	0	0	2	1	1	4	1.39
Rent arrears	2	0	0	1	3	3	7	2.48
Termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancy	69	2	25	23	39	6	5	26.16
Reason other than Termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancy	15	1	19	1	23	7	12	12.07
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Left an institution or LA care	2	1	0	2	7	2	0	2.17
Left armed forces	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.15
Other	32	0	1	3	5	3	6	7.74

The Homeless Reduction Act 2017 has the potential to increase considerably the work load of Lincolnshire authorities in meeting their duties to households in housing need. There are risks of legal challenge to the authority if resource requirements are not met and councils are unable to meet new legal duties arising from the Act. Government has committed to providing additional resource to local councils to help them implement the new Act. The demands will be met from a combination of existing resource, partnership working and any future funding from government.

The loss of private rented accommodation as a key cause of homelessness across Lincolnshire

The ending of an assured shorthold tenancy is the single largest reason for loss of settled accommodation amongst statutorily homeless households nationally. This trend that has been increasing sharply since 2009, with over 4,000 households (11% of all cases in 2009/10) becoming homeless through the ending of a private tenancy to now 17,900 (31% of cases in 2015/16). The main reason for homelessness in Lincolnshire is the ending of an assured shorthold tenancy, this accounts for 26% of all statutory homeless acceptances in 2016/17 across the county.

Domestic abuse is a key driver of homelessness across Lincolnshire

Violence is the second most common reason for homelessness in Lincolnshire. During 2015/16 there were 856 cases of domestic abuse that were assessed as being high risk and have required a high level of multi agency intervention and a referral to Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference. This demand on services demonstrates a continued need to pro-actively ensure early intervention is used to help households that have become homeless through violence.

Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate

Parental exclusions is also considered a main reason for homelessness across Lincolnshire, with many young people also being captured in the category of friends no longer willing or able to accommodate. Councils work

collaboratively with Lincolnshire County Council to ensure that young people receive the help and support that they need.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR STRATEGY?

With an increased reliance on the private rented sector to meet housing need including for vulnerable households; access, sustainability, quality and affordability in the private rented sector must be a key feature of our strategy to prevent and reduce homelessness in Lincolnshire. Councils will need to develop new incentives to engage with private sector landlords and help customers to access or remain in their tenancies.

It will be more important than ever for councils to work in partnership to address the many forms of domestic abuse and to ensure that schemes to prevent homelessness are prioritised.

Partnership working forms the cornerstone of our work with young people. We need to maintain current work streams whilst together we assess if better outcomes could be delivered by doing things differently.

Developing a joined and cohesive approach to homelessness prevention between districts and county

It is becoming more important for councils to make attempts to prevent homelessness and during the five year period of the homeless strategy, over 9,700 households were prevented from becoming homeless across Lincolnshire.

Tackling financial issues highlighted by the need for debt advice, resolving housing benefit issues and resolving rent arrears remain key factors in preventing homelessness. Many of these issues relate to helping a household to remain in the private rented sector or to find accommodation in the private rented sector. This mirrors the major cause of homelessness being the ending of an assured shorthold tenancy.

Homelessness Preventions 2016/17	SKDC	BBC	ELDC	WLDC	COL	SHDC	NKDC	TOTAL	%
Mediation	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	0.25
Conciliation	5	1	5	14	0	9	12	46	2.85
Homeless Prevention Fund	2	2	0	33	1	27	2	67	4.15
Debt Advice	2	1	7	2	0	84	7	103	6.38
Resolve Housing Benefit	3	0	28	62	348	119	275	835	51.73
Resolve Rent Arrears	15	1	65	0	0	3	24	108	6.7
Sanctuary Scheme	8	0	3	17	33	1	14	76	4.71
Crisis Intervention	2	0	0	4	3	1	8	18	1.12
Negotiation with PRS	21	18	7	13	2	6	21	88	5.46
Assistance with PRS	13	0	6	83	1	102	0	205	12.71
Mortgage Arrears intervention	1	1	8	0	0	0	7	17	1.05
Other	10	0	22	0	1	0	14	47	2.91
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>352</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>1,614</b>	

	SKDC		BBC		ELDC		WLDC		COL		SHDC		NKDC		TOTAL		
	Prevent	Relief	%														
Hostel/HMO	7	1	0	5	56	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	8	0	76	6	6.93
PRS - Incentive Scheme	10	4	1	3	60	2	5	0	29	6	21	0	8	1	134	16	12.68
PRS - Without Incentive	1	0	0	4	67	0	11	1	0	0	3	0	61	0	143	5	12.51
Friends/Relatives	0	0	0	3	11	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	9	4	21	7	2.37
Supported accommodation	4	1	0	7	31	0	33	10	23	5	12	0	15	0	118	23	11.92
Social Housing - Existing LA Tenant	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	4	0	0.34
Social Housing - Part 6 offer	7	1	7	11	82	4	85	2	111	10	123	0	66	15	481	43	44.29
Social Housing - Non Part 6	14	0	0	1	35	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	51	1	4.4
Low cost home ownership scheme	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	1	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	44	0	45	9	4.56
	44	7	8	43	343	6	134	13	163	21	170	0	211	20	1073	110	

## Homeless People - Priority Needs

Of those households accepted as being homeless, the following priority needs were recorded. They demonstrate that households with children are the

main category of priority need. Also notable is the demonstration that homeless people are approaching with high prevalence of physical disability and mental illness or disability.

Priority Need 2016/17	SKDC	BBC	ELDC	WLDC	COL	SHDC	NKDC	TOTAL	%
Emergency (fire, flood, storms, disaster, etc)	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	0.31
Dependent children	130	9	56	42	101	22	59	419	64.86
Pregnant woman - no dependents	24	0	0	2	11	7	6	50	7.74
Aged 16 or 17 years old	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	3	0.46
Formerly "in care", and aged 18 to 20 years old	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0.15
Old age	1	0	1	8	0	1	3	14	2.17
Physical disability	18	0	7	5	5	1	11	47	7.28
Mental illness or disability	18	0	6	3	22	6	6	61	9.44
Drug dependency	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	4	0.62
Alcohol dependency	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	4	0.62
Former asylum seeker	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0.15
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0.15
Having been "in care"	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Having served in HM Forces	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Having been in custody/on remand	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.15
Having fled their home because of violence/ threat of violence	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	0.31
Domestic violence	1	2	6	3	20	3	1	36	5.57
Total	197	12	77	65	164	42	89	646	

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR STRATEGY?

The role of preventing homelessness will have to be strengthened and further developed particularly in finding incentives to encourage the private rented sector to work in partnership. The Homeless Reduction Act will act as a key driver for authorities with new duties for Councils and new responsibilities placed on applicants.

There are clear linkages with other public services and a requirement to work in partnership to ensure that homeless people receive the right support.

Just as the government’s cross party Communities and Local Government Committee found that an effective strategy needed to be developed across a wider cross government programme of work, it is clear that the same requirement exists at the local level. Our future approach requires collaboration from a range of partners across the statutory and voluntary sectors.

A continued challenge to tackle rough sleeping in Lincolnshire

Rough sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness. It is also one of the most destructive forms of homelessness. The life expectancy of someone who has experienced rough sleeping is around 47 years compared with 77 within the general population.

Rough sleeping is rising. Nationally rough sleeping rates have risen by 79% between 2012 and 2016. Despite efforts of the service to reduce rough sleeping during 2016, there has been a year on year increase in rough sleeping levels across Lincolnshire (100% from 2012 to 2016, source: Autumn Rough Sleeper Counts).

Local Authority Area	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
COL	5	11	8	14	13
WLDC	0	0	1	0	1
NKDC	0	0	0	0	3
SKDC	1	1	2	2	1
BBC	7	5	4	7	5
SHDC	1	2	6	3	4
ELDC	3	2	1	6	7
Lincs Total	17	21	22	32	34
England Total	2309	2414	2744	3569	4134

Rates of rough sleeping vary across the county, with specific ‘hotspots’ existing in Lincoln, Boston, Spalding and Skegness.

## **ROUGH SLEEPING LEVELS IN LINCOLNSHIRE OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS HAVE BEEN INFLUENCED BY THE FOLLOWING KEY CHALLENGES:**

The introduction of restrictions to the welfare entitlement for EEA nationals

Changes to the welfare entitlement of EEA nationals has been a contributing factor to increased levels of rough sleeping amongst EEA nationals across Lincolnshire and most particularly, those individuals assessed as ineligible for welfare benefits but considered by the Home Office to have permanent residency in the UK. These changes have had the impact of limiting the housing options available to those who experience a loss of employment whilst residing in the UK, resulting in some individuals who experience sporadic employment patterns which in turn leads to street homelessness. Such individuals can face being 'trapped' with no resources to return to their home country, no work and therefore no money and no home.

These challenges are likely to remain for the lifetime of this strategy, requiring authorities across Lincolnshire and their partners to consider how support is provided to those who have lost their employment and experience street homelessness. This includes support in re-accessing employment, in addition to support in returning to their country of origin.

Rough sleeping as a result of being vulnerable and/or having a chaotic lifestyle

Significant numbers of rough sleepers and those known as hostel hoppers or sofa surfers are vulnerable in the commonly understood sense of the word. This can include

having a mental health problem, or addiction to drugs or alcohol, being physically unwell or any combination of these. Many have had abusive childhoods or have had a sequence of major life traumas which have the consequence of an inability to form positive relationships and 'difficulty coping'. The fear of isolation and loneliness can act as a barrier for some to access and maintain settled accommodation where the 'street' represents a known quantity and familiar faces.

There are examples where partners involved in supporting rough sleepers across Lincolnshire express difficulties in accessing appropriate services for individuals. The Rough Sleeper Outreach Service, commissioned by Lincolnshire County Council and delivered by P3, frequently reports the difficulties in supporting rough sleepers with mental health issues in accessing services to provide support and assistance with such issues.

In addition to difficulties in accessing mental health services, many partners report difficulties in securing suitable accommodation for rough sleepers, often as a result of their higher support needs, substance misuse and their tenancy history.

There is some evidence of individuals experiencing homelessness as a result of being discharged from hospital without suitable accommodation being available for them upon discharge.

The challenges facing us include:

- Concerns around engaging mental health services to assess and support individuals.
- Evictions from supported housing
- Unplanned discharge from hospital.
- Difficulties in accessing accommodation due to support needs and tenancy histories.

More recently, a report commissioned by the independent anti-slavery commissioner considered the links between modern slavery and homelessness. The results were eye opening, showing that homeless people are at risk of being exploited when they are on the streets, but also that victims of modern slavery are at risk of becoming homeless if no long-term support is provided to them. The report makes 12 recommendations for organisations who work with homeless people.

In response to the challenge, the street outreach team have implemented a 'Housing First' model, initially within Lincoln. Through this model, accommodation is offered to those who have been rough sleeping for a period of time or where traditional housing related support services have not worked.

More recently, together with P3 and Lincolnshire County Council, the seven district councils were successful in securing funding from the Department of Communities and Local Government's Homelessness Prevention Programme to expand our work with some of the most entrenched rough sleepers across Lincolnshire. This funding presents an opportunity to build on strong foundations to try, in partnership, something new and more innovative than previous traditional service models.

The service, ACTions Lincs is based on the premise that traditional methods of engagement do not meet the needs of the most vulnerable and will incorporate the support and coordination of other key services including the Mental Health Trust, Addaction, Lincolnshire CCG's, the Police and Crime Commissioner, Health Watch and Credit Union to take an holistic approach to the needs of rough sleepers.

This is a £1.3m fund, just one of eight social impact bond

projects across England and the first complex needs project in Lincolnshire. The project launched in September 2017 and will support 120 of the most entrenched and vulnerable homeless individuals intensively for a three and a half year period. The model adopts a housing first approach, and will be delivered through genuine collaboration and partnership. ACTion Lincs will provide life changing support to the most entrenched rough sleepers across the County.

The project will be delivered by a team of specialists including a seconded drug and alcohol recovery worker and a seconded mental health practitioner. Crucially, once someone is accepted onto the program, then unlike traditional services, they will remain part of the program and support will be provided in any setting whether that be the street, hospital, prison or home. By offering support over a prolonged period of time, and by being flexible to meet the needs of the people that we are working with, we hope that it will give them the best opportunity of bringing about lasting change.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR STRATEGY?

Tackling rough sleeping will continue to form a major part of our work on homelessness. There is a need to build on relationships with key statutory and voluntary sector partners to address concerns and to tackle the barriers which prevent rough sleepers from moving away from the streets.

It is recognised that tackling homelessness is not simply a matter of increasing housing supply. To tackle the broader causes and symptoms of homelessness in Lincolnshire, there is a need for coordinated action; bringing together housing, health, criminal justice and employment commissioners and partners. At a time of increasing

homelessness in Lincolnshire, there is a need to ensure that effective collaborative working is in place across each of these areas and that all partners and commissioners understand their roles and genuinely contribute to preventing homelessness even in the absence of national joined up policy.

At a national level the Homelessness Reduction Act provides an opportunity to include a duty to cooperate for other public bodies to comply with efforts to prevent and relieve homelessness, particularly for vulnerable groups. We will seek to engage with ongoing discussions regarding the Act. We will seek to engage with relevant strategic partners and commissioners, seeking to invite adoption of the homelessness strategy and action therein. Whilst a wider group of partners and stakeholders will continue to play an important role in homelessness prevention, the emergence of a group of strategic commissioners partners, focussed on the prevention and reduction in homelessness across the county.

The need to ensure the availability of services and supported housing to meet the needs of those who are at risk of, or experience homelessness

Housing related support plays a vital role in preventing and relieving homelessness, particularly for vulnerable groups who are unable to access or sustain alternative housing options. It is important that the limited resources available are able to meet the needs of those customers in need, and that the services form part of a pathway to housing and independence.

Thanks to Lincolnshire County Council's ongoing commitment to preventing and tackling homelessness,

Lincolnshire has not to date encountered the levels of reduction to housing related support provision experienced in other parts of the country. In 2014, the Public Health Directorate of Lincolnshire County Council recommissioned housing related support services in Lincolnshire. The revised model sought to provide transitional accommodation and support to a greater number of people – services were rationalised and an emphasis placed on throughput and more even distribution of services across Lincolnshire.

Whilst the recommissioning process has resulted in the loss of client group specific accommodation and support, the need to continue to address rough sleeping was integrated into the revised model as part of a countywide floating support service. The development of an electronic referral system sought to improve areas such as ease of access to services, greater transparency, accountability and improved data capture to inform evidence of need and future commissioning. The services commissioned as part of the revised model are available to:

- Former rough sleepers, and other single homeless people living in hostels, to move-on into self-contained accommodation;
- Recovering substance misusers, to settle down after treatment and rehabilitation;
- Offenders, who have lost their home while in prison, to plan for their release;
- People suffering domestic abuse to find new accommodation freeing themselves from abusive relationships

It is anticipated that housing related support services will be re-commissioned during the life of this strategy. A Public Health led review of the service as part of the commissioning cycle is currently underway, with a focus on:

- Rationale for current model
- Delivering outcomes
- Future commissioning needs and alignment with other key areas of work (such as the Housing for Independence Strategy)

homelessness across Lincolnshire. We will seek to actively engage with providers of these services operating in Lincolnshire.

### **WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR STRATEGY?**

Access to stable and suitable accommodation plays a vital role in assisting vulnerable people to rebuild their lives. It is also important to genuinely work collectively and collaboratively to meet the needs of those at risk of, or experiencing homelessness and to make best use of the limited resources available to us in Lincolnshire. We will engage fully with the review of Housing Related Supported services, with a focus on ensuring that supported housing continues to be available to those who need it. We will seek to ensure that associated work streams (including housing for independence, the Housing Health and Care Delivery Group and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment) are aligned. We also seek to engage Lincolnshire County Council as a partner in adoption and delivery of this countywide homelessness strategy.

The emergence of a number of non-commissioned supported housing schemes, funded in the main through intensive housing management must also be considered as part of this strategy in terms of their role in preventing and tackling homelessness, their sustainability and opportunities to ensure a partnership approach to preventing and tackling

# Priorities, Delivery Plan and Governance

We have used the sections above on 'national and local context and drivers for change' (pages 21 – 33) and 'homelessness in context in Lincolnshire' (pages 35 – 46) to formulate the following Key Priorities that we hope to focus on and achieve throughout the life of this strategy. We will meet these priorities through working to meet the actions

set out in a Delivery Plan. Accompanying this strategy will be our first Delivery Plan which will run for the first two years following launch of the strategy. We will undertake a review of our Delivery Plan after 18 months and consider progress, whether it is still fit for purpose and whether other actions need to be added.

## The Key Priorities are:

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

Effective governance arrangements are key to driving change and improvements across the sector. Coordination of our Delivery Plan and associated work programmes will be the responsibility of Lincolnshire’s Homelessness Prevention Programme Manager. This post will be accountable to the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy Partnership. Any further

demands will be met from a combination of existing resource, partnership working and any future funding from Government.

The following table sets out our governance arrangements and the key roles and responsibilities of those involved in making this strategy a success:

	<b>Context / Role</b>
<b>Homelessness Prevention Programme Manager</b>	<p>A countywide role funded by a grant from the Department for Communities and Local Government.</p> <p>Accountable to the Homelessness Strategy Partnership.</p>
<b>Homelessness Strategy Network</b>	<p>Wide network of voluntary and statutory sector stakeholders working together to prevent and tackle homelessness in line with the objectives of the countywide homelessness strategy and delivery plan. Information sharing, collaboration and delivery.</p>
<b>Homelessness Strategy Partnership (Strategic)</b>	<p>Strategic partnerships comprising the District Councils, County Council and other key stakeholders from Health and Criminal Justice. Oversee the delivery of the Homelessness Strategy and ensure the delivery plan is responsive to emerging needs. Unblock and address key strategic issues that are impacting on homelessness.</p> <p>Oversee the ACTION Lincs Project and steering group</p> <p>Accountable to the District Housing Network.</p>
<b>Programme / Project Sponsorship</b>	<p>Within the homelessness strategy, work programmes / key projects may require strategic leadership from a member of the Homelessness Strategy Partnership. For these areas of work, a Local Authority programme /project sponsor will be agreed.</p>
<b>District Housing Network</b>	<p>Endorsed by the Lincolnshire Chief Executives Group as the senior housing group on Lincolnshire. Oversee the work and outcomes of the Homelessness Strategy Partnership.</p>
<b>Housing, Health and Care Delivery Group</b>	<p>A sub group of Lincolnshire’s Health &amp; Wellbeing Board. Driving forward collaboration and integration between housing, health and care.</p>

### **South Holland District Council**

Homelessness Out of Hours: 01775 761161  
Housing Advice/Needs: contact via SHDC  
Switchboard: 01775 761161

### **North Kesteven District Council**

Homelessness Out of Hours: 01529 308308  
The Safe as Houses and Housing Options: contact via  
NKDC switchboard: 01529 414155

### **West Lindsey District Council**

Homelessness Out of Hours: 01427 613960  
The Housing & Communities Team and Home Choices Team  
contact via WLDC switchboard: 01427 676676

### **East Lindsey District Council**

Homelessness Out of Hours: 07766 776447  
Housing Advice: 01507 613126

### **Boston Borough Council**

Homelessness Out of Hours: 01205 362151  
Housing Advice/Needs: 01205 314555

### **South Kesteven District Council**

Homelessness Out of Hours: 01476 590044  
Housing Advice/Needs: contact via SKDC  
switchboard – 01476 406080

### **City of Lincoln Council**

Homelessness Out of Hours: 01522 534737  
For housing advice contact the Property Shop:  
01522 873777  
Private Sector Housing team: 01522 873787

