

HOUSING AND PROPERTY

Inclusive Housing Strategy

2023 – 2028



North Kesteven
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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HPS Inclusive Housing Strategy

Providing homes to meet the current and future needs of our tenants.

FORWARD by the NKDC Assistant Director of Housing and Property:

It's hard to dispute the importance of good quality affordable housing, but many people may not be aware of the wider impact that this accommodation can have.

North Kesteven District Councils development of new homes, and change of use for existing buildings, has contributed to the increase of affordable housing supply levels in our District and the impact of our work goes beyond 'just' delivering homes.

Through our building programme, as well as our wider housing services, we aim to support social, economic, and environmental policy objectives in health and social care, and Local Government. Also, to meet the challenges of an ageing population, disability, unemployment, and fuel poverty.

Covid 19 has fundamentally changed the way we need our homes to function. Poor housing puts people at greater risk of Covid 19. Homes have become workplaces, schools, day centres, and leisure areas. Easy access to outdoor space is highly valued. We now all aspire to have flexible and adaptable space.

M Gadd

Michael Gadd,
Assistant Director of Housing and Property Services,
North Kesteven District Council

1.0 Introduction

This Inclusive Housing Strategy replaces the Housing and Property Department Older Persons Housing Strategy 2016 – 2020, acknowledging the progress made against the original action plan and recognising the changes in the Housing Sector.

Housing is a key social determinant of health. Suitable good quality housing can decrease the need for medical intervention and help people maintain their independence safely. This strategy encompasses building a better future for the forthcoming generations of people with physical or mental challenges by providing options and choices for their housing needs.

The quality of the built and natural environment such as air quality, quality of and access to green spaces, and housing quality all affect health. Poor housing has a negative effect on our physical and mental health, particularly for older people, children, disabled people, and individuals with long-term illnesses.

(Source – Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, Health Profile for the East Midlands 2021.)

Our vision to maintain existing homes and develop new Homes that will be suitable for the changing needs of our Tenants and the wider Community continues. Peoples housing needs can change, as they become older or face unexpected physical or mental challenges at any age. We need to recognise and respond to this diversity and provide 'Inclusive Housing'. The term Inclusive Housing means homes designed to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design.

2.0 Developing this Inclusive Strategy

This Strategy specifically discusses elements of existing Housing and Property procedures and policies relating to practices that may affect people with additional life challenges, physical or mental. The Key principles that underpin this strategy are drawn from Executive Board priorities, the HRA Business Plan, and the Corporate NK Plan (Our Homes):

- Making decisions that focus on sustainability and carbon efficiency,
- Developing Homes to meet the needs of the People in our District,
- Developing Homes that can be easily adapted to meet the tenant's changing needs,
- Allocation of properties to make effective use of NK housing stock and meet the needs of people on the housing waiting list.

This Strategy builds on the **Corporate NK Plan**. The NK Plan is our strategic vision for the realisation of priorities, purpose, and services, for the whole council. It is a statement of purpose, vision, values, and priorities for delivery, replicated in specific plans for each area of work within the Council.

It drives our priorities for **Our Economy, Our Homes, Our Environment, Our Communities and Our Council**. The **Our Homes** priority is to deliver sustainable housing growth and pursue energy efficient development to meet the current and emerging needs of all our communities. The NK Plan 2022-25 is available at <https://n-kesteven.gov.uk>.

The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2021 - 2051 sets out the Council's plans and ambitions in its role as a landlord for the next thirty years. It references this document as a guide to maximising the general wellbeing of its tenants and supporting independent living for all.

Our watchword is simple. We don't manage houses, we provide homes.

Cllr Ian Carrington

Full document available at <https://www.n-kesteven.gov.uk/residents/homes-and-property/information-about-housing-in-north-kesteven/hra-business-plan-and-local-offers/>

The Charter for Social Housing Residents - The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper was published by MHCLG in November 2020, with stated aims to raise the standard of social housing and meet the aspirations of residents today and into the future. The Charter sets out what every social housing resident should be able to expect in seven themes, summarised as:

1. **To be safe in your home.** We will work with industry and landlords to ensure every home is safe and secure.
2. **To know how your landlord is performing,** including on repairs, complaints, and safety, and how it spends its money, so you can hold it to account.
3. **To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly,** with access to a strong ombudsman who will give you swift and fair redress when needed.
4. **To be treated with respect,** backed by a strong consumer regulator, and improved consumer standards for tenants.
5. **To have your voice heard by your landlord,** for example through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being on its Board to give residents the tools and knowledge to influence landlords, and hold them to account
6. **To have a good quality home,** with evidence on social housing allocations will be reviewed, ensuring allocations are made in the fairest way possible while achieving the best outcomes for local communities. Landlords will also be expected to use their knowledge of vulnerable tenants to monitor and support those at particular risk of exploitation. The Decent Homes Standard 39 will be reviewed.
7. **To be supported to take your first step to ownership,** so it is a ladder to other opportunities, should your circumstances allow.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-charter-for-social-housing-residents-social-housing-white-paper/the-charter-for-social-housing-residents-social-housing-white-paper>

The National Disability Strategy sets out the government's vision to improve the everyday lives of disabled people. Disability should not be a barrier to people living full, independent lives. The accessibility and supply of housing for disabled people is to be increased.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-disability-strategy>

This Strategy also links to other documents that focus on improving the offer of accommodation and services to our community (see page 29 - 11.0 References and further reading). The Action Plan at the end of this document summarises the issues explored and recommends action to be taken (see page 30).

Recommendations for reviewing current practice should be undertaken with full consideration for any impact on Legislation relating to the area of work (see page 30 - 12.0 Action Plan).

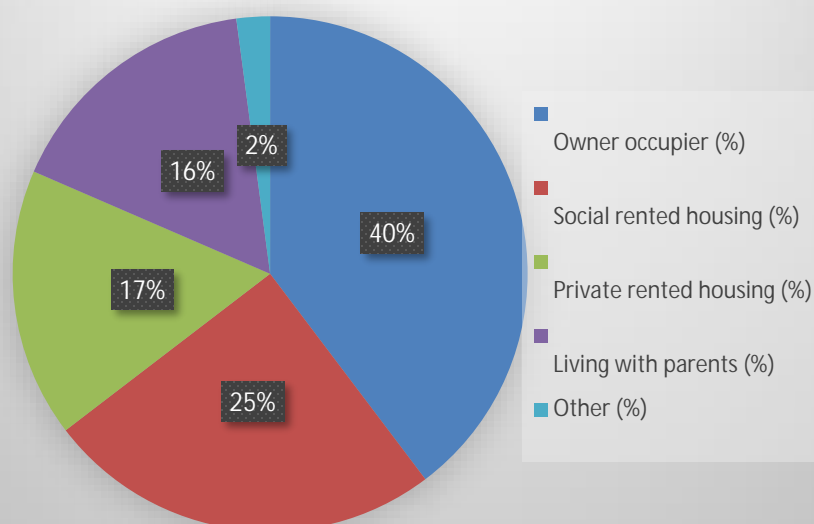
3.0 National Context

Britain is one of the most age segregated countries in the world. Many of our services and facilities are siloed by age. Where people live and their housing are linked to their age and health. By 2040 1 in 4 of us will be over 65. The Oldest of our population may also be amongst the poorest, on a fixed income often trapped (financially, emotionally, or physically) in their current accommodation, irrespective of how unsuitable it may be.

People on low incomes are most likely to be living with three or more long-term health conditions, and in poor health themselves face greater barriers to getting involved in their communities. They are also much less likely to have existing people they can count on for support or know where to access help.

The English Housing Survey (EHS) is a national survey of people's housing circumstances. This information is from the latest findings in the 2021 to 2022 survey.

Housing status of people 16 to 64 with a disability 2020/21



- Of all households in the social rented sector had one or more household members with a long-term illness or disability (54%).

- An estimated 400,000 + wheelchair users are living in homes which are neither adapted nor accessible. www.ons.gov.uk

- A greater proportion of more vulnerable groups in rented accommodation, live in the social rented sector compared to other tenures. This is likely due to social housing being allocated based on resident needs.

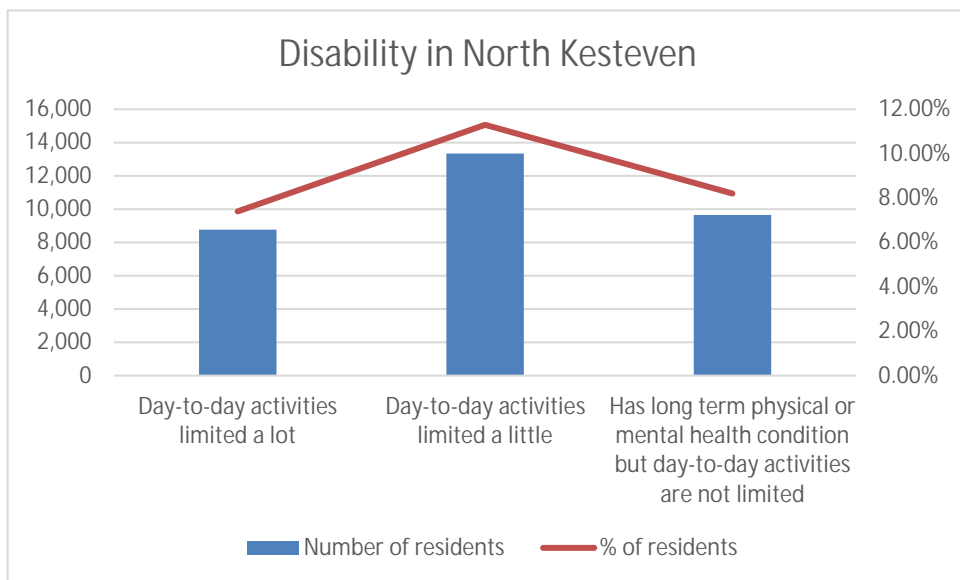
- 91% of homes do not provide the four main features for even the lowest level of accessibility – a home that is ‘visitable’.

The National Disability Strategy sets out the government's vision to improve the everyday lives of disabled people. Disability should not be a barrier to people living full, independent lives. The accessibility and supply of housing for disabled people is to be increased.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-disability-strategy>

4.0 North Kesteven District

North Kesteven traditionally has a higher than average number of older residents than the national average. 2019 estimates show that nearly a quarter (23.6%) of our residents were aged 65+, compared to an average of 18.4% for the rest of England. Recent projections show that the population aged 65+ is expected to increase by over a quarter (25.7%) by 2031, by which time they will form over 27% of the total population of the district.



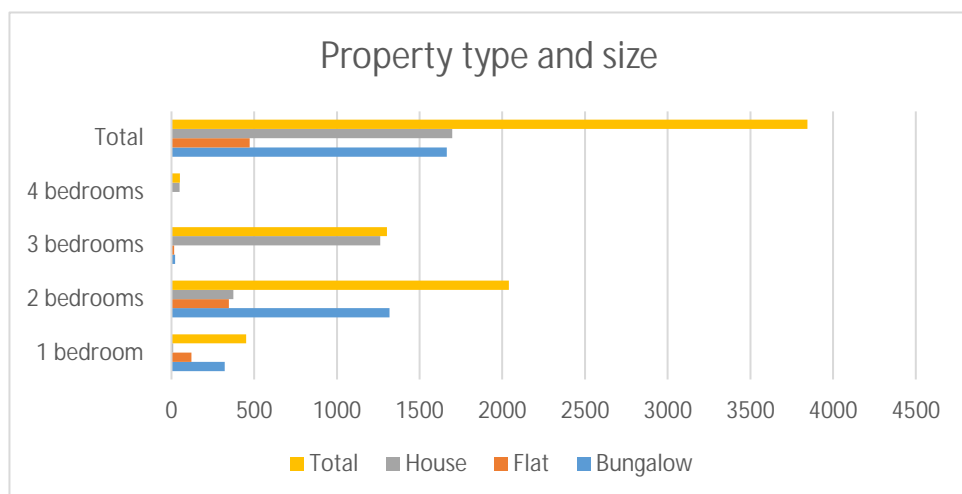
12,989 households have 1 disabled person under the Equity Act.

3,763 households have 2 or more people disabled under the Equity Act.

67% of all households in this District.

5.0 Council owned Homes in North Kesteven

There are 3,998 council homes on expanding stock (as of 1st Dec 2022). Our housing stock primarily consists of self-contained 1, 2 and 3 bed properties. The majority of 1 and 2 bed properties are bungalows, and the majority of 3 bed properties are houses. Bungalows with two bedrooms and houses with three bedrooms comprise over two thirds (68%) of the total stock. There are 12 three bedroomed maisonettes, that have been included within the number of flats in the graph below.



Based on an extrapolated 50% stock sample:
 - 103 ground floor flats
 - 794 Bungalows and
 - 69 houses have a level access shower/wet room.

Source HRA Business Plan 2021 - 2052

6.0 The Customer journey

6.1. Applying for social and/or affordable accommodation

People looking for social and/or affordable rented accommodation in the North Kesteven District area are sign posted to the Council website for information on how to register online for 'Lincs Homefinder', the Councils Housing Register (also known as a Choice Based lettings system). Whilst this system is shared with City of Lincoln Council each Council has its own individual Lettings Policy that sets out how applications will be processed, and properties let.

There are a range of housing options available in the District, including signposting to homes to rent privately. Information on other Housing Providers with properties for rent is available to download from our website.

Support from the Housing Options Team at this stage is to facilitate a way for the applicant to complete the Lincs Homefinder form themselves, in their own time, using their own words, without interpretation by a third party. Those unable to complete the online form themselves are encouraged to seek support from friends, family, or professionals they are already engaged with, to complete it. Wellbeing Lincs is a low-level support service delivered by NKDC, who can assist with obtaining services to help people retain their independence. See <https://www.welbeinglincs.org>

The applicant, their household and current housing circumstances informs the property eligibility, and the priority they are awarded. Priority Bands are 1 to 4, 1 being the highest. (For further information see page 10 - 6.3 Priority for rehousing)

The Lincs Homefinder system allows applicants to register online, and subsequently place 'bids' for properties that become vacant. Bids are ranked according to local connection to North Kesteven and then by Banding. The application with the highest priority placing the bid is offered the property. Anticipated vacancies are 'advertised' on the website, so applicants can decide if they consider a property to be suitable to meet their needs. Bidding is limited to property type and size the applicant qualifies for.

Equality and Diversity information is requested at this stage and monitors equal opportunities throughout the housing process.

6.2. Applicants waiting for a new home.

On the 1st of April 2022, there were just over 2,578 applicants registered on Lincs Homefinder, the Council's choice based lettings system.

Nearly half of these applicants are not considered to be in housing need, with over 1,000 being placed in Band 4, the lowest priority band. Of the remainder, just over 500 applicants are assessed as Band 1 (urgent need to move) or Band 2 (high need to move). Therefore, whilst there is a high demand for housing in the District, the number of applicants with an urgent need for rehousing is significantly lower than overall demand for affordable housing.

While there is demand for all sizes of accommodation, there is an increasing need for smaller homes, particularly for single people and couples without children. This demand is reflected in

the construction type of new build homes and where possible, retro fitting properties. (See page 16 - 7.0 The Homes we provide)

The total number of bedrooms needed is calculated without reference to the physical dimensions of each room. The size of the room can be relevant for same sex children that share a bedroom, separate bedrooms for medical reasons, or the size of the room to accommodate mobility aids or medical equipment. However, room size is relevant when determining if an applicant has refused an offer of 'suitable' accommodation.

Applications to transfer within the NKDC Housing stock to same size accommodation are considered, but may not be awarded any priority, unless there is an additional housing need. They are encouraged to 'SWAP' their home with another social housing tenant, known as a mutual exchange or Home Swap.

6.3. Priority for rehousing

The Council aims to make the best use of its available housing stock. Priority is allocated to those people assessed to be in the most urgent need first. Within the Charter for Social Housing Residents theme six (see page 5 2.0 – Developing this Strategy), the outcome of the call for evidence on social housing allocations is being reviewed, to ensure allocations are made in the fairest way possible while achieving the best outcomes for local communities.

This Strategy focus' on the needs of people with physical or/and mental health challenges. It is assumed that applicants have met the eligibility criteria to join the Housing Waiting Register, Lincs Homefinder. The full Lettings Policy is available on our website: <https://www.n-kesteven.gov.uk/residents/homes-and-property/i-want-to-be-a-council-tenant-in-north-kesteven/>

Applications are awarded a 'Banding' to reflect the applicants assessed Housing need. The Law states that certain groups of people have reasonable preference within any Local Authority Housing. Consideration is given to Medical Need that may require a specific design of property e.g., Ground Floor accommodation.

If you are an existing NKDC tenant, you are awarded priority if you are willing to move to a smaller property. Tenants requesting a move to a smaller property will be placed in Band 1 if asking for two less bedrooms, Band 2 if they need one less bedroom. This practice is intended to release larger homes for families. Whilst not awarded exclusively to older people, they are the main beneficiaries.

6.4 Age

Age and disability criteria are often used to categorise suitability of properties. The requirement to be 60 years or older for bungalows is representative of the counties historic lowest official Retirement Age (qualification for a State Pension).

If you are 60 years or older, you do not require a specific medical need to be considered for the tenancy of a bungalow, but your individual priority Banding (priority status) will still show your assessed medical need for this type of accommodation. You may also express a preference for a ground floor flat.

The current Policy does not allow allocation of a bungalow to applicants under 60 years of age unless there is a medical need. Ground floor flat applicants have no age requirement to join the waiting list, but allocation is to those who have the highest banding often due to an evidenced medical need.

Peoples housing needs can change due to unexpected physical or mental challenges at any age. The national retirement age for residents now varies. A recommendation in the Action Plan is to review the current Lettings Policy in recognition of Government Legislation on Equity and Disability and the changing revised State Pension qualification. (See page 30 -12.0 Action Plan)

6.5. Disability

Disability is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. It defines a disabled person as someone with a physical or mental injury. It must be substantial or long-term (likely to last more than 12 months) and affect their ability to conduct day-to-day activities.

Evidence is required before any priority can be assessed and potentially awarded to an application. Medical priority is awarded on receipt of relevant evidence from the applicants GP, other medical professional, or Adult Social Care, Lincolnshire County Council. It can specify the design, facilities, or adaptations a property will need to meet the applicant's health needs. Medical Evidence on current, not future need, is considered. The priority awarded to an applicant is reviewed in receipt of any new medical evidence. Once awarded this priority may increase the 'Band' into which applicant are placed and is intended to increase their opportunity, above that of other applicants, to obtain suitable accommodation.

When considering medical priority (general mobility and access needs), the type of property for which applicants can be considered may be revised. They are only considered for properties that meet their needs, by having the required facility of adaptation already in place, often working with LCC to establish the applicants' specific needs.

Awarded medical priority is retained by the applicant, with the medical priority changing only if further evidence is provided as to any further deterioration or the medical condition no longer affects the applicants housing situation. The later requires stronger evidence as allocation of an unsuitable property may incur additional costs carrying out adaptations, require additional Adult Social Care resources to make a recommendation for change, and a wait for completion may leave the tenant at risk. This is explored further in 6.8 Adaptations to tenants' homes (page 16).

The need for adaptations or facilities may reduce the total number of properties considered suitable for the applicant, and impact on the locations they have selected. Information on the potential impact of medical priority on the time applicants may wait for a suitable property, could be shared, to allow them to consider other housing options (see page 30 – 12.0 Action Plan).

Local Lettings Policies can be introduced to meet a particular local need and to have an overall positive effect on local areas/estates. For example, the current Policy will consider households of a certain age for some schemes, or a very specific local connection to an individual village. To be considered for a property subject to local lettings criteria, applicants would need to meet the usual eligibility criteria AND the additional local lettings criteria, failure to meet both criteria may lead to the bid being by passed. Information on any Local Lettings criteria that applies are included in the property information provided on Lincs Homefinder.

6.6. Environment and location

Rural isolation is recognised within the HRA Business Plan as a potential issue for many residents, with a lack of access to public transport and/ or a lack of local facilities being a particular feature of several settlements in North Kesteven.

This is reflected in the “Barriers to Housing & Services” domain of deprivation, which considers road distance to a post office, primary school, general store/supermarket and GP surgery, alongside household overcrowding, homelessness and housing affordability. Of the 64 small clusters (villages) of households North Kesteven, six rank in the bottom decile (i.e. the bottom 10%) for this domain, representing over a third (27) 53 of the total of 75 parishes in North Kesteven.

Source – HRA Business Plan.

The benefits of access to open space, private or shared has been highlighted by the Covid Pandemic. The design of new build properties reflects this need, but it is more difficult to change the design of existing properties and estates to provide this.

Applicants choose the areas in which they would like to be considered for rehousing. Whilst the varying popularity of geographical areas is recognised it may reflect the perceived isolation of some villages. Further information about the area could be made available in a focused and concise way (see page 30 – 12.0 Action Plan). This is currently provided for properties in areas that are less popular to improve their appeal.

Location can also impact on access to care and support, whether commissioned by Lincolnshire County Council, bought privately, delivered by friends and family or the local community.

6.7. Recognising individuality

As a result of the Equality Act 2010 it is unlawful to discriminate against someone on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion/belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation. These are referred to as ‘protected characteristics’. A review of our Equity Action Plan is underway. Opportunities to use the information we collect to profile our customers, to better meet their needs, is currently being undertaken.

North Kesteven has a low ethnic minority population, with the most recent estimates showing that over 97% of residents are White British and just over 2% belong to a minority ethnic group. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationcharacteristicsresearchtables>

Many people benefit from the support of their extended family, close friends or peer group for advice, reassurance, physical and mental support. Preferences for location can be in response to perception of more tolerant and welcoming Communities. Applicants may choose to wait longer for properties in their area of preference.

Verbal language barriers are alleviated by a telephone translation service available for use by all NKDC employees and Members. For nonverbal communication methods, the Councils Corporate Information Team contact national support groups and charities for assistance. The

NK Partnerships Team (not part of the Housing and Property Team) work closely with local Communities, Religious Centres, Charities and Volunteers to identify sources of local support for residents and raise awareness and understanding of individual and group needs.

New applicants for rehousing who are experiencing intolerance for a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2021 may be considered for emergency rehousing through a Homelessness Application. Tenants experiencing these behaviours will be considered for a Priority move. The NKDC Anti-Social Behaviour Teamwork with the victim, Police and Housing and Property Dept.

Local Lettings Policies have been unable to find a consistent and transparent way of recognising and delivering these preferences when allocating properties. Individual preferences are acknowledged and the potential effect on their rehousing options shared. Strategies better placed to deal with these issues directly link to rural isolation and building sustainable communities. Local Lettings Policies benefit from regular review to consider available options (See page 30 – 12.0 Action Plan).

The Charter for Social Housing Residents (for further information see page 6 - 2.0 Developing this Inclusive Strategy) is under review by Central Government. It is expected that theme six will include a requirement for social housing to evidence that allocations are made in the fairest way possible, including achieving the best outcomes for local communities. Landlords will need to ensure that tenants know who is responsible for action on anti-social behaviour (ASB), clarifying the roles of agencies involved in tackling ASB and signposting tenants to the most appropriate advice and support for their situation. Landlords will also be expected to use their knowledge of vulnerable tenants to monitor and support those at particular risk of exploitation. NK currently produces an Annual Statement of those on the Housing register and those accommodated to - monitor fair access. (see page 30 – 12.0 Action Plan)

6.8. Practical support and guidance for our customers

There is a range of support available from NKDC to support people to maintain their independence and safety by living in a suitable home.

Applicants joining Lincs Homefinder, the Housing Waiting List, can receive assistance from the Housing Options Team. Advice for every stage of the application process and finding a new home with another social housing provider or private Landlord. Telephone and face to face support in the NKDC office in Sleaford is available.

There is recognition of the good physical and mental health needed to complete a move to a new home.

Homeless applicants receive support to find temporary and/or long-term accommodation. Officers will mediate between applicants and their current housing provider to delay homelessness wherever possible. Pre assessment of benefit entitlement can also be completed.

For new tenants who have difficulty with the moving process, support can be provided by a Tenancy Sustainment Officer (TSO). They are unable to assist with a tenant's previous address, however, low level support may be available from WellbeingLincs who will recognise

both properties, further information from NKDC or <https://www.welbeinglincs.org>

For Tenants transferring to another NK property with priority for Health and Welfare concerns (Hoarding, home maintenance, looking after pets, personal care etc), the Housing Officer can liaise with Environmental Health and/or Housing Renewals (using The Better Care Fund see page 16 - 7.1 Adaptions to tenants' homes) to create a package of support. They assist the tenant to meet the minimum property condition requirement, allowing the transfer to a more suitable property to take place.

Tenants are encouraged to contact their Housing Officer for tenancy advice by telephone, email, or face to face visit request. While the sector trend has been to move towards more digital communication, North Kesteven's tenants place significantly higher value on greater opportunity for face-to-face communication than for communication via text messaging, the internet, or social media.

Annual tenanted home visiting targets for Housing Officers have been replaced with more recognition for the proactive contact they have with NKDC e.g., Contractor visits tenants have during their Tenancy. Awareness training of all services available to vulnerable tenants is delivered to our Contractors. Basic Safeguarding Awareness and access to informal discussions, combined with information on the additional service's available from the Council. e.g., Wellbeing Lincs, assisted bin pulls, aids and adaptions, property cleaning/clearance, Health and Safety advice (further options and information available on the NKDC website) also see page 30 – 12.0 Action Plan.

When asked to set our landlord priorities for service delivery, tenants identified 'more support for vulnerable people'. When asked to clarify their definition of Vulnerability in a follow up questionnaire, tenants chose 'illness and disability' before age the definitions of 80+ years, and 60 to 80 years. (2020 STAR Survey results <https://www.n-kesteven.gov.uk>). The 2022 consultation closes in February 2023. <https://www.n-kesteven.gov.uk/your-council/have-your-say/consultation/current-research-and-consultation/star-2022-survey-of-tenants-and-residents/>). The information will be collated and included in the At Home newsletter sent to all tenants.

To recognise the need for additional support to our tenants, and understand specific communication needs, it is recommended that awareness sessions for the most common health and wellbeing challenges be held for Officers. Optional sessions could also be extended to all NK Officers and Members. Suggested topics to include Dementia Awareness, depression including PTSD, reduced sight, and hearing etc. (see page 30 – 12.0 Action Plan)

The Housing Officer is also the first point of contact for any tenancy related issue. This may include Including concerns about Tenants or their family's health and safety, including specific concerns about the welfare of children or vulnerable adults (unless there is an immediate risk of harm). NKDC provides support for all staff through the NKDC Corporate Safeguarding Team, based in Housing and Property Services. The NK Safeguarding Administrator is available to all colleagues to discuss concerns, additional resources, and a way forward to ensure statutory responsibilities are being complied with. In house forums for professionals can be held, such as the Vulnerable Adults Panel to ensure all relevant Council resources are being utilised, coordinated and risks mitigated. This resource is for NK employees and Members only. Other inquiries are directed to Lincolnshire County Council, who have formal responsibility to deal with Safeguarding issues under the Care Act 2014. (See NKDC safeguarding Policy for further information <https://www.n-kesteven.gov.uk/residents/health-education-and->

[people/safeguarding/](#)

Financial challenges can affect everyone, particularly those facing a change in their ability to work either through personal illness or caring duties for others. Prioritising expenditure from a low income can lead to difficult decisions affecting, heating, water, food and rent payment. In addition the current Central Government support for rising energy bills, immediate further advice and support is available to tenants. Housing Officers and Tenancy Sustainment Officers can assess for benefit claim eligibility, signpost to specialist support services for specific health and wellbeing concerns and refer into the NKDC and City of Lincoln joint Money Advice Service to help manage debt.

For tenants that have difficulty using their heating/hot water system works, Aaron Services, the NK heating contractor, will visit and show how to use the system. Many people are on a fixed income once they no longer have the ability to work. The Housing Dept Domestic Energy Officer can also review energy costs and advise on money saving changes.

Accessing value for money trusted services can be a challenge for anyone. The Council insures the property structure, fixture and fittings only. To make it easier for tenants to insure house contents, such as furniture, belongings, clothes, TV, the Council negotiated a competitive Home Contents Insurance scheme specifically for tenants run by Crystal Insurance. One of the benefits is that it has no excess charge, if you need to make a claim (contact the NK Housing Community Engagement team for more information telephone 01529 414155). (See page 30 – 12.0 Action Plan).

Health and Safety information in the Tenants Handbook, Asbestos, Gas Safety, Fire Safety, Water Hygiene, Damp and Mould, Fire safety and Cold Weather Advice. Request a further copy on 01529 414155 or see our website <https://www.n-kesteven.gov.uk/residents/homes-and-property/i-am-currently-a-council-tenant-in-north-kesteven/tenants-handbook/>

7.0 The homes we provide.

The term Inclusive Housing means homes designed to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design.

Whenever we carry out building works on any property, we need to reassess the suitability of the works for the occupant and consider the role the home needs to fulfil, and their need for an energy efficient home.

For individual households there are several important considerations, including additional disposable income from lower energy bills, the health benefits from improved air quality and a more comfortable home. Old and inefficient housing leads to an estimated 11,500 early winter deaths and 4,000 early deaths from overheating per year and adds around £2 billion to annual NHS costs through negative health impacts.

Tenant Liaison Officers are available to support tenants who are having major repair or improvement carried out on their home. They work with the tenant to try and reduce the impact of the work on their health and wellbeing. They have helped tenants pack items for safe storage, liaised with contractors to carry out works as sensitively as possible, assisted with monitoring utility bills through major projects and other tasks to support the tenant. Full Policy accessible at <https://www.n-kesteven.gov.uk/residents/homes-and-property/information-about-housing-in-north-kesteven/housing-strategies-and-policies/> Support During Improvement Works Policy.

Tenants are asked to complete a survey upon completion of any building works/repair in their home.

7.1. Adaptions to tenants' homes

For existing tenants adaptations to the physical property can be completed by the Council. (Source – NKDC website www.n-kesteven.gov.uk NKDC disabled-facilities-policy).

Minor adaptations costing below £500 (as at Dec 2022), might include lever taps; half steps; second stair handrail; grab rails can be installed without a formal professional (Adult Social Care, GP) assessment of need. However, the tenant may need to seek professional advice on where to fit them to ensure the most benefit.

The funding is provided by the Housing Department. The budget is limited each year and work is carried out on a first come, first served basis.

Recommendations for Simple Aids for Daily Living (SADL's) (raised toilet seats, bathing aids etc), can also be shared. WellbeingLincs Trusted assessors are trained to recommend the use and correct fitting of SADLs. WellbeingLincs have a dedicated SADL's installer post to fit SADL's, purchased from them, free of charge.

There is flexibility on an individual case basis to make specific changes to a tenanted home, to delay the need to access Personal Care. Specific physical or mental challenges associated with medical conditions can be better managed by recognising the specific characteristics of the condition. Staff awareness training of more common conditions (e.g. Dementia, Anxiety and

depression, the need for mobility aids etc) may increase the range of minor adaptations this fund can deliver e.g. improving ability to see into kitchen cupboards by replacing them with clear doors (rather than solid) or removing them completely; Changing the style of internal door handles for easier grip; Provision of a higher toilet pan (full provision of a Level Access shower/wet room requires a Disabled facilities Grant). (See page 30 – 12.0 Action Plan)

It cannot be assumed that the individual is aware of everything that is available to them to increase the safety and use of their home. *‘People rarely ask for what they don’t know exists’.*

It is recommended that a basic guide to SADL and adaptations is shared with Housing and Property Department visiting Officers. It can also be made available on The Orange, for all Council Officers and Members. (See page 30 – 12.0 Action plan)

The Council can fund more complex adaptations to make life easier for tenants and their family. These include modifying a bathroom; Installing a stairlift; Moving a toilet; providing ramps for wheelchair access; making doorways wider; making sleeping and toilet facilities accessible; improving heating, lighting controls or power sources; and more.

An Occupational Therapist from Lincolnshire County Council, Adult Social Care visits to assess need and recommend what modifications are necessary and appropriate. How long adaptations take will depend on several factors, some of which are outside the District’s Council’s control, such as the workload of Occupational Therapists, contractor availability and the complexity of work. Adaptations such as Level Access Showers, threshold changes remain when a property becomes empty (void) and is available for reallocation to an applicant on Lincs Homefinder.

Stairlifts are removed when a tenancy ends. Design can be very specific to the user and /or the design of the property. Stairlifts are stored and may be reinstalled (by a specialist contractor) in an alternative property, to potentially reduce the waiting time for the tenant, or used to provide improvements or replacement parts for stairlifts in use at other properties. A co-ordinated Policy and procedure for recycling equipment would be beneficial and allow savings and reduction of waiting times to be identified. (See page 30 – 12.0 Action Plan)

Further information for is available on the NKDC website <https://www.n-kesteven.gov.uk/residents/homes-and-property/i-am-currently-a-council-tenant-in-north-kesteven/home-improvements-standards-and-disabled-adaptations/>

The Handyperson Service can provide basic assistance to tenants who are unable to complete minor repair and maintenance tasks around their homes and have no friends or family that can assist them. Assistance is given for maintenance that is the tenants responsibility (see Tenants Handbook for more information on tenant responsibilities). Tenants purchase the items to be replaced, such as long light tube in kitchens, replacing toilet seats etc with the physical labour being provided by the Handyperson Service. Assistance can also be given with jobs to high, low, or heavy for the tenant to complete.

7.2 The Decent Homes Standard for our existing properties

‘85% of our homes will still be in use in 2050’ source: Federation of Master Builders

The Decent Homes Standard has played a key role in setting the minimum standards that

social homes are required to meet since the early 2000s. The standard was updated in 2006 to take account of the Housing Act 2004 and included the implementation of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

It is soon to be updated again, potentially widening the scope to include energy efficiency and decarbonisation, access to and quality of green spaces, and security of neighbourhoods. It is anticipated that the outcome of the Government consultation will be a refreshed Decent Homes Standard, potentially applicable from April 2023 onward.

All NK properties meet the requirements of a 'decent home' and all current legislation. The NK Homes Standard establishes the benchmark for the quality of our Homes. Adopted in 2016, our approach seeks to ensure that the Council's stock conditions exceed the minimum statutory requirement. Adapted in 2016, this standard also recognises the additional challenges of living in a rural community. It allows for investment that seeks to minimise property running costs and fuel poverty and can facilitate the reduction of carbon emissions.

Our tenants are in communities that can be an extension of their homes and a wider focus can be applied to improving the physical environment. A greater focus on Health, Wellbeing and the housing estate general environment can be achieved.

However, a 'decent home' will mean different things to different people. A home with good public transport, close to family and friends, can be as important as a home with the right adaptations. Local Offers are the tenants voice when prioritising the Depts commitments. (See page 24 - 8.2 Local offers)

7.3. Visitability

91% of homes do not provide the four main features for even the lowest level of accessibility a home that is 'visitabile'.

www.ons.gov.uk

'Visitability' is the design approach for housing such that anyone who uses a wheelchair or other mobility device should be able to visit. A social visit requires the ability to get into the property, to pass through interior doorways, and enter a bathroom to use the toilet. Visitability stresses specific accessibility features from a social reform perspective, and counters social isolation.

Many people can benefit from the application of this standard. A mother with a baby in a pushchair; delivery companies; less able visitors to the property including older family member who may need to access bathroom facilities during their visit; moving furniture within the home; people who through injury temporarily use walking aids.

The current definition of Visitability is intended to influence the design of new homes. It is not to be confused with design features intended to make a property wheelchair accessible or built to mobility standards. Implementation cost is often negligible at design and construction stages. This standard is mandatory for all new build homes under Building Regulations Part M. (see page 21 - 7.6 Building New Homes). It is not a required consideration when Retro fitting older homes, however there is an option to include elements of the standard. (See page 30 – 12.0 Action Plan)

Covid has also highlighted the ‘walkability’ of areas and encourages improving landscaping and aesthetics to encourage use of outdoor spaces. Further information at <https://www.visitablehome.org/develop-design-build-sell>

7.4. When a property becomes empty (aka VOID).

The term Inclusive Housing means homes designed to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design.

When a tenancy ends, the property it is subject to immediate inspection, safety checks and condition survey. The Property is maintained to a ‘lettable condition’ as soon as possible. This reflects the Councils wish to minimise income loss and allow the new tenant to move into their new home as soon as possible. Stairlifts (also see 7.1 Adaptions to tenants’ homes) and showers (over baths) are removed.

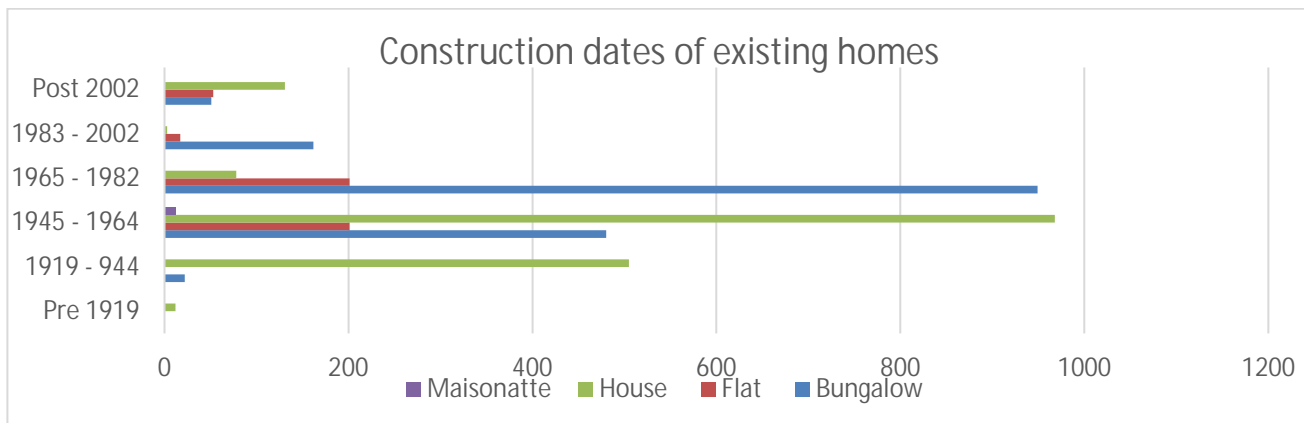
At this stage it may be feasible to consider completing minor works to better meet the Visitability Standard (See 7.3 and Action Plan page 30) and potentially include any small improvement that may benefit the new tenant and their family e.g. Increased lighting, raising the height of fuse boxes, if a replacement toilet is required consider a pan at ‘Comfort Height’ (heights vary but generally slightly higher than a standard pan, but not as high as a fully mobility standard). If replacing kitchen cupboard units, consider including deep drawer units etc. (See page 30 – 12.0 Action Plan)

Bungalows and Ground Floor Flats are most popular when they have a Level Access Shower. This may be an opportunity to replace the bathroom, especially if other works are needed that will delay the date for occupation.

This is also an opportunity to record further information about the property that re relevant to inclusive housing e.g. internal door width, external egress, distance to parking etc. (See page 30 – 12.0 Action Plan)

7.5. Retro fitting existing properties

The term Inclusive Housing means homes designed to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design.



Source - HRA Business Plan

In the current environmental climate NKDC is prioritising expenditure on sustainability measures for our homes. Tackling emissions is needed to mitigate climate change. Our homes use 35% of all the energy in the UK and emit 20% of carbon dioxide emissions. Retrofitting those homes requires an integrated approach, recognising advances in sustainable fuel sources is informing the type of replacement heating fitted in homes. Building and ground mounted renewable energy options are being investigated for existing and new properties. Available land opportunities within existing and housing developments are being reviewed to identify opportunities to increase and improve green and biodiverse infrastructure.

Homes with occupants of limited mobility are often heated to a higher temperature. Improving the performance of a home does not just benefit the climate, it reduces household fuel consumption for provision of heating and light.

The Council use the age of individual elements within homes and applies Expected Life Spans to plan their replacement. When retro fitting is being undertaken, additional low-cost options may help future proof the property to meet any occupants needs:

- Doors 40 years – consider wide access, install a ramp, easy use large handles and door locking mechanism.
- Windows 40 years – consider low level window winders for high opening casements, handle design options,
- Kitchen 30 Years – consider more drawer units, clear cupboard doors, pull out shelving within cupboards, lower wall cupboards. Easy turn stop taps and a floor covering are included as standard (Safety), as other options,
- Bathroom 40 Years – consider installation of a wet room in bungalows and ground floor flats (a bath for medical needs can be fitted over a shower area within a wet room), for first floor bathrooms, strengthen walls in areas where grab rails could be needed; include provision of under floor drainage for potential installation of a level access shower; leave a minimum distance between pan, wall and wash hand basin so a walking frame or framed toilet seat can be fitted without alternations to the room.
- Gas heating boiler 15 Years – sustainability drives the type of replacement heating to be installed.

Additional considerations include (not an exhaustive list):

- provision of a power socket at the top and bottom of the stairs in an electrical upgrade has the potential for use for future installation of stairlifts.
- Additional ceiling roses to increase the level of light in main rooms.

(See page 30 – 12.0 Action Plan)

‘Visitability’ standards could be incorporated subject to suitability of the property (see page 18 - 7.3 Visitability).

Tenant satisfaction surveys show that car parking problems cause more unhappiness than almost anything else. Tenants with mobility problems benefit from having easy access to transport, as can parents with small children, and anyone with a large amount of heavy shopping. Vehicle parking near an access to their home (front or back door) is preferable. We are improving this through an annual parking programme. This includes building lay-bys, driveways, and hard-standing areas. There are many parking spaces near our properties, but some estates were not designed to cope with today’s number of vehicles. (See page 30 – 12.0 Action Plan)

7.6. Building New Homes

The term Inclusive Housing means homes designed to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design.

The Councils strategy remains to deliver a new build programme to increase the amount of affordable housing for rent, to respond to levels of need identified on the housing register and, as a minimum investment, replace properties sold through Right to Buy with zero carbon new build properties. The Councils commitment is to deliver 300+ new council homes over 5 years and unlock 250+ new homes through Lafford Homes. These homes will meet several industry recognised standards.

In July 2019 NKDC's Full Council unanimously resolved that the Council declared a 'Climate Emergency'. The Councils new Build Standard has been updated to our 'New Build CO2-sy Homes Standard' which meets the requirements of the Climate Emergency Action plan.

New homes are designed to meet the 'Passivhaus' energy efficiency building principles. There are several benefits of this design. Low energy bills, constant fresh air, superior internal comfort, peaceful and quiet interiors. This has taken precedence over the former NK Fabric Plus building standard. Further information available at:

https://www.passivhaustrust.org.uk/what_is_passivhaus.php

The current set of regulations that set standards for the design and construction of buildings to ensure people can access and move around inside buildings are referred to as Part M of the Building regulations. In summary:

- **M4(1) – Visitable dwellings:** This is the lowest level and the current baseline standard for building new homes. The home must be 'visitable' with a level access to the main entrance, a flush threshold, sufficiently wide doorways and circulation space, and a toilet at entrance level. **M4(1) is currently the only one that is mandatory.**
- **M4(2) – Accessible and adaptable dwellings:** This category is also described as 'age-friendly' or 'lifetime' housing. Simple things built into the structure and space of the home that allow a person to remain independent for longer.
- **M4(3) – Wheelchair user housing:** This is the only category intended to provide a home suitable for those of us who use a wheelchair all the time.

Full details are available at:

https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200135/approved_documents/80/part_m_-_access_to_and_use_of_buildings/2

This Council develops 20% of new homes, in response to Planning Policy, to the M4(2) standard. Whilst not compulsory, the adaptability of new homes built to this standard can reduce costs for tenants who must transfer to an alternative home as their needs change and reduce the cost to the Council for any adaptations to the homes that make it suitable for the occupant to continue to live there. (See page 30 – 12.0 Action Plan)

Further investigation of additional opportunities to include additional structural changes should be undertaken. For examples Bathroom - walls to be of strong enough construction to support

the installation of grab rails; a hidden floor gulley to allow a walk-in shower or wet room to be easily installed. Staircases - walls to be constructed to support the addition of a handrail to both sides, a one-meter square area at the top and bottom of staircases into which doors do not open. Additional plug socket in consideration of an easily accessible power supply for stair lifts, house alarms. Wider parking spaces to allow for the vehicle door to be fully opened. (See page 30 – 12.0 Action Plan)

Design features like level thresholds, wider doorways, and controls at accessible heights, are not immediately noticeable in a well-designed environment. Similarly, the right lighting, acoustics, visual contrast, signage, and technology ensure independent navigation and communication is optimised for all. This is especially beneficial for people with Dementia.

7.7 Extra Care Schemes

‘Extra Care’ housing is a term used to describe developments of self-contained homes (usually flats) with design features and care and support services to enable self-care and independent living. It is often considered an alternative to residential care and seen to have developed from the diverse needs and wishes of the older community. A self-contained flat with its own front door, allowing control of privacy, visitors and kitchens and bathrooms designed for independent use.

Extra Care can offer a quick response to residents changing needs through provision of planned and unplanned care when needed, and an emergency response. For further information see <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/HousingExtraCare/what-is-extra-care/>

Whilst the concept of Extra Care originated from the needs and wishes of the older community, it can be delivered for other groups such as young adults with disabilities wanting to retain as much independence as possible. In addition, there is growing interest in facilitating older and younger people with dementia and people with sight loss to maintain their independence in a community setting and extra care has begun to respond to these challenges.

It is built to meet building standard M4(3), with full access for people who use a wheelchair. This also benefits visitors to the scheme who find it easier to move around building with wider doorways, stairs and lifts, and generous seating provision. Design features like level thresholds, wider doorways, and controls at accessible heights, features that you wouldn’t notice in a well-designed environment, create vibrant spaces in which people can circulate easily and comfortably. Similarly, the right lighting, acoustics, visual contrast, signage, and technology ensure independent navigation and communication is optimised for all. The requirements are regularly reviewed to meet local need. (See page 30 – 12.0 Action Plan)

Increasingly Extra Care housing is recognised as an essential component of joint commissioning by health and social care. Extra care is now being used for intermediate care and rehabilitation as well as longer term housing. Extra Care developments provide a focus for integrated working to meet housing, health, and social care needs. Age restrictions are often at over 60 years, or less frequently over 55 years of age.

NKDC is currently working with Lincolnshire County Council to develop an Extra Care scheme at The Hoplands, Sleaford. It will be a combination of a main building containing 40 flats and

communal facilities to include communal lounges, catering, laundry and mobility scooter parking and charging. In addition, two satellite blocks of 12 flats will be available for working age adults with physical or mental health needs. All flats will be available for rent.

This will be the first purpose built Extra Care scheme developed within the District. It will increase the options available to those who need an inclusive designed home that benefits from both planned and responsive support and care provision.

<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/news/article/581/new-housing-options-approved-for-sleaford>

Artist's impression of the scheme for The Hopland, Sleaford:



VISUALISATION 1: Extra Care building frontage from the east

Features for individual flats include:

- Generous glazing with feature terrace
- Large wet room with two-way access
- Open plan living
- Integrated storage spaces
- Wide accessible doorways
- Full Telecare integrated system

Expected completion 2025.

8.0 Listening to our Tenants.

The Housing and Property Service strives to provide quality housing services that meets the needs and aspirations of its customers. Tenants can give us feedback our services in several ways. Our services can be accessed via NKDC Customer Services in person or:

-  Letter at North Kesteven District Council, Kesteven Street, Sleaford, Lincolnshire, NG34 7EF
-  By telephone on 01529 414155
-  By email to customer_services@n-kesteven.gov.uk
-  Through our website at www.n-kesteven.gov.uk
-  NKDC Housing on Facebook.

Effective Communication can be supported through a telephone Translation Service, and non-verbal communication through the Councils Corporate Information team contact national support groups and charities for assistance.

8.1. Tenancy Strategy

The Localism Act 2011 brought in a requirement for local authorities to produce and publish a Tenancy Strategy, setting out matters which all registered providers of social housing in the area (including stock retained local authorities themselves) must consider when framing their own tenancy policies.

In 2013, the Central Lincolnshire authorities of City of Lincoln Council, North Kesteven District Council and West Lindsey District Council published a joint Tenancy Strategy, with a key aim to make the best use of the social housing stock to provide homes from those households who are unable to meet their own housing needs within the Central Lincolnshire area.

The Tenancy Strategy sets out the Councils' approach to such things as the type and length of tenancies to be used and the circumstances when tenancies would be reviewed. These guidelines will apply both for the management of the Councils' own properties, where applicable, and for other providers of social and affordable housing within the area who must consider this strategy when they develop their own policies for managing their properties. It is currently being reviewed and publication is expected in mid-2023. (See page 30 – 12.0 Action Plan)

8.2. Local Offers

A local offer is a way of tailoring social housing services based on what tenants want locally. It is the standard of service you can expect from North Kesteven Housing and Property Service. From your feedback and involvement with the service we hope to deliver improvements that make a positive difference to your home, quality of life and community.

NK sends out a STAR survey to all tenants asking them what we should focus on, the most important service areas you wanted us to improve, and we use this information to inform the HRA Business Plan. Tenants are invited to become a Tenant Representative for their local Community. Tenant Forums include the Tenant Liaison Panel, which shares membership with your Local Councillors.

Tenants are asked to complete surveys to feedback their views on the standard of service they have received. Feedback is also received through customer complaints. These include surveys of their experience applying for rehousing, after moving into a new home, after repair and maintenance work is carried out and for all tenants the STAR survey.

Our local offers cover the four key areas in housing regulation. Value for the rent you pay runs throughout:

Your Home

Your Neighbourhood and Community

Your Tenancy

Involvement and Empowerment

The local offers included here are relevant to this Strategy. For a complete list is available at <https://www.n-kesteven.gov.uk/residents/homes-and-property/information-about-housing-in-north-kesteven/hra-business-plan-and-local-offers/> . Local offer information is also shared in the quarterly Tenants 'At Home' magazine, delivered to every Council property.

Your Home - We will explore options to retrofit homes with energy efficiency measures; Investigate the feasibility of fitting more electrical sockets; Consult on a new NKDC standard to ensure Homes have modern facilities; Involve residents and use their feedback in procurement for new repairs contracts; Publish annual health and safety statements to show the work we carry out to keep residents safe.

Your Tenancy - We will provide you with a home visit from your Housing Officer upon request; Advertise the names of housing officers and how to request a home visit in the At Home magazine, through social media and online.

Involvement and Empowerment – We will introduce a new computer system, to better record contact with you, so that no matter who you speak to they will know the history of your case; Develop a communications standard that will set out guidance for staff on communicating with residents; Provide a clear and accessible complaints process, inform residents 'lessons learnt' from complaints and make improvements to our services.

Your Neighbourhood and Community – We will retain and review provision of Handyman services including eligibility criteria to ensure that it meets the needs of tenants; Provide greater publicity of the available support services through the At Home magazine and through Facebook; Continue to refer tenants to other agencies as and when required; Continue to provide a team of Tenancy Sustainment Officers for support and practical assistance to tenants who have additional needs to maintain their tenancy; Continue to work with Lincs Fire and Rescue to make home safe referrals; Review activities taking place at the communal lounges and help to facilitate activities where residents want them; Offer an aids and adaptations service.

9.0 Rural Isolation and Contributing to the Local Community.

Rural isolation is a potential issue for many residents, with a lack of access to public transport and/ or a lack of local facilities being a particular feature of a number of settlements in North Kesteven. This is reflected in the “Barriers to Housing & Services” domain of deprivation, which considers road distance to a post office, primary school, general store/supermarket and GP surgery, alongside household overcrowding, homelessness and housing affordability. Of the 64 LSOAs in North Kesteven, six rank in the bottom decile (i.e. the bottom 10%) for this domain, representing over a third (27) 53 of the total of 75 parishes in North Kesteven.

Covid restrictions amplified a sense of isolation for many people. But at the same time.....

....the lockdown and restrictions imposed for Covid 19 has seen more people helping their Communities, with some people volunteering for the first time. Not only helping their mental health but supporting their neighbours, friends and families.

Source: The state of Ageing in 2020, Centre for Better Aging

9.1 Former Sheltered Housing Scheme Communal Lounges

In 2015 dedicated services to tenants living in Sheltered Housing Schemes changed. Originally dedicated scheme staff provided support to tenants living on the scheme. No visits were made outside of the NKDC owned properties on the scheme. It was revised into a service that visited people (over 18years) who needed a little support, irrespective of their address. It later helped to inform and shape the current LCC commissioned WellbeingLincs Service, which NKDC continues to deliver within NKDC and now throughout to in the South of Lincolnshire.

The communal facilities on schemes remain, most schemes benefiting from a Communal Lounge, and some a laundry. All meeting the Visitability standard (see page 18 - 7.3 Visitability). Although closed due to the increased risk of Covid transmission, they were ‘relaunched’ in May 2022. After consultation with the tenants on the schemes in 2022, old favourites and new activities were reintroduced with mixed success.

An options appraisal is currently under development in partnership with our tenants who live on the schemes, to establish how the facilities could be better used and by who. Is assistance needed to ensure regular activities take place, or can tenants continue to facilitate activities for their neighbours on their own?

Consideration is being given to:

- Locality of other similar facilities.
- Cost of providing the facilities and who pays for them.
- Alternative funding options.
- Design and maintaining building security.
- Opportunities to create more vibrant and utilised facilities by welcoming the local community.
 - Awareness sessions for tenants and the local community to foster understanding

and tolerance of perceived unusual behaviour or practices. e.g. Dementia awareness, parenting skills, hearing and sight loss, local history, beliefs, and cultures.

- Themed events to reflect the local community and their needs. And their use as venues for clinics in small villages e.g., sight tests, hearing tests, chiropody.
- Partnership with local groups and charities to develop social clubs including arts and crafts, gardening, music, and exercise.

New ideas and initiatives to better meet the tenants' aspirations for use the space are being sort.

It is hoped that their benefits can be shared in new ways, with the wider community. There is increased potential if we create inclusive homes, as our tenants can remain living independently in the Community, and enjoy local friendship, and activities that interest them and meet their needs.

The Consultation and Options Appraisal will be completed by December 2024, with an expectation of implementation April 2025. (See page 30 – 12.0 Action Plan)

Much publicity has been given to schemes linking nurseries and schools with older people's care homes, extra care schemes and sheltered housing. Regular visits are key to building relationships between young and older people so that both feel they benefit. We have also seen more parent and toddler groups set up specifically to visit care homes regularly, thereby benefiting three generations.

There are many different models for creating more inclusive communities. Sheltered housing schemes with low demand could see empty flats let to students or young mothers – as is happening in Cambridge and Haringey. Potentially Extra care schemes could be home for adults of all ages as in Hull. Homeshare schemes enable older people to let spare rooms to younger people needing housing in return for companionship and practical support.

Local authorities are looking at how they create communities for all ages and ensure regeneration and housing schemes work for people of all ages. This growth in intergenerational housing and care schemes has largely been grassroots driven. With the support of the next government, much more could be done to unite the generations, transform our communities and build a stronger country.

10.0 Where next?

Recognition of the good works being undertaken is essential to motivate officers and reassure customers that we aspire to deliver the best service possible.

An action plan reflecting the contents of this Strategy is on page 30 – 12.0 Action Plan.

Peoples housing needs can change, as they become older or face unexpected physical or mental challenges at any age. We need to recognise and respond to this diversity and provide 'Inclusive Housing'. The term Inclusive Housing means homes designed to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design.

There are many external challenges facing our customer and officers. This strategy has been developed in a post Covid environment when costs are increasing for all good and services. Our aim is improving services and make our homes more inclusive, whilst recognising an over ridding priority for sustainability in our Climate Emergency

Our vision is to maintain existing homes and develop new Homes that will be suitable for the changing needs of our Tenants and the wider Community continues.

The action plans will be reviewed a minimum of annually to benchmark progress and consider the impact of changes in legislation, our climate, our customer aspirations, and the needs of our local communities (see page 30 – 12.0 Action Plan).

11.0 References and further reading.

Health integration white paper March 2022 - Summary The governments health and social care integration white paper, aiming to bring the NHS and local government together to improve care and value for money, allowing people to receive “the right care in the right place at the right time”, and join up services. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-and-social-care-integration-joining-up-care-for-people-places-and-populations>

Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JSNA) – owned by Lincolnshire Council this document uses analysis of local people’s needs, to provide strategic direction for its services. <https://research-lincs.org.uk>

Central Lincolnshire Housing Strategy - sets out the **housing** issues and challenges facing **Central Lincolnshire**. It identifies six strategic objectives: Deliver **housing** to meet diversity of need including Older Persons. Maintain and improve the **housing** stock and bring empty properties back into use. Deliver and maintain a robust and up to date evidence base. <https://n-kestevev.gov.uk/central-lincolnshire>

Centre for Ageing Better - The partnership builds on Lincolnshire County Council's ambitions to secure the best outcomes and opportunities for people approaching later life, ensuring that Lincolnshire is a place where people can age well in an environment that’s inclusive, supportive and empowering. <https://ageing-better.org.uk/lincolnshire>

The Good Home Enquiry – Getting our homes in order report March 2021. Homes are more than bricks and mortar. They should provide warmth, safety and a comfortable environment to live in. <https://ageing-better.org/good-home-enquiry>

Lincolnshire’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy:
<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/2345/joint-health-and-wellbeing-strategy>

Social Care Reform White Paper:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/people-at-the-heart-of-care-adult-social-care-reform-white-paper>

<https://ageing-better.org.uk/lincolnshire>

<https://www.housinglin.org.uk/>

<https://www.n-kesteven.gov.uk>

12.0 Action Plan - INCLUSIVE HOUSING STRATEGY

Action Number	Page	Section	Action	Team	By Date
	5	2.0	Developing this inclusive Strategy		
1	6	ALL	Monitor for and incorporate changes emerging from the implementation of the Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper and other relevant legislative changes	Housing Regulatory Assurance	On going
	9	6.0	The Customer Journey		
	10	6.4	Age		
2	10	6.4	Review the Age requirements for property types considering relevant Equality legislation	Housing Options Manager	December 2025
	11	6.5	Disability		
3	11	6.5	Provision of information to applicants about the impact on waiting times when applying for medical priority for properties with adaptations or, and the availability of properties meeting their requirements in the geographical areas they have requested.	Housing Options Manager	December 2024
	12	6.6	Environment and location		
4	12	6.6	Provision of or signposting to concise and relevant information about the settlements within the district (specifically relevant to areas with difficult to let properties). Map local provision of shops, Post Offices, food stores and Banks.	Housing Options Manager	December 2025
	12	6.7	Recognising individuality		
5	12	6.7	Coordinate the implementation of the HPS Equality Action Plan	Housing Regulatory Assurance	March 2024
6	13	6.7	Adopt a regular review of Local lettings Policy to meet the needs of local communities. Investigate options for recognising the community profile and support appropriate allocations.	Housing Options Manager	December 2025

7	13	6.7	Review Local Lettings Policies as an opportunity to investigate opportunities to influence the creation more sustainable and tolerant communities by accommodating cultural requests and recognising accessibility to Community Support – Links to local community and support groups.	Housing Options Manager	December 2025
8	13	6.7	Collect and monitor data collected in response to the review of The Charter for Social Housing Residents to evidence fairness of allocation and achieving the best outcome for local communities.	Housing Options Manager	December 2025
	13	6.8	Practical Support and Guidance for our customers		
9	14	6.8	Customer Support - Review the annual contact requirement for each household, recognising contact with contractors and other NKDC Teams.	Neighbourhood Manager	December 2025
10	14	6.8	Customer Support - Deliver awareness training to staff about the most common health and wellbeing challenges, Dementia, depression (including PTSD); poor sight and reduced hearing e.g Dementia Friends and an opportunity for accreditation by the Alzheimer's Society;	Human Resources/ Housing Wellbeing Strategy Manager	April 2024
11	15	6.8	Promotion of the Home Contents Insurance offer to tenant (currently Crystal Insurance). Including increased presence on the NKDC website. Tenants Handbook and At Home.	Resident & Community Engagement	October 2023
	16	7.0	The homes we provide		
	16	7.1	Adaptions to tenants' homes		
12	17	7.1	Adaptations – raising Officer awareness of the basic simple aids for daily living (SADL) and adaptations available. Ensure awareness of the tenure free, no cost, free WellbeingLincs low level support service, and the availability of SADL.	Human Resources /Housing Wellbeing Support Manager	April 2024

13	17	7.1	Create a procedure to ensure consistent identification, removal, and reuse of stairlifts (and other suitable adaptations or SADL) installed by NKDC in tenants' homes. Collection data on the success of utilising removed units (or parts thereof) for re-installation, maintenance, and parts. To include cost savings and reduced wait times achieved. (Note: Countywide changes to funding expected)	Contract and Commissioning Manager	December 2024
	18	7.3	Visitability		
14	18	7.3	Investigate inclusion of 'visitability' design standards, where possible, when retrofitting homes.	Repairs and Planned Maintenance Manager	April 2024
15	19	7.3	Investigate application of 'walkability' when reviewing landscaping and aesthetics of outdoor shared spaces.	Repairs and Planned Maintenance Manager/ Neighbourhood Services Manager	April 2025
	19	7.4	When a property becomes void		
16	19	7.4	Investigate inclusion of 'visitability' design standards, where possible, when properties become empty (void).	Repairs and Planned Maintenance Manager	March 2025
17	19	7.4	Void Standard review - Consider opportunities to create more inclusive homes when reviewing the current Void Standard e.g. installing a Level Access Shower/Wet room as standard in bungalows and ground floor flats, adding additional higher level electrical sockets etc.	Housing Services Manager/TLP/ Repairs and Planned Maintenance Manager	December 2023

18	19	7.4	Considering using the opportunity of a void inspection to record more individual information about the property – egress limitations, distance to parking, access to rear garden etc.	Repairs and Planned Maintenance Manager	December 2023
	20	7.5	Retro fitting existing properties		
19	20	7.5	Retro fitting - Incorporate additional options in recognition of the needs of current or future occupants. Revise the standard to include additional low cost options for increasing the flexibility of the accommodation as standard also see 7.4 above for potential areas of investigation.	Repairs and Planned Maintenance Manager/ Housing Renewal Officer	April 2024
20	20	7.5	Parking spaces on plot to be of sufficient size to accommodate needs of wheelchair users and parent and toddler parking	New Build and Development Manager	April 2024
	21	7.6	Building new homes		
21	21		Consider developing to M4(2) standard for 100% of new build homes.	New Build and Development Manager	April 2025
22	22	7.6	On plot parking spaces to be wide enough to accommodate wheelchair users, and parent parking needs.	New Build and Development Manager	April 2025
23	22	7.6	Investigate additional low cost opportunities for inclusion of ‘walkability’ standards to new housing schemes.	New Build and Development Manager	April 2025

	22	7.7	Extra Care Schemes		
24	22	7.7	Ensure continued investigation of best practice to deliver an Extra Care Scheme that meets the current and future aspiration of our tenants, including advances in technology designed to help maintain wellbeing and safety at home.	New Build and Development Manager / Housing Wellbeing Manager	Dec 2025
	24	8.0	Listening to our Tenants		
	24	8.1	Tenancy Strategy		
25	24		Monitor for and incorporate changes emerging from the implementation of the Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper and other relevant legislative changes	Housing Regulatory Assurance	On going
		8.2	Local Offers		
26	24	8.2	Refresh the Local Offers made to tenants.	Housing Regulatory Assurance	Dec 2023
	26	9.0	Rural Isolation and Contributing to the Local Community		
		9.1	Former Sheltered Housing Scheme Lounges		
27	27	9.1	Complete the options appraisal for provision of Communal Lounges on former sheltered housing schemes.	Housing Wellbeing Strategy Manager	Dec 2024
		10.0	Where next?		
28	28	10.0	Annual review of progress to deliver this action plan and revision of actions where necessary to meet changes in legislation and customer profile.	Housing Wellbeing Strategy Manager	Annually



North Kesteven
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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