

The Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk Homelessness Strategy 2015-19

Introduction

The Borough Council is the statutory housing authority for Kings Lynn and West Norfolk. It has a duty to review homelessness in the area and develop a Homelessness Strategy to:

- Address the causes of homelessness
- Introduce initiatives to prevent homelessness
- Secure sufficient accommodation for homeless people or those who may become homeless
- Ensure appropriate support to prevent repeat homelessness.

Anyone can become homeless or threatened with the loss of their home – from all walks of life. Many people face housing and other problems that could ultimately lead to homelessness. That is why our Homelessness Strategy and commitment to preventing homelessness is important.

There have been many successes in tackling and minimising homelessness in recent years. These have been achieved through the Council's commitment and the continuing work in delivering homelessness solutions – both directly by the Council and in partnership with others.

This Homelessness Strategy is evidence based and has been developed in consultation with partners and residents to ensure they have their say and can play a role in both shaping and delivering our future priorities.

The Strategy sets out our local context and considers the challenges and opportunities that are likely to come forward in the next 5 years. The Homelessness Action Plan sets out our priorities for future action

Many of the challenges facing us are outside the direct control of the Council and we will work in partnership with others to find local solutions.

The Borough Council's approach will focus on:

- Early intervention to prevent homelessness whenever possible
- Working to ensure an appropriate supply of good quality affordable accommodation in both private and social sectors
- Working together to support households with more complex needs

Homelessness

Contrary to popular perceptions, most homeless people do not live on the street. People may have access to some form of shelter some of the time, but lack a stable, long term, settled home.

Rough sleeping is the starkest form of homelessness and is a harmful and risky lifestyle. It is linked to wider social and health issues and living on the streets is likely to increase these problems. However, at the present time it is comparatively rare in West Norfolk.

Some people who can't access housing live in improvised dwellings – tents, sheds. This can happen in residential areas, on other land including car parks. There have been several instances of this identified in Kings Lynn but it can also occur in rural areas.

More often, people are forced with frequent moves from one temporary accommodation to another – people with no settled home. There are also many households that share accommodation or live in unsatisfactory housing.

Whilst it is the case that anyone can become homeless, it is possible to identify people who are most likely to become homeless. Specific groups at risk of homelessness include young people leaving the care of a local authority, those leaving prison, people suffering from domestic violence, those with a mental health or substance misuse problem, those from troubled families, people on low incomes and/or insecure employment and those who are in debt. There is a strong correlation between homelessness and deep social exclusion.

Preventing homelessness goes further than the keys to the door. Particularly for vulnerable and young people, there is a need to provide support to help build life skills and build independence. This can ensure people have the ability to attain and retain a settled home. This can reduce both repeated homelessness and admissions to institutional or residential care. For example, as a result of their complex needs, single homeless people disproportionately use acute local health services.

Housing in King's Lynn & West Norfolk

The population of West Norfolk has increased by 8.9% (over 12000 people) between 2001 and 2011 (see Table 1). The most marked changes are increases in those aged over 60 and those aged 15 to 29 – 15 to 29 increased by over 20% from 18,984 to 22,858; those over 60 increased by over 21% from 37,095 to 45,094. During the same time the number of dwellings increased by 17% from 63,242 to 73,962.

Table 1

Dwelling and population change in the Borough of King's Lynn and West Norfolk

	2001	2011	Change
Population	135,345	147,451	+12106 (+9%)
Dwellings	63,242	73,962	+10,720 (+17%)
Second homes	ND	3,115	ND

The vast majority of residents are able to secure suitable accommodation without the involvement of the Borough Council. However, there is an increasing number of households approaching the council for assistance.

Housing tenure in the area is changing. There has been an increase in rented housing – especially the private rented sector. In the period 2006-2013, the number of households

renting privately increased from 11.6% to 16.7% and those in social rented sector marginally from 38.6% to 39.5%. There was also a marked reduction in owner occupied households with a mortgage – 36% in 2006 compared to 29.2% in 2013

There are just over 9,000 Housing Association homes in the area. As at 31 March 2014, 2,630 households were recorded on the Housing Register and this includes 860 existing social housing tenants seeking alternative accommodation. At 31/03/14 there were 1,332 families, 802 single people and 496 singles and couples aged over 60 on the Housing Register (see Table 4).

702 properties were let in 2013/14 of which 323 were family type accommodation, 112 were one bedroom flats for single people, 140 were one or two-bedroom bungalows for those aged over 60 or those under 60 with medical need for ground floor accommodation (see Table 2) and 127 were flats and bungalows in sheltered schemes for those aged over 60. 31% of all properties were let to existing social housing tenants. There is an under-supply of two-bedroom houses in the social rented sector, notably in King’s Lynn with only 18 being let in 2013/14 (see Table 3) compared to 35 in 2012/13 and 63 in 2011/12. During 2013/14 an average of 127 bids (expressions of interest) were received for each two-bedroom house vacancy in King’s Lynn compared to an average of 33 bids per vacancy across all property types and locations in the borough.

Table 2 – lettings by accommodation type

Number let	Type of accommodation
323	Family-type accommodation
112	One-bedroom flats
140	Bungalows
127	Sheltered accommodation for over 60s
702	Total

Table 3 - two-bedroom houses in King’s Lynn

Year	Number
2013/2014	18
2012/2013	35
2011/2012	63

Table 4 – household composition on Housing Register

Household type	Number
Family	1332
Single Person	802
Singles and couples over 60	496

Homelessness in King’s Lynn & West Norfolk – the facts

The number of people being accepted as having a full statutory homeless duty has increased over the last year – 106 households in 2013/14 compared to 81 in 2012/13. In total 336 homeless applications were taken in 2013/14 and 287 decisions were made, compared to 213 and 185 in the previous year (see Table 5).

Any significant growth in homeless presentations is of concern to the Borough Council and this will be kept under close review. In all, over 1,000 households approached the Housing Options Team for advice and assistance during the last year.

Of those being accepted as statutory homeless, the main causes are loss of home due to exclusions from family or friends' homes, relationship breakdown or the loss of a private sector tenancy.

The majority of households accepted as statutory homeless are those with dependent children but there is an increasing trend for presentations and acceptances for younger and older people (see Table 6).

(Note that definitions are included in appendix at end of this document)

Table 5 – homelessness decisions

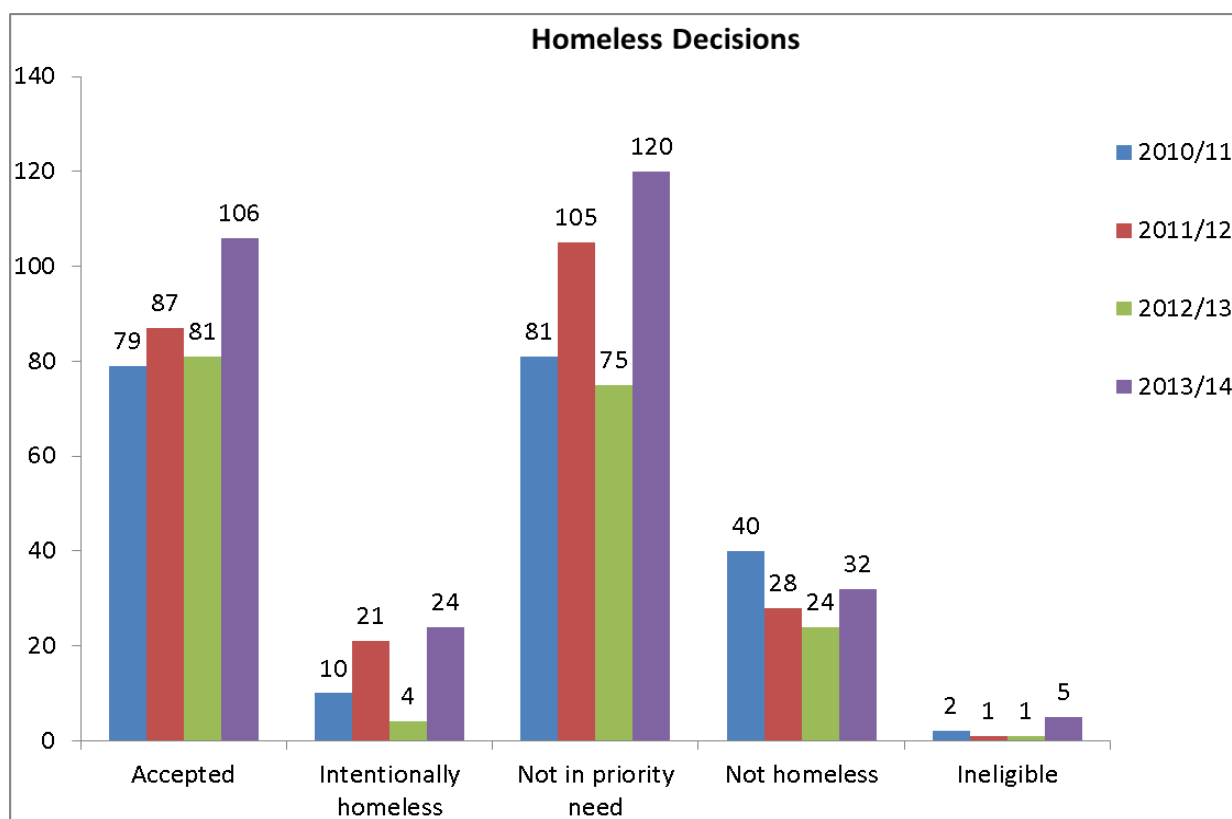


Table 6 – age of accepted homeless households

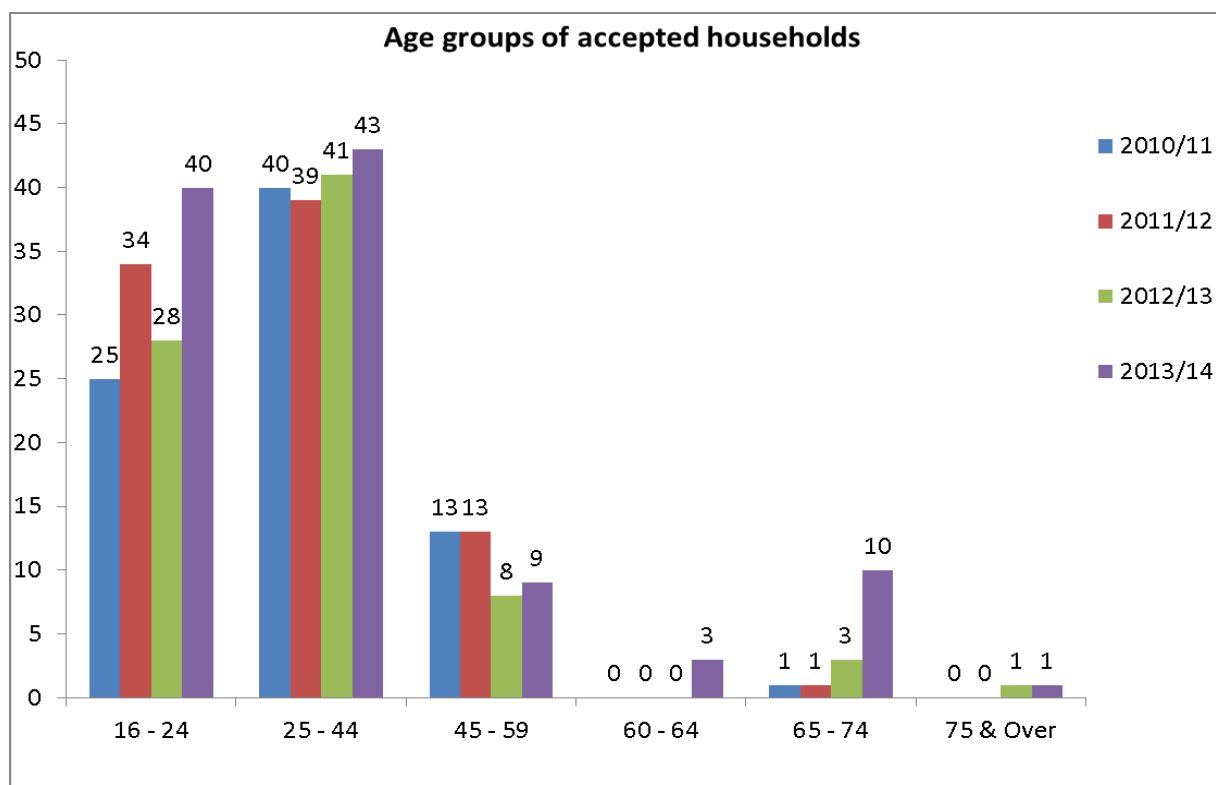


Table 7 – causes of homelessness (acceptances)

King's Lynn and West Norfolk	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Parents no longer able or willing to accommodate	9%	10%	9%	13%
Other relatives or friends no longer able or willing to accommodate	11%	13%	16%	16%
Non-violent relationship end	11%	9%	19%	13%
Violent relationship end	16%	16%	20%	6%
Racial / other violence / harassment	1%	7%	1%	2%
Rent / mortgage arrears	9%	13%	9%	5%
Loss of private rented accom (Term of AST / Reasons other than term of AST)	33%	14%	23%	22%
Left institution or LA care	0%	8%	0%	8%
Other reason*	9%	10%	4%	16%

England	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Parents no longer able or willing to accommodate	20%	20%	18%	17%
Other relatives or friends no longer able or willing to accommodate	13%	14%	14%	13%
Non-violent relationship end	6%	6%	6%	5%
Violent relationship end	13%	12%	12%	12%
Rent / mortgage arrears	6%	6%	5%	6%
Loss of private rented accom (Term of AST / Reasons other than term of AST)	21%	25%	28%	30%
Other reason*	21%	17%	17%	17%

*N.B. Left institution or LA care is combined with 'Other reason' in the England table

Homelessness in Kings Lynn and West Norfolk – issues and actions

Preventing homelessness

The Council's absolute priority is to prevent homelessness occurring by helping people resolve their housing problems and tackling barriers to obtaining accommodation. Homelessness was prevented for 426 households through the work of Housing Options Team and with partners in 2013/14. Examples include:-

- Early intervention and joint working with statutory and non-statutory agencies
- Assisting those at risk of homelessness to access the private rented sector by tenancy deposits or rent in advance
- Working with landlords at the pre-eviction stage including developing repayment plans, mediation and pre-eviction protocols in social housing
- Helping those at risk of homelessness through increased priority for social housing via Insecure Accommodation Awards

The Council responds to cases of alleged harassment or eviction in the private rented sector and works with landlords and tenants to sustain tenancies in order to prevent homelessness occurring.

Of any council area in England, West Norfolk has the highest percentage of households living permanently in caravans. To date, no particular homelessness issues have arisen from people living in caravans or park homes but this will be kept under review.

The Council and its partners will continue to make best use of resources available including homelessness prevention funds and discretionary housing benefit subsidies as well as investment in staff through training to ensure good quality services and advice can be offered.

The growth in the private rented sector is likely to have been, at least in part, underpinned by historically low interest rates but there is a likelihood that there will be a gradual move towards more 'normal' levels of interest as the economic recovery continues. This could impact both on owner occupiers and landlords including some who may be forced to pass costs onto tenants or even to sell property and leave the sector.

Working with Orbit Housing Association, the Council has offered a mortgage rescue scheme to prevent owner occupiers facing repossession becoming homeless. 30 households who were threatened with homelessness have been assisted since 2010/11.

We work with partners to assist victims of domestic violence in both preventing homelessness where possible and responding at crisis point where necessary.

Access to housing – attaining and retaining a tenancy

There is increased demand on the rented sector and this will continue to dominate the homelessness and housing agenda in future years. There are signs that some private landlords may be increasingly unwilling to offer tenancies to those on benefits.

Separately, the ability to maintain a successful tenancy is an issue for some households. Feedback from partners suggests that:-

- Lifestyles were seen as one cause – involving chaotic lifestyles, substance misuse, being pressured by friends and their behaviour – such as misplaced loyalties including responsibility for a friend who is a visitor.
- Lack of basic financial capacity, money, prioritisation and debt management/ previous debt, rent arrears can also threaten the ability to retain a successful tenancy.
- Young single people, especially men, were highlighted as having special difficulties in gaining accommodation. The question as to whether younger people under 25 should be able to access social housing has also been raised.

In order to address some of these issues three shared houses have been developed with Freebridge Community Housing and Broadland Housing Association – all of which were previously empty thus making best use of existing housing. The shared houses meet good housing standards and offer a range of support and a focus on training towards employment. The aim is to help people gain independence in the longer term, thus preventing them going through a ‘revolving door’ and back to homelessness again.

Household income, debt and impact of welfare reform

National welfare spending is reducing and this includes housing and council tax support and other welfare benefits. This has an impact on those people on who are partially or totally dependent on benefits for their household income. It is important to recognise that housing benefit changes affect those who claim the benefit due to low incomes and not just those on out of work benefits.

Younger people have been affected by the single room rent restrictions on benefit paid and this has been extended from those under 25 to those under 35 years old. This is likely to lead to a need for more shared accommodation. The Shared Room Rate allowance which is set by the Valuation Office Agency appears lower in our area than other comparable authorities and is cited as a barrier for younger single people on low incomes being able to access or retain accommodation.

There have been changes restricting housing benefit to tenants in the social rented sector in relation to number of bedrooms in their property compared to household composition and size. These have impacted on over 1,000 households locally. Housing Associations are working directly with their tenants to try to resolve any issues arising such as rent arrears. The Government has made some additional funding available to enable the Council to award a Discretionary Housing Allowance. This enables additional payments to be made to some applicants following an affordability assessment of household income and expenditure.

Some larger families have had benefits reduced as a result of a cap on total level of benefits paid to one household.

As a consequence of the need to minimise the impact of these factors on homelessness work between Housing Associations, Stonham Housing and the Council to support those potentially threatened with eviction in the social sector – helping people resolve household budgeting, debt and other issues - has been a high priority. This prevents homelessness and has, to date, been successful. 161 households were assisted via the protocol in 2013/14 and there were no cases of homeless acceptances due to loss of a social tenancy.

The plans to introduce Universal Credit and payments directly to claimants, monthly in arrears is causing concern amongst many social landlords in light of the potential impact on budgeting and debt, increasing risks of homelessness amongst households with poor budgeting and financial skills. Currently social landlords receive rental payments direct. This will ultimately be extended to all working age households in receipt of benefits and is due to commence in West Norfolk in 2015 – initially with single people of working age.

Department for Work and Pensions sanctions have also been cited as an issue affecting household income and the ability to meet rent payments.

Given the above and general constraint on incomes, budgeting, individual and household debt is likely to be a continued challenge for the future for low income households.

In our consultations, the issue of debt was highlighted as an increasing issue in creating homelessness and preventing people from accessing accommodation – in both private and social rented sectors. This includes moves from temporary homeless accommodation. The issue of debt, household income and financial awareness needs a multi agency assessment and response. The need to try to educate young people at school was also highlighted as a potential initiative that could help prepare people for their housing journey through life and expectations on them.

Changes in public sector policy and finance

There are continued national reductions on local authority budgets. The Council has a firm financial footing but further reductions in grant from Government are expected throughout the period covered by this Strategy. This will inevitably impact upon the level of resources the council can devote to this area of work. Containing costs in meeting homelessness obligations is business critical to the Council.

The Homelessness Prevention Payment from the Department of Communities and Local Government is not guaranteed beyond 2015. This Fund supports expenditure on preventing homelessness in King's Lynn & West Norfolk.

The Localism Act offered flexibilities for local authorities to discharge their homelessness responsibilities by securing good quality, well managed, affordable private rented homes and the Council will make use of this where possible in meeting homelessness obligations.

Groups to whom Council's will award reasonable preference in allocating social housing are outlined within national policy but it is for each housing authority to adopt a Local Social Housing Allocations Policy in consultation with partners such as Housing Associations. The reality is that the majority of people on the Housing Register may never be offered a housing association home due to the high demand in comparison to property available to let. The Social Housing Allocation Policy is kept under review. Changes were made in 2013 and 2014.

Changes have also taken place in social housing. New social housing is increasingly let on Affordable Rent levels (up to 80% of market value) and on Flexible (fixed term) tenancies. The Council adopted a Tenancy Strategy in 2013.

Increasing supply and making best use of existing housing

New Homes

The global banking crisis had an impact on mortgage availability throughout the UK and reduced confidence in the housing market. Inevitably the impact was felt in West Norfolk.

As a direct consequence there was a downturn in new homes built in the area – including social housing. Whilst there are clear indications that the housing market is now recovering with a more active mortgage market and a pick-up in the construction sector. There were 160 new affordable homes available in 2010-11 compared to just 30 in 2013-14.

The downturn in the number of new affordable homes built was driven by two main factors. Firstly, as the overall numbers of new private homes built for sale reduced, the number of affordable homes that would have been required through the planning system also reduced.

Secondly, the capital funding changes introduced through the Homes and Communities Agency from 2010 included reduced grant levels to Housing Associations. These changes have impacted upon the investment decision of some social housing providers. Whilst delivery has been more challenging, the downturn did provide some new investment opportunities as sites became available that would have previously been too expensive for social sector providers. It is evident that things will continue to change such as more competition for sites as confidence in housing improves.

In the context of changes to the Affordable Housing Investment regime there are likely to be more challenges ahead and it is unlikely there will be a return to approaches that rely on significant levels of capital grant funding from central government.

On a more positive note there are clear indications that the number of new affordable homes built will begin to rise in 2014/15.

155 new homes are planned to be built between 2014-18 through a joint venture between Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk and Norfolk County Council. The Council will also consider further schemes to bring forward homes for sale, private rent and social housing.

Existing Homes

Working with partners there have been a number of successful initiatives that have seen vacant sites and empty properties brought back into use as affordable rented accommodation. Opportunities have been taken to lever in investment from Central Government to deliver housing to meet local needs.

A major regeneration scheme at Hillington Square, Kings Lynn is being undertaken by Freebridge Community Housing to invest in existing housing. The scale and extent of this work has required the 'decanting' of a significant number of properties in order to allow the works to proceed. The current year will see the reoccupation of the first phase of this programme.

Securing accommodation at crisis point

Whilst the Borough Council makes strenuous efforts to prevent homelessness, inevitably this is not possible in every case. Consequently, it is necessary for the Council to address the immediate housing needs of some homeless households.

The use of temporary accommodation, in particular bed and breakfast accommodation, has been successfully minimised in recent years – improving the quality of life for homeless households and reducing costs to the public purse.

49 households were in temporary accommodation on 31 March 2014. However, of these, 48 households were living in self-contained accommodation. There was just one household in bed and breakfast accommodation on 31 March 2014.

This has been achieved through support from Housing Associations and especially Freebridge Community Housing and Broadland Housing Association in providing temporary accommodation offers to homeless households in appropriate cases and the provision of hostel accommodation for up to 20 households.

The use of temporary accommodation and the ability for people to move to settled homes will be kept under close review.

Meeting needs of households with more complex needs

In reviewing homelessness issues with partners, certain people and household types were identified as having limited access to housing and associated services.

These include people on low incomes, without regular work, who lack a proven track record, or have previous failed tenancies, or who experience mental health, or engage in substance misuse, are unlikely to meet lettings agents/landlords vetting procedures and so cannot obtain a private tenancy.

Those with complex needs, mental health and undiagnosed learning difficulties, addiction, negative behaviour, poor parenting and life skills face particular problems in accessing and retaining stable homes.

There is a range of services and accommodation for vulnerable people and those with complex needs – provided by a number of organisations with different funding streams including the Pathways to Investment Project through the Council working in partnership with the Purfleet Trust.

A fundamental review of services supported through the former Supporting People programme is under way at County level. This continues to develop options and solutions to deliver savings. This may result in the loss of funding and hence housing and support solutions for homeless people in the future. Should this outcome occur, this will inevitably result in increased pressure on Borough Council housing services.

Nonetheless the Clinical Commissioning Group are committed to working with partners including the Council and to maximise the value of the Supporting People Programme including being open to new ideas.

On a more positive front a strong network of partnerships and services is in place to support homeless people and those threatened with homelessness. This includes Norfolk County Council, Probation Service, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Norfolk Constabulary and immigration, as well as Housing Associations and voluntary organisations.

There is joint work between Children's Social Care and the Council to ensure that young people are appropriately supported if they are homeless; families are supported if they are homeless or families are supported to look after children at home. There is a commitment to close working on preparing care leavers for their future life and housing options – especially engaging with the Care Leaving Service being formed within Norfolk County Council in 2015/16.

Tackling rough sleeping

There have been significant reductions in the number of rough sleepers from approximately 20 in 2010 to just 3 during the rough sleeper assessment in November 2013.

There has been good partnership working around Emergency Direct Access Beds – which provide an overnight bed – and with other partner agencies to intervene when people are found to be sleeping rough. Where possible, we will help people re-connect back to areas where family and other support may help people gain accommodation and independence for the future.

A local Norfolk-wide scheme based on No Second Night Out initiative has been introduced. Fundamentally the scheme hopes to prevent a second night on the streets for those sleeping rough. The Council is the lead authority for this initiative in Norfolk.

However, entrenched rough sleepers do not respond to traditional methods of re-settlement with repeat homelessness and returning back to the streets. Specific responses are needed for this client group – who often have complex problems including substance misuse and mental health issues.

Our future priorities

Looking to the future we need to continue to review and adapt services and provision to prevent homelessness and respond in the most effective way. We consulted on our Homelessness Strategy and future priorities in 2014. This Strategy and the associated Action Plan have taken into account the views expressed during consultations. Our future actions are based upon our approach:

Priority 1 - Early intervention to prevent homelessness whenever possible **We will work to**

- Review ways in which our services are delivered, including how information and advice is available to public and partners.
- Maximise the role of the Homechoice scheme
- Minimise homelessness due to the end of Flexible (fixed term) Tenancies
- Review the possibility of joint mediation for families
- Review debt and income advice services
- Prepare for implementation of Universal Credit
- Review Debt and Tenancy Sustainment Policies with Registered Providers
- Maximise homelessness preventions through Home Options approach
- Implement discharge of duty through Private Rented Sector Offers where possible
- Minimise the number of homelessness acceptances
- Minimise the number of households in temporary accommodation

Priority 2 - Working to ensure an appropriate supply of good quality affordable accommodation in both private and social sectors

We will work to

- Review funding mechanisms to bring forward development
- Respond to funding opportunities as they arise
- Explore opportunities to invest
- Make best use of social housing
- Deliver the empty homes scheme
- Review opportunities to develop the Shared Housing Schemes
- Secure sufficient and appropriate temporary accommodation
- Use our planning and housing powers to work with partner organisations to bring forward new housing
- Work in partnership to bring forward unviable sites
- Increase new social housing completions

Priority 3 - Working together to support households with more complex needs **We will work to**

- Ensure housing pathways and protocols are reviewed with partners
- Seek homelessness to be recognised as a priority for Health and Well Being Board
- Improve data sharing across organisations
- Develop suitable housing and support for those with complex needs
- Review the impact of No Second Night Out
- Continue to work with organisations that assist rough sleepers to reconnect, re-engage and leave the streets
- Respond to any funding opportunities as they occur
- Undertake an annual rough sleeper assessment

**Full details of our priority actions are contained in the Homelessness Strategy
Action Plan 2015-19**

Background

National and statutory context

This Homelessness Strategy responds to Acts of Parliament and statutory guidance notably:

Housing Act 1996 Part 7 sets out the legal tests to decide whether a housing duty is owed.

Homelessness Act 2002 requires Councils to have a Homelessness Strategy and outlines a range of duties for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. This includes advice and assistance, the provision of temporary accommodation and a main housing duty to accommodate those who are unintentionally homeless and in priority need.

The Homelessness Code of Guidance 2006 explains how duties should be implemented.

Statutory Guidance on the provision of accommodation for 16-17 year olds 2010 sets out arrangements for housing and social services departments

Localism Act 2011 includes measures for ensuring that social housing is made available to people in greatest need and a power to meet homelessness obligations in the private rented sector.

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 intends to increase work incentives and increase individual responsibility for money management and introduces changes to housing benefit and moving towards Universal Credit.

Making Every Contact Count 2012 details how the Government expects all local services to work together to prevent homelessness and concentrate on early intervention for groups at risk of homelessness. It sets out 10 challenges for local authorities:

1. Adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services.
2. Actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs.
3. Offer a Housing Options prevention service including written advice to all clients.
4. Adopt a No Second Night Out model or effective local alternative.
5. Have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support.
6. Develop a suitable private sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support for both clients and landlords.
7. Actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions, including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme.
8. Have a Homelessness Strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to changing needs.

9. Not place any young person aged 16 or 17 years old in bed and breakfast accommodation.
10. Not place any families in bed and breakfast accommodation unless it is an emergency and then for no longer than 6 weeks.

Case law The courts are frequently asked to decide disputes between applicants and local authorities. Decisions of the Court of Appeal and above are binding.

Responsibilities

Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk is the statutory housing authority whose functions include housing allocations and homelessness as detailed in Housing Acts 1996 and 2002 together with associated statutory guidance, code of guidance and case law as detailed above.

Adult Care and Children's Services Authorities are under a duty to take the homelessness strategy into account when carrying out their functions (Housing Act 2002 and English Code of Guidance).

Registered Providers are under a duty to co-operate with local housing authorities to assist them in performing their allocations and homelessness functions if requested and so far as is reasonably practicable (Housing Act 1996) and to co-operate with local housing authorities strategic housing functions, duty to meet housing needs and in meeting homelessness duties (Homes and Communities Agency Regulatory Framework 2012).

Definitions

Acceptances: households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and falling within a priority need group (as defined by homelessness legislation) are referred to as statutory "acceptances". These households are consequently owed a main homelessness duty by a local housing authority. The main duty is to secure settled accommodation.

Decisions: refers to decisions taken of households that apply for assistance under the Housing and Homelessness Acts.

Priority need groups: include households with dependent children or a pregnant woman and people who are vulnerable in some way e.g. because of mental illness or physical disability. The priority need categories were extended by Order in January 2002 to include, additionally: applicants aged 16 or 17; applicants aged 18 to 20 who were previously in care; applicants vulnerable as a result of time spent in care, in custody, or in HM Forces, and applicants vulnerable as a result of having to flee their home because of violence or the threat of violence (in addition to domestic violence, which is one of the original priority need groups). It is not possible to establish precisely how much of the changed profile of acceptances is attributable to the Order. Previously, some local authorities would have accepted households that fell within the new categories as having a priority need because of "another special reason". This applies in particular to applicants such as vulnerable young people, and people fleeing domestic violence. Where applicants are accepted as homeless because of an emergency, for example fire or flood, this will always be recorded as the main priority need category.