

# Review of the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-2021



## Introduction

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

Under section 2(1) of the 2002 Homelessness Act a homelessness review means an assessment by the local housing authority of:

- a) The levels, and likely future levels, of homelessness in their district;
- b) The activities which are carried out for any of the following purposes (or which contribute to achieving any of them):
  - i) Preventing homelessness in the housing authority's district;
  - ii) Securing accommodation that is or will be available for people in the district who are or may become homeless; and
  - iii) Providing support for people in the district: – who are or may become homeless; or – who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.
- c) The resources available to the housing authority, the social services authority for the district, other public authorities, voluntary organisations and other persons for the activities outlined in (b) above.

The Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy published in November 2017 is a joint strategy across the seven district councils (Boston, East Lindsey, Lincoln, North Kesteven, South Holland, South Kesteven and West Lindsey.) The strategy was endorsed by Lincolnshire County Council as a commitment to join working. By having a joint strategy, we could work in partnership to achieve our priorities and pool resources for countywide projects.

This Homelessness Strategy Review provides a snapshot of the people who have approached us for help during the lifespan of the Strategy. It considers what we have achieved, the pathways and partnerships that we have in place, and feedback from our stakeholders. This will inform our priorities and objectives for the new Homelessness Strategy.

We can evidence progress statistically using H-CLiC return data, but we also have qualitative data that was collated through a stakeholder survey. In partnership there have been many achievements over the last 5 years including:

- The countywide introduction of the Duty to Refer including the production of the Lincolnshire Prison protocol.
- The response to Covid-19 Everyone In and Protect and Vaccinate government initiatives to ensure rough sleepers were protected across the county, a total of 215 individuals were accommodated.
- A decrease in rough sleeping by over 50% over the last 2 years.
- A successful bid for government funding for 3 Rough Sleeper Initiative Projects that are working well across the county.

- Implemented the Housing Reduction Act preventing over 14,000 households becoming homeless over the last 5 years across the county.
- Delivered the ACTion Lincs project to provide long term life changing support for an identified group of vulnerable and complex need rough sleepers, across the county using Housing First principles.

## National picture

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

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

Key measures include:

- Extending the period during which an authority should treat someone as threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days.
- A new duty to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants threatened with homelessness, regardless of priority need.
- A new duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible homeless applicants, regardless of priority need. This help could be, for example, the provision of a rent deposit or debt advice.

- A new duty on public services to notify a local authority if they come into contact with someone they think may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

The “Everyone In” initiative prompted by the Covid-19 pandemic accommodated over 37,000 individuals experiencing or at risk of rough sleeping between March 2020 and January 2021 across the UK. This early response is calculated to have prevented substantial numbers of COVID-19 infections, hospitalisations, and deaths among the target cohort. Substantial reductions in rough sleeping of 37% and radically reduced reliance on the use of night shelters were also achieved as a result.

The pandemic response also improved joint working between the homelessness and health sectors. The Protect and Vaccinate initiative prompted by the Plan B restrictions gave £24.9m to support all local authorities across England to find appropriate accommodation for people sleeping rough and boosting vaccination rates across this vulnerable population.

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

## **Partnerships**

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

### **Voluntary and Community Sector**

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

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

## **Housing Related Support (HRS)**

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

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

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

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

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

### **Rough Sleepers Initiatives (RSI's)**

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

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

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

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

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

### **Care Leavers and Young People**

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

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

### **Prison Leavers**

The Lincolnshire Prison Release Protocol is an agreement between all Lincolnshire Housing Authorities, the prison and the probation service.

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

## **Domestic Abuse**

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

## **Vulnerable Adults Panel**

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

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

## **Team Around the Adult (TAA)**

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

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

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

## **Non-commissioned accommodation**

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

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

temporary and move on accommodation.

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

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

### **Drug and Alcohol Substance Misuse Service**

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

The grant will be used to deliver substance misuse treatment services for people sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough through an assertive outreach model. This will be delivered by the county's treatment and recovery providers in collaboration with housing, the voluntary sector and district councils.

In addition to evidence-based drug and alcohol treatment, vital wraparound support will be provided to improve access to and engagement with treatment.

### **HHH**

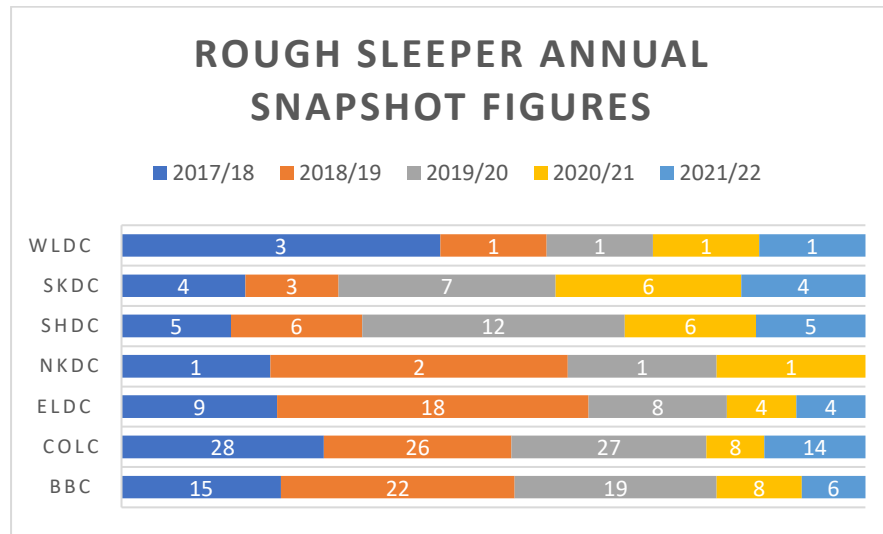
The Holistic Health for Homeless team in Lincoln works with individuals to conduct holistic reviews, and best support individuals with both physical and mental health. The team work alongside other clinicians and practitioners locally to ensure smooth transitions when accessing services. By having this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

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

## County snapshot of Statistics

### Rough sleeping

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



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

Rough sleeper numbers may be lower in Lincolnshire compared to other counties but still presents a challenge locally, particularly given the rural nature of the county in terms of provision and accessibility of services. The issue, no matter how great needs to be addressed,

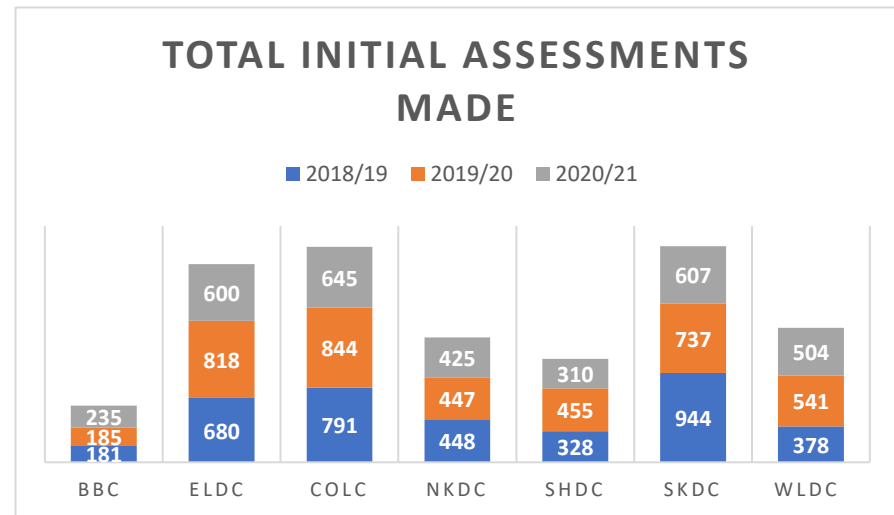
and Lincolnshire has tackled this head on with three rough sleeper initiatives operating across the county.

### Rough sleeper projections

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

### Initial assessments

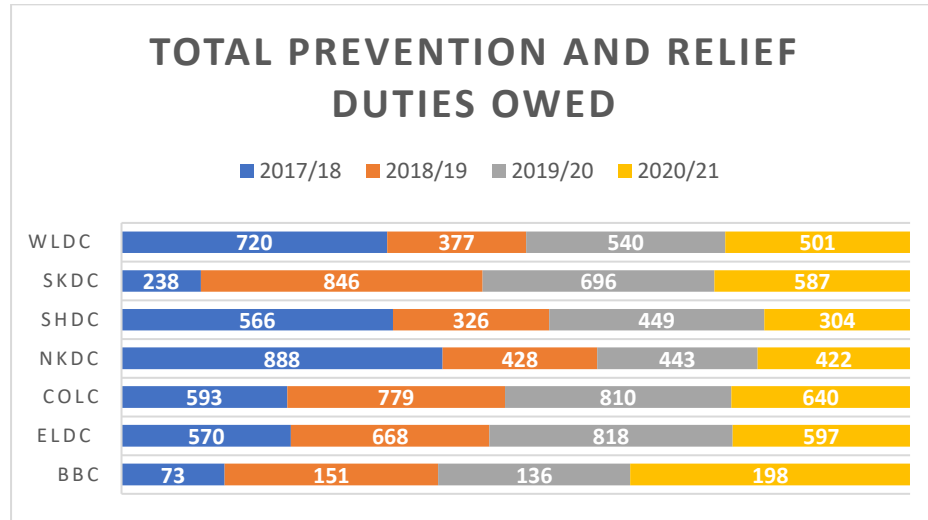
A total of 11,103 initial assessments were completed between 2018 and 2021 to determine if a duty was owed to those presenting as homeless or threatened with homelessness.





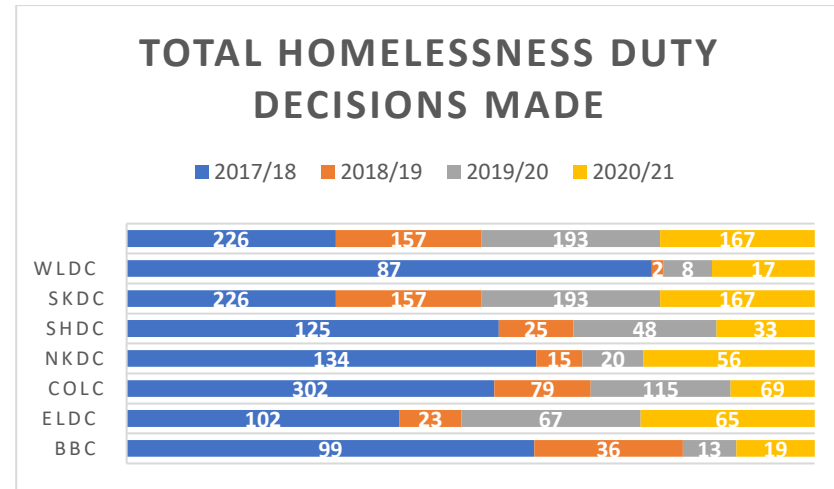
### Prevention and Relief of Homelessness

Following those initial assessments 14,364 cases were owed a prevention or relief duty to try and resolve their housing issue.



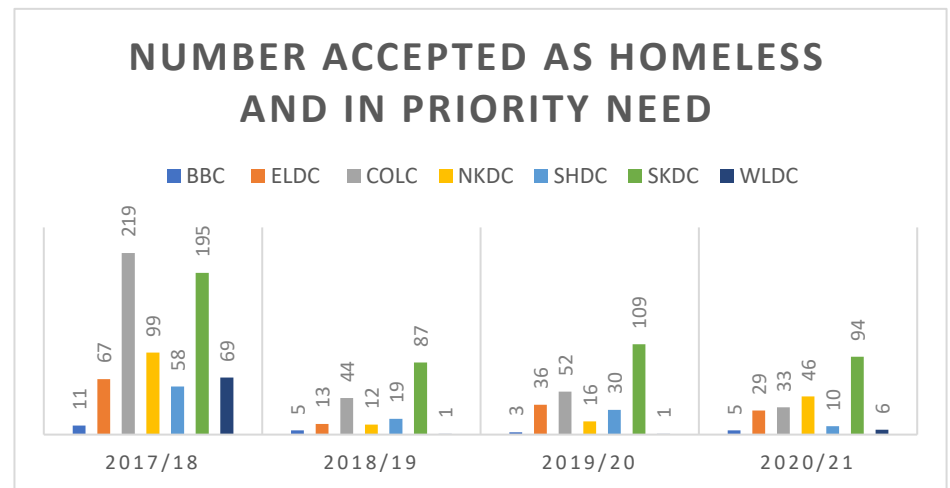
### Homelessness Duty Decisions

For those whose housing situation could not be resolved by prevention or relief duties, 2,301 cases were assessed to determine an acceptance of homelessness. This shows the impact prevention duties are making as only 16% of cases did not have their housing issue resolved by a prevention or relief duty, resulting in them presenting as homeless. The number of duty decisions made have also reduced by a quarter over the 4 year period further demonstrating the impact of prevention and relief duties.



### Priority Need

Of those 2,301 cases presenting of homeless 1,369 were accepted as being homeless and in priority need and owed a duty. The number of those accepted as homeless and in priority need has decreased by 31% since 2017 showing the impact of homelessness prevention.



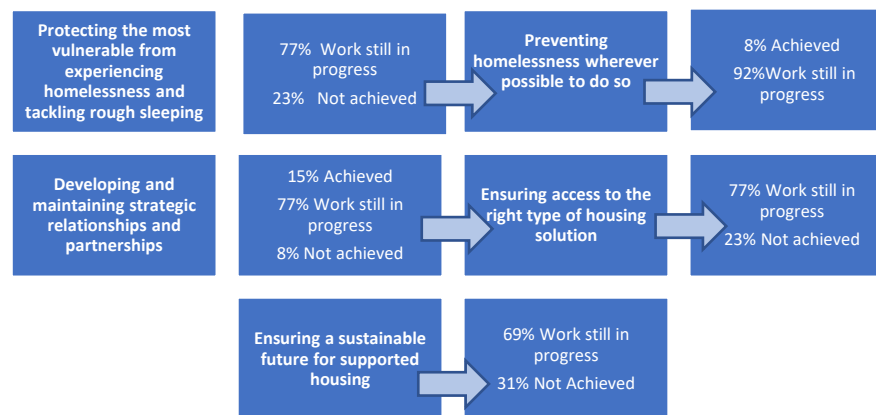
## Strategy Priorities

The strategy had five main priorities to focus on:

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

### Achievements over the last 5 years on the priorities

We asked stakeholders to rate the progress on the five priorities, the graphic overleaf shows the results. It needs to be noted that due to the nature of homelessness and rough sleeping the priorities above will never be 100% achieved. However, it is useful to gauge the progress that has been made and highlight areas to focus on going forward.



The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017 came into effect on 3rd April 2018 changing the way services are provided to homeless people by imposing a duty to prevent and relieve homelessness. This is reflected by the feedback as being the priority that has been rated as having the most progress on.

Developing partnerships is another factor rated highly but the pandemic halted some groups meeting which could account for the not achieved responses. Protecting the most vulnerable and ensuring access to housing received the same ratings showing that there is still work to be completed. Increasing the provision and longevity of supported housing remains a challenge across the county, so it is expected that this priority has been rated as having the most progress still to achieve.

In terms of projects and actions that have been achieved over the last 5 years under each of the priorities there have been many successes including:

### **Protect**

- ✓ A decrease in rough sleeping by over 50% over the last 2 years
- ✓ Successful bid for government funding for 3 Rough Sleeper Initiative Projects that are working well across the county.
- ✓ Introduced a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol to provide emergency assistance for rough sleepers when weather conditions pose a risk to health.
- ✓ Increased the provision of single persons accommodation to improve housing options.
- ✓ During the pandemic a total of 215 rough sleepers were accommodated through the Everyone In and Protect and Vaccinate schemes
- ✓ Partners across the county system, went to great lengths to maximise take up of the Covid-19 vaccine amongst the homeless cohort. HRS staff helped facilitate, promote, and encourage their service users to attend drop-ins too.
- ✓ Enabled all rough sleepers to have a postcode so that they can access post and the ability to setup a bank account
- ✓ Introduction of the Lincs Prison Protocol to ensure prison leavers have safe and suitable accommodation on release.
- ✓ Provision of Hospital and Housing Link Workers.
- ✓ Referring the most vulnerable to multi agency groups to ensure they can access the support they need.

### **Prevent**

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

### **Partnership**

- ✓ In partnership with LCC and providers implemented the Housing Related Support Service for supported accommodation and floating support for those either homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- ✓ Formed the Homelessness Strategy Partnership to work with housing providers, voluntary and community sector organisations, health professionals and Lincolnshire County Council to deliver together the actions of the Lincolnshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
- ✓ Fully engaged an effective Homelessness Cell working group to respond together to Covid-19 Everyone In and Protect and Vaccinate government initiatives.
- ✓ Raising awareness of the needs of people who are entrenched in rough sleeping and developing health services to meet their needs through the Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group.

### **Place**

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

### **Possibility**

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

### **Looking ahead our challenges**

The pandemic took services approach from proactive to reactive focussing on accommodating and protecting rough sleepers and has highlighted the ambition all partners have across the County to work together on the emerging challenges.

Through the consultation process with stakeholders the key challenges the new strategy will need to address include:

- The need to accommodate all rough sleepers across the county has highlighted the shortage of accommodation for single people and those with high support needs who struggle in a hostel environment.
- In offering everyone accommodation the Rough Sleeper Teams have engaged with more individuals and been able to offer support and understand their needs better so service provision can be changed to reflect this.
- An expected increase in both homelessness and rough sleeping as the cost of living continues to increase and people are not able to afford their rent or mortgage.
- Homes for Ukraine scheme may lead to increases in homelessness at the end of the scheme or if relationship with host breaks down.
- Tackling rogue landlords and conditions in the private rented sector.
- More support and provision for prison leavers on release.
- Improve pathways for sofa surfers.
- Ensuring consistency across the councils and open access to those all that present as homelessness especially those with language barriers.

- Getting the right support for people and for the long term not time bound.
- Gaining access to affordable Private Sector Housing.
- Enough provision for those not in priority need.
- Increased access to mental health and substance misuse services.
- Supported accommodation will have little throughput as service users are unable to move to suitable and affordable accommodation.
- Identifying the extent of hidden homelessness to enable access to accommodation and support.

The county is committed to working together on the next joint strategy 2022-2026 which will include the Rough Sleeping Strategy as a separate chapter to ensure workstreams are co-ordinated. Together with other agencies as part of the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategic Partnership a new delivery plan will be implemented to further reduce rough sleeping, prevent homelessness and provide accommodation and support to meet the needs across the county. The latest version of the delivery plan from the current strategy can be found on the next page, and remaining actions will be taken forward into the new strategy.

## Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy Delivery Plan 2021 - 2022

Priority Number	Title Activity	Activity Summary	Outcome
P1	Implement a county wide process to meet the new requirements of the Duty to Refer under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017	Develop an action plan that includes communication, information, training needs, protocols, and processes for a county wide approach.	Completed - through Homelessness Strategic Partnership (HSP) and Lincs Prison Release Protocol is in place
P2	Develop online information on how to get help or give help for Homelessness in Lincolnshire	Explore online platform options and implement, providing clear and accessible information on websites.	Completed - information on individual websites
P2	Reduce evictions in social housing/private rented sector.	Collate data, identify issues, and current challenges. Identify existing good practice and make recommendations to the HSP.	Superseded- Embargo on evictions implemented in 2020/21
P3	Reduce rough sleeping	Develop a clear action plan and review pathways to ensure adequate provision and support is available, across the county.	Completed - 3 Rough Sleeper Initiatives have been implemented covering the county.
P3	Deliver the Social Impact Bond project ACTION Lincs	To deliver long term life changing support for an identified group of vulnerable and complex need rough sleepers across the county using Housing First principles.	Completed - project concluded and evaluation report received by University of Lincoln.
P3	Review and improve SWEP provision across the county	Complete a review of existing provision and implement agreed recommendations to improve the co-ordination and provision of severe weather accommodation.	Completed - SWEP protocol published and agreed by all local authorities.
P3	Improve access to health and substance misuse treatment to prevent evictions.	Identify appropriate representation from LPFT for the HSP, liaise with Safeguarding Adult Board to discuss their prevention and early intervention strategy.	Completed - implemented Team Around the Adult (TAA)
P3	Identify opportunities to work with EEA Nationals with no recourse to public funds	Submit a bid to the Controlling Migration Fund for a 'Safe routes to reconnection' service	Completed - bid was successful and project has now concluded
P4	Improved access to private rented accommodation for those on benefits or low incomes	Consider and implement new initiatives that would secure engagement from private sector landlords.	A range of assistance is already in place, but no new initiatives have been implemented.
P4	Understand the need for supported accommodation in the county	Develop a clear evidence base that demonstrates the need for numbers and type of supported housing across the county.	In progress - evidence base to be provided by Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. Chapter on Homelessness to be included.

