

LINCOLN TENANTS' PANEL

Wednesday, 3 January 2018

10.30 am

**Committee Room 1 - City
Hall**

Lincoln Tenants Panel
member(s):

Debbie Rousseau, (Chair), Mick Barber (Vice-Chair),
Sheila Watkinson, Kathy Hill, Brian Botham, Caroline Coyle-Fox,
Sharron Elsom, Felicity Kelsall, Richard Kelly, Christine Lamming
and John Gooding.

Also in attendance: Chris Morton and Becky Scott

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4. Declarations of Interest	
Please note that, in accordance with the LTP Code of Conduct, when declaring interests LTP members must disclose the existence and nature of the interest and whether it is a disclosable or personal interests.	
5. Feedback from Executive Committee on 18 December 2017	
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10. LTP Publicity and Membership (Chris Morton)
11. Leasehold Matters (Felicity Kelsall)
12. LTP Training (Chris Morton)
13. Items for the Next Meeting
 - (a) Review of the Work Programme (All)
14. Non Agenda Items

Present:	Debbie Rousseau. (<i>in the Chair</i>)
Members:	Mick Barber (Vice-Chair), Sheila Watkinson, Kathy Hill, Brian Botham, Caroline Coyle-Fox, Sharron Elsom Christine Lamming and John Gooding.
Officers:	None.
Apologies for Absence:	Richard Kelly, John Ranshaw and Felicity Kelsall

Welcome and Apologies (Chair)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies received from Richard Kelly and Felicity Kelsall. The chair reminded everyone not to discuss meeting matters outside of the meeting.

Resignation of LTP Member for Moorland- Barrie Frith

RESOLVED the resignation of Barrie Frith be confirmed.

Confirmation of Minutes - 15/11/17

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2017 be confirmed.

Declarations of Interest (Chair)

RESOLVED non declared.

Election of Vice-Chair

Chris Morton advised that only one application had been received for Vice-Chair from Mick Barber. Caroline Coyle-Fox proposed that Mick Barber should be elected as Vice-Chair. This was seconded by Sharron Elsom.

RESOLVED Mick Barber be elected as Vice-Chair.

Next Generation Report

Stephanie Lonsdale-Ellis, Next Generation member gave a presentation on the report written by the group.

- a) Explained the background of the group and it was set up to increase the amount of younger residents involved. It is open to those between 18-35. She stated the panel can have up to eight members but other tenants can get involved in projects and events
- b) Advised that Mick Barber is the current mentor of the group but will come to LTP to ask for other members to mentor projects and reviews

- c) Stated it is the aim of Next Generation to be independent from LTP but to work together to improve services
- d) Explained the first review by the project looked out how the council could better involve younger presents. This was because levels of involvement from younger tenants is low
- e) Informed LTP the recommendations from the report were:
 - a. Create links to local agencies that already engage with younger tenants
 - b. Offer incentives to get younger people to engage
 - c. Put in place a marketing/keeping in touch plan to engage younger tenants
 - d. Help younger people to gain qualifications when they get involved
 - e. Develop a strategy how tenant involvement groups work together
 - f. Asked LTP to provide any feedback that needs to be included in the final report.

LTP discussed how the relationship between LTP and Next Generation should work, following a discussion the following proposal was put forward, this was:

Next Generation to submit draft reports to LTP for feedback, LTP given 14 Days to comment. LTP will support recommendations unless they have reasonable grounds and evidence not to. Next Generation will reserve a seat for LTP as a none voting member, however LTP will not have authority to remove people from Next Generation panel.

LTP voted on the above proposal, the results were eight in agreement and one abstention.

RESOLVED the proposal is accepted by LTP.

Windows (Mick Barber and Sharron Elsom)

Mick Barber gave a report on his recent visit to Hamilton House regarding windows.

- a. Explained that he had received complaints about windows regarding not have key locks and restrictors
- b. Advised that this was reported to the council and it was agreed for Mick and Sharron to visit to see the windows
- c. Stated the keys aren't provided but the push button locks as people kept losing keys, however they agreed that windows should be fitted with restrictors in certain circumstances
- d. Informed the panel that Kier have agreed to investigate fitting restrictors on a means tested system and will come back to Mick with further information.

RESOLVED- LTP agreed that Kier should be invited to the LTP meeting on 17 Jan 18 to report on progress.

Review Groups

Allocations and Tenancy (Caroline Coyle-Fox)

Caroline Coyle-Fox, chair of A+T gave an update on the group's progress:

- a. Explained Paula Burton would be coming to LTP in February to give an update on downsizing
- b. Informed the group need to speak to Marvin from Alive further about the scheme
- c. Advised that at the next meeting will discuss inviting to county council meeting in February to speak about how they dispose of furniture from the tip. The group will also discuss inviting City of Lincoln Council staff responsible for authorising housing to be cleared and contents taken to the tip
- d. Also be putting together a survey to the voids team.

RESOLVED the report be noted.

Neighbourhood, Community Involvement and Home (Chris Morton)

RESOLVED no further updated presented.

Anti-Social Behaviour Monitoring (Chair)

It was explained that the panel is still waiting for a date for the ASB development group. It was agreed to wait until the next meeting and then schedule a date for LTP to meet.

RESOLVED-the report be noted.

LTP Publicity and Membership (Chris Morton)

RESOLVED no further updates.

LTP Elections for Ermine East-Update

It was explained the Ermine East elections are underway.

RESOLVED the report be noted.

Leasehold Matters (Felicity Kelsall)

RESOLVED no further update.

LTP Training (Chris Morton)

RESOLVED no further update.

Questions For Quarterly Question Time in January (Chris Morton)

LTP members were reminded that questions should be submitted by 27/12/17.

LTP Meeting 24 November 2017

It was explained at the emergency meeting of LTP on 24 Nov 17 several points were agreed but could not be ratified by the panel as it was not a formal LTP meeting. These points were ratified and agreed by LTP.

RESOLVED-points agreed at the emergency meeting be ratified by LTP.

Items for the Next Meeting

Review of the Work Programme (All)

RESOLVED no further updates.

Non Agenda Items

RESOLVED no issues were raised.

SUBJECT: CHOICE BASED LETTINGS ALLOCATIONS POLICY – PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

DIRECTORATE: DIRECTORATE OF HOUSING AND REGENERATION

REPORT AUTHOR: BOB LEDGER, DIRECTOR OF HOUSING AND REGENERATION

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for proposed amendments to the Choice Based Lettings Allocations policy.

2. Background and Executive Summary

- 2.1 Local housing authorities are required by the Housing Act 1996 to have a scheme for the allocation of Council housing. Local housing authorities are also required to have regard to statutory guidance in exercising their functions under Part 5 of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and Localism Act 2011.
- 2.2 The last review of the Allocations Policy was considered by Executive in January 2015. A full review of the policy is proposed for the summer of 2018.
- 2.3 Earlier this year the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 was enacted and provisions become operable from April 2018 which requires one change to be made to the allocations policy now. In addition it is proposed to make five other changes now to the policy on the basis that our Choice Based Lettings IT software is currently being upgraded and it makes sense to incorporate these changes within the software and thereby save monies that would likely have to be expended in the summer 2018 review.
- 2.4 If the Executive adopts the allocations policy changes proposed in section 3 below a consultation period with current applicants, and potential applicants via the website, will be commenced. Having taken Counsel advice this consultation period should last 8 weeks.
- 2.5 The existing Choice Based Letting Policy is appended to this report for information.

3. Proposed Changes to the CBL Allocations Policy

3.1 Change to Partnership Membership

- 3.1.1 Lincs Homefinder was launched in 2013 as a partnership between City of Lincoln Council, North Kesteven District Council and West Lindsey District

Council. From April 2018, West Lindsey DC have decided to withdraw from the partnership. This means that any applicant wishing to live in, or who are currently living in West Lindsey will need to apply to them directly.

3.2 Minimum Age to Apply for Accommodation

3.2.1 There is some ambiguity in the current policy about the age in which applicants are allowed to apply. It is proposed to clarify that applicants must be aged 18 or over to apply for accommodation. This change has been introduced because legislation does not permit a person under the age of 18 to hold a tenancy in law.

3.2.2 If the Authority has a statutory duty to accommodate or assist a person aged 16/17 with accommodation then a tenancy may be granted subject to appropriate support and a suitable guarantor.

3.3 Direct Lets to Statutory Homeless Households

3.3.1 Statutory homeless households are currently placed in our highest priority banding, Band 1. They are placed in that band because their circumstances mean that they need to be housed quickly. At present, statutory homeless households can bid on properties advertised. Unfortunately some applicants do not place any bids on suitable properties and this means that it takes longer for the Council to offer a suitable property to homeless households.

3.3.2 It is proposed that the Council will no longer allow statutory homeless households to bid for accommodation. Instead, the Council will make a direct match of suitable accommodation for them. This will enable the Council to offer suitable accommodation more quickly, moving vulnerable people and families out of temporary accommodation in to settled accommodation.

3.4 Homeless Relief Duty

3.4.1 Under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 an additional duty is now owed to those who are assessed as likely to become homeless within 56 days. It is proposed that such assessed applications are placed in Band 2 of the allocations criteria

3.5 Introduction of a Transfer Quota

3.5.1 The Localism Act 2011 stated that in order to create stable and balanced communities, it was important that good tenants have the opportunity to transfer to more suitable accommodation. We have not previously reflected that in our policy but it is now proposed to introduce a 25% quota for transfer applicants i.e. existing tenants with clear rent accounts and no recent history of anti-social behaviour will be prioritised over non Council tenants.

3.5.2 We therefore propose to introduce a quota for transfer applicants which means that 25% of general housing will be advertised with a preference to City of Lincoln tenants requiring a transfer to more suitable accommodation

3.6 Refusals and Non-Bidding

- 3.6.1 The current Policy allows applicants to refuse three properties that they have bid for before we consider reducing their banding. This sometimes results in properties taking longer to let than they should leading to an increase in the loss of rental income and properties standing empty. It is therefore proposed that, following two unreasonable refusals, an application will be moved to band 4 for a period of 6 months. At the end of the 6 month period their application will be reconsidered.
- 3.6.2 With respect to non-bidding, the current Policy does not address the issue of applicants not bidding for properties. This means that the Council is administering a large list of applicants many of whom do not intend to bid for any properties. The Council therefore will reserve the right to remove an applicant from the waiting list if no bids are placed during a 12 month period when suitable properties have been advertised.

4. **Strategic Priorities**

4.1 Let's Reduce Inequality

The proposed amendments to the Choice Based Lettings Allocations Policy clarifies the priority given to those assessed as homeless and gives additional priority to those effectively managing existing Council tenancies.

5. **Organisational Impacts**

5.1 Finance.

No implications.

5.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules

The proposed allocations policy amendments reflect changed priorities brought about by the Homelessness reduction act 2017.

5.3 Human Resources

No implications.

5.4 Equality, Diversity & Human Rights

An Equality Impact Assessment has been produced. There is no evidence to show that the amended policy will have a detrimental impact on any group.

6. **Risk Implications**

6.1 None identified.

7. Recommendation

- 7.1 It is recommended that Executive endorses the proposed changes to the Choice Based Lettings Allocations Policy as detailed in section 3 of the report.

Is this a key decision? No

Do the exempt information categories apply? No

Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply? No

How many appendices does the report contain? One

List of Background Papers: None

Lead Officer: Bob Ledger
Director of Housing and Regeneration
Telephone (01522) 873200

LincsHomefinder



Appendix A

Lettings Policy

www.lincshomefinder.co.uk

VERSION DATED	Draft Revisions - 21/12/2017
SCHEME APPROVED	NKDC – TBC City of Lincoln – TBC
SCHEME IMPLEMENTED	Planned for 03/04/2018

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This is the allocation scheme, as required by the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2012, Localism Act 2011 and as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 for the partners listed below. It sets out the framework within which partners operate in the assessment of housing need on the common housing register and the letting of social and affordable rented properties.
- 1.2 Partners, and their housing arrangements are:
- City of Lincoln Council – stock holding local authority
 - North Kesteven District Council – a stock holding local authority
- 1.3 Properties owned by other housing providers, operate their individual nomination arrangements with the above Partners through this scheme.

2 Statement of Choice

- 2.1 The Partnership is fully committed to enabling applicants to play an active role in choosing where they live, whilst accommodating those in the greatest housing need.
- 2.2 It is important that applicants are aware that the demand for accommodation is higher in some areas than in others, as is property availability and turnover. In making a decision about the choices available, applicants need to consider their housing need against the availability of properties in any given area.
- 2.3 The main objectives of this Policy are to:
- Provide a fair, open and accountable framework with equality of access
 - Prevent homelessness and reduce the use of temporary accommodation
 - Ensure freely available and accessible advice and assistance, to ensure applicants understanding and participation.
 - Take account of the relevant legislation, statutory regulations and guidance
 - Reflect Partners individual tenancy policies and strategies
 - Have due regard to the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy

3 Equal Opportunities

- 3.1 The partnership is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity for all existing and potential applicants. No one will be treated unfairly due to age, gender, disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, transsexuality, marital or partnership status, or being pregnant/on maternity leave. This list is not intended to be exhaustive but indicative of the Partnership's intention and commitment to ensuring equality.

4 Data Protection, Confidentiality and Sharing Information

- 4.1 The Partners are what is known as ‘Controllers’ of the data you provide and are each registered with the Information Commissioner’s Office. The Partners take your privacy seriously and will not use the information you give for any other purposes than to administer your application, unless the law allows this.
- 4.2 If you provide your personal information on both the paper and online application, you are consenting to the Partners using this and any other information you provide as proof of your application, to process and consider your application. We will:
- keep your information accurate and up to date, with your assistance
 - retain your information only for as long as necessary (minimum of 6 years from the end of the tenancy/application and longer in certain circumstances)
 - store your information securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 at a level appropriate for its sensitivity. For further information see the relevant Partner’s Data Protection Policy
- 4.3 We will not share your personal information with third parties without your consent, unless they are processing your information on our behalf, or because the law allows this, for example to check the information provided by you or about you. This includes any sensitive personal information you provide for example regarding you or your family’s health, although only where it is necessary.
- 4.4 We are also under a duty to protect the public funds we administer, and to this end may use the information you have provided for the prevention and detection of fraud. We may also share this information with other bodies responsible for auditing or administering public funds for these purposes.
- 4.5 The third parties may include but are not limited to, passing your information and receiving information about you, with the agencies/services listed in the Statement and Declaration on the application form.
- 4.6 If after providing consent for us to process your personal information for this purpose, you decide to withdraw your consent, then you must contact us immediately to confirm this. However the consequences of this will be that your application will not be considered. We may also have already passed on your information, as the law allows, to other departments within council and organisations.
- 4.7 If you want to know more about the information we hold about you and how we process this or you have a complaint regarding the way we have handled your personal information please ask for the Data Protection Officer at any of the Partners main offices. If you however remain unhappy, then you have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner at: Information Commissioner’s Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Telephone: 01625 545 700 Website: www.ico.org.uk

5 Overview of How the Scheme Works

- 5.1 The common Lettings Policy provides a way of letting social housing, and promoting shared ownership properties, and other housing options across the partner areas. The Scheme has been designed to be easy to use, provide the highest level of customer service and enable people to make the best choice for their needs from the full range of housing options available to them. The Scheme will not however produce any more housing but will provide a fair, efficient and transparent way of letting the current social housing resources.
- 5.2 People who apply to join the scheme or are registered with the Scheme are known as applicants. Applicants are assessed and awarded a banding according to their need for alternative accommodation. Landlords advertise their vacant properties for rent and invite bids on each property from applicants who are registered.
- 5.3 Adverts will contain a detailed description of the property and will state which applicants are able to apply. Applicants can then bid for the property of their choice as long as they meet the qualifying criteria and are registered with the scheme.
- 5.4 The successful applicant will be selected from those who have bid for the property and who meet the qualifying criteria. Selection will be based on the relevant band, followed by the effective banding date where there is more than one applicant from the same band. The landlord then offers the tenancy to the successful applicant.
- 5.5 Feedback will be provided for each vacancy advertised, as this will help applicants to make more informed choices.

6 Eligibility

- 6.1 Applicants should be aged 18 years or over.
- 6.2 Applications from the following groups will be considered:
- 6.2.1 Persons not subject to immigration control taking account of nationality and immigration. The main customer groups to whom properties will be let to are:
- British Nationals who are habitually resident in the Common Travel Area (CTA) i.e. United Kingdom, Channel Islands, Isle of Man or Republic of Ireland.
 - Commonwealth citizens who have the right of abode and are habitually resident in the CTA.
 - European Economic Area (EEA) nationals who have the right to reside in the UK and are habitually resident in the CTA.
- 6.2.2 Persons subject to immigration control who have been granted:
- Refugee Status
 - Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary Protection, provided that there is no condition that they shall not be a charge on public funds

- Indefinite Leave to Remain, provided that they are habitually resident in the CTA and their Leave to Remain was not granted in the previous five years on the basis of sponsorship given in relation to maintenance and accommodation (or if their sponsor has died)
 - Persons subject to immigration control who are nationals of a country that has ratified the European Convention on Social and Medical Assistance (ECSMA) or the European Social Charter (ESC) provided that they are habitually resident in the CTA and lawfully present in the UK.
- 6.2.3 In addition to European Nationals who are habitually resident in the UK, and can prove they have a current British National Insurance Number, applications from the following groups of people will also be considered: -
- A person granted refugee status when his/her request for asylum is accepted.
 - Persons granted exceptional leave to enter or remain. This will be someone who has failed in the request for asylum, but has been given leave to remain where there are compelling, compassionate circumstances.
 - Persons granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK who are regarded as having settled status. Applicants still have to establish habitual residence.
- 6.3 Under the Housing Act 1996, local authorities must consider whether applicants are eligible for housing assistance. This relates to some people who may have been living abroad or who do not have permanent permission to remain in the UK. Any person making an application who is identified as falling under the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 will be assessed in accordance with the Act. We reserve the right to seek advice and assistance to resolve the issue of eligibility.

7 Ineligible Applicants

- 7.1 Those who **CANNOT** join the Choice Based Letting Scheme are: -
- Persons who are ineligible to reside in the United Kingdom.
 - Persons granted exceptional leave to enter or remain but do not have recourse to public funds.
- 7.2 There may be cases where an ineligible person forms part of a household with others who are eligible. It is important to note that whilst the ineligible person cannot be granted a tenancy they may be taken into account in the size of accommodation to be offered, but the tenancy will only be granted to the individual who is eligible.

8 Non-Qualifying Persons

The following will be considered to be non-qualifying persons, and therefore unable to join this Choice Based Lettings Scheme:

- Existing social housing tenants who have not been in their current home for 12months.
- Serious Unacceptable behaviour

8.1 Existing Social Housing Tenant

8.1.1 Our partnership aims to promote settled and sustainable communities, therefore social housing tenants who have not been in their current home for 12months will be considered non-qualifying and not accepted on to the scheme.

8.1.2 The Lincs Homefinder Panel will consider any exceptional cases where an applicant's household circumstances have significantly changed and the applicant was not aware or anticipating the change prior to taking their current tenancy

8.2 Serious Unacceptable Behaviour

8.2.1 This can relate to anti-social behaviour, criminal behaviour, nuisance, property condition and/or any significant housing related debt.

8.2.2 The Partners are entitled, when deciding whether or not to allow an applicant to join the scheme or be offered a tenancy, to take into account relevant current and previous behaviour of the applicant, and/or members of their household.

8.2.3 It is the responsibility of an applicant to provide reasonable information to enable their application to be processed and assessed. Applications will not be registered until we have received all the required information and we are satisfied that an applicant, and their household, is eligible and a qualifying person.

8.2.4 In determining the issue it is not necessary for the applicant to have actually been a tenant of one of the Partners when the behaviour occurred. Furthermore, the behaviour is not limited to that caused by the applicant and/or their household - it extends to behaviour caused by visitors to an applicant's home for which they were responsible.

8.2.5 The following contains examples of where we may consider applicants as non-qualifying, and therefore not eligible to join the scheme, due to evidence of serious unacceptable behaviour, as we may consider this makes them unsuitable as a tenant. This includes, but not limited to:

- Housing related debt, generally determined, but not limited, equivalent of 8 weeks rent liability or less. By "Housing Related Debt" we mean (1) rent arrears owed to any landlord (2) costs of repairing damage to accommodation, (3) mortgage arrears owed to the Council or any other lender, (4) other Partner debts including Housing Benefit overpayments and rent advance or deposit payments, and (5) court costs.

We expect applicants with housing related debt to either pay the debt in full or reduce the debt to less than the equivalent of 8 weeks rent liability followed by regular repayments of an acceptable amount to reduce the debt for a minimum of 13 consecutive weeks and ongoing to continue to reduce the debt.

- Breaching a condition of the tenancy agreement, for which possession action has been or is being pursued. If we have evidence that a tenant is breaking their tenancy conditions we may not offer accommodation until the breach has been remedied. This includes, but is not limited to: damaging the property; making structural alterations without our consent; allowing the garden to become neglected or overgrown; poor internal decorative and cleanliness standard. This also applies to applicants whose landlord is another Local Authority, Registered Provider or a Private Landlord. We may visit our own tenants before we offer them another tenancy.
- Anti-Social Behaviour - Being subject to (or having previously been subject to) an Anti-social Behaviour Injunction, an Anti-social Behaviour Order, a Criminal Anti-social Behaviour Order, a Criminal Behaviour Order, a Community Protection Notice, a Closure of Premises Order; or having been in breach of any of those orders, a Possession Order, or notice served for anti-social behaviour. The applicant will have to show that their behaviour has improved and they are capable of being a responsible tenant before reapplying.
- Using their home for immoral or illegal purposes
- Being convicted of an offence committed in, or in the locality of, their home, or committed elsewhere against a person with a right to reside in, or occupy housing accommodation in the locality, or was committed elsewhere against the landlord of their home, or a person employed in connection with the exercise of the Partner's housing management functions, and that the conduct affects those functions (either directly or indirectly)
- Causing the condition of the property to deteriorate by a deliberate act, or by neglect
- Making a false statement to obtain a tenancy

8.2.6 The Partnership will take into account other behaviour considered as unacceptable, but is not considered sufficiently serious for non-qualifying as above, this is detailed in **Section 10.7**

8.2.7 The Partnership will take into account other housing related debt, which is not considered sufficient for non-qualifying as above, this is detailed in **Section 10.8**

8.3 Consideration

8.3.1 We will act reasonably when determining if an application is considered non-qualifying. We will consider all the relevant information before we make our decision.

- 8.3.2 Where the Partner has reason to believe that unacceptable behaviour is due to a physical, mental or learning disability, the person will not be determined as disqualified without first considering whether they would be able to maintain a tenancy satisfactorily with appropriate care and support. In such cases the Partner will consult as appropriate with any relevant agencies, including Social Services and providers of support services. We will consider the interests of the applicant and their household but we will also consider the interest of the people who live and work on our estates.
- 8.3.3 In the case of new applications, we expect applicants to provide us with some proof that they have behaved responsibly. We will normally ask for a reference from the applicant's current or former landlord(s) relating, but not limited, to behaviour, payment and property condition. We may also consider references from an employer or other professional persons. It will be the applicant's responsibility to obtain such references. Where such landlord references are not available, we may ask applicants to produce other documentation to show whether or not they were up to date with their rent payments.
- 8.3.4 Where it is apparent to the Partner that an applicant has not behaved responsibly, the applicant will be given the opportunity to explain, with each case decided on its own merits. It is usual for an applicant to evidence that they have remedied their behaviour, normally over a period of six months.
- 8.3.5 If at any time the Partner obtains information that leads it to believe that an applicant already on the housing register is non-qualifying, the applicant will be informed in writing. The applicant will be given 28 days to provide information supporting why they believe they are a qualifying applicant, their application will be suspended for that period and unable to place bids, bids already placed may be bypassed. If they do not reply within this period, or if they reply but the Partner remains of the view that they are non qualifying, they will be removed from the housing register ie: their application will be cancelled. The applicant may request a review of the decision.
- 8.3.6 Partners will consider future application on its merits and evidence at that time.
- 8.3.7 Exceptional circumstances – partners will consider any request from households with exceptional circumstances who would not normally qualify for housing. Each case will be assessed on an individual basis.

9 How to apply and how we process applications

9.1 Administrating Partner

- 9.1.1 Applications should be forward to, and appropriately processed by, the Partner:
- for the area you currently live (if currently residing within Partnership area); or
 - for the area in which you wish to live (if currently residing outside the Partnership area).

9.2 Providing Information and Documentation

- 9.2.1 Applicants are required to provide acceptable evidence of their identity e.g. their National Insurance Number(s) and proof of residency for themselves and anyone they wish to be housed with. A list I of acceptable required documents will be provided. Without this information an application will not be processed.
- 9.2.2 For any application which includes someone from abroad, proof of identification, nationality and immigration status will be required. Verification may be sought from the Immigration Service to safeguard the use and allocation of public funds.
- 9.2.3 In order to determine the priority an application receives, it is the applicant(s) responsibility to provide any and all information reasonably required by the Partnership. Such information may extend beyond that requested on the initial Application Form to reflect individual circumstances. Until all required information is provided the application will not be registered and/or will NOT be eligible to bid.
- 9.2.4 It is also the applicant(s) responsibility to ensure they notify the Scheme Partnership of any change in their circumstances. The Housing Act 1996 section 171 states that a person commits an offence if, in connection with the exercise by a local housing authority of their functions under this Part –
- (a) s/he knowingly or recklessly makes a statement which is false in a material particular, or
 - (b) s/he knowingly withholds information which the authority have reasonably required her/him to give in connection with the exercise of those functions.'
- 9.2.5 False information can include any information given on an application form, given in response to subsequent review letters, given during telephone conversations or interviews, or by other updating mechanisms or information submitted by applicants during the proceedings of a review. Landlords may seek possession of a property under Ground 5 of Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985 if a tenant has induced the Council to grant a tenancy by knowingly or recklessly making a false statement. The offence is also punishable on summary conviction by magistrates by a fine of up to £5000.
- ### **9.3 Dating of Applications**
- 9.3.1 The initial registration date of an application will be the date the fully completed and signed housing application form is received at any of the Partner offices. All relevant documentation requested by the Partnership should be provided within 28 days of initial contact. Failure to provide relevant documentation may result in a later registration date, or cancellation of application.

9.3.2 The following explains how effective band dates will be awarded:

- **New application** - the effective band date will be the same as the applicant's registration date. Assuming all required documents are received within 28days, if not then date will be when all required documents are actually received
- **Change in circumstances which results in a higher band assessment** - the effective band date will be the date the applicant provides satisfactory evidence of the change in circumstances.
- **Change in circumstances which result in a lower band assessment** - the effective band date will revert to the original application date.
- **Homelessness applications** – the effective band date will be the date the homeless decision (s184) is made and notified to the applicant
- **Refusal of reasonable offers** – Partners reserve the right to amend effective banding dates to date of last offer in accordance with **Section 14.5**

9.3.3 For example: birth of a child may cause a household to be lacking 1 bedroom and may therefore move up a band. The effective band date is the date that the birth certificate was provided to the Partnership (leading to the re-assessment) not the child's date of birth

9.4 Cancellation of Applications

9.4.1 The Partnership may cancel applications where, an applicant:

- is housed as a result of that application,
- fails to respond to the annual review within the set timescale,
- has moved and failed to notify the Partnership, within 28days of moving
- persistently fails to respond to a Partner's communication or requests for information over a reasonable timescale, we consider this to be within 28days, or over 3 advertising cycles
- has failed to bid within the last 12months, unless there is evidence that there has been no suitable vacancies
- is no longer considered a qualifying person

9.4.2 Should an applicant subsequently wish to re-join the register they will be required to complete a new application which will be processed based on their current circumstances and with the subsequent registration date.

9.5 Suspension of Applications

9.5.1 We may suspend (put "on hold") a housing application if, for example:

- Applicant has been asked, in writing, by telephone or email for key information in relation to their application and we are waiting for an appropriate response
- We have asked another support agency or worker, to provide additional key information about a household and are waiting for a reply from them.
- if we are unable to contact an applicant following multi attempts
- whilst awaiting the outcome of a referral to the Lincs Homefinder Panel
- whilst awaiting response to annual review
- where requested, an applicant refuses a home visit

9.6 Landlord References

- 9.6.1 Partners may contact an applicant's current or former landlord(s) for information on how that tenancy was conducted. This will cover payment of monies due, condition of property, anti-social behaviour and other tenancy conditions. This information will be used to determine eligibility and banding, of which applicants will be informed. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure Partners are provided with this information.
- 9.6.2 In the event that an applicant disputes the contents of a reference, an officer will make a decision taking into account individual circumstances and information available.

9.8 Home Visits

- 9.8.1 It may be necessary to carry out home visits to assist with the assessment process and/or to provide an alternative way for customers to discuss their circumstances.
- Homevisits will only be carried out by prior appointment, unless in exceptional circumstances.
 - The Partners reserve the right to suspend applications where access to the home is denied and until such time as this can be given. Persistent refusal of reasonable requests may lead to the application being cancelled. The Partners reserve the right to decline the request for a home visit where this may place a member of staff at risk or is otherwise considered unnecessary

9.9 Financial Capacity

- 9.9.1 Households may be assessed for their ability to buy/rent a suitable property within the area, or improve/adapt their own home to meet their assessed needs.
- 9.9.2 Assets that may be taken into consideration when assessing financial capacity may include but are not limited to savings, shares, bonds, commercial property, residential property, property abroad and money apportioned through the proceeds of a divorce settlement, inheritance or any form of cash windfall.
- 9.9.3 Applicants assessed as having the financial resources to resolve their own housing difficulties, may have their housing priority reduced. The Partnership reserves the right not to make an offer of tenancy to an applicant who has the financial capacity to reasonable resolve their housing situation when taking the above into account. This criteria may be reviewed where a property is deemed to be in a 'low demand area' or at the discretion of the Partner who manages the relevant property.

9.10 Change of Circumstances

- 9.10.1 Applicants are required to inform the relevant Partner if their personal circumstance change and it may reasonably be expected to have an effect on their Housing Register application. This includes any change in their address or household composition or contact details.
- 9.10.2 A specific form may be available for this purpose and this must be signed by each of the applicants. Examples of this include:
- Housing circumstances have improved
 - Recovered from an illness which previously gave medical priority

- When a child is born and a copy of the birth certificate has been provided there will be a re-assessment of the banding and if the banding results in a higher band it will have an effective band date of when the Partner received confirmation of the child's birth.

9.10.3 Changes in circumstances that lead to re-banding will be dealt with in accordance with this policy. The relevant Partner will re-assess an application where there has been a change of circumstances and if priority changes applicant(s) will be notified in writing.

9.10.4 It is the applicants responsibility to ensure they provide up to date contacts, failure to do so may lead to their application being suspended or cancelled and could mean their bids on vacancies are bypassed, after reasonable attempts to contact are unsuccessful.

9.11 Managing Risks

9.11.1 It is important to manage the needs of individual applicants with the needs and rights of neighbours and the local community. In order to manage risks to individuals and communities a multi-agency approach must be taken, the Partnership will therefore work closely with the Police, Social Care, Probation, Health and voluntary agencies. Applicant are required to complete a self-assessed risk assessment prior to being accepted on to the register.

9.11.2 For example, securing accommodation for a high-risk offender will be done in consultation and with the approval of the appropriate agencies and special arrangements may apply in cases where an applicant is considered by the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). In order to achieve this there may be occasions when the applicant with the highest priority in the scheme may not be offered a particular property. In such cases they will be written to by the relevant Partner explaining the reasons why this has happened.

9.11.3 The Partnership actively works with the Local Community Safety Partnership in addressing a range of issues that impact upon community safety. These issues include drugs misuse, anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse amongst others. The Partnership reserves the right to liaise with the Local Community Safety Partnership when considering any exclusion, letting or other issues which have an impact upon community safety.

9.11.4 An integral part of managing risks is to ensure that appropriate support networks are in place and are regularly monitored and reviewed by the Partners involved. Any successful bid will be declined if the relevant agencies have not provided a relevant Care Plan/Risk Assessment to manage the risk.

9.12 Annual Review

9.12.1 The Partners are required to undertake an annual review of applicants on the Register. This helps to ensure that those on the register are still interested in applying for suitable properties and also reduces the amount of time and resources wasted in sending information to those applicants who are no longer looking to move house.

- 9.12.2 Each applicant will be contacted, in writing, on the anniversary of their application to ascertain if they still wish to be registered. Should there be no response to this letter **within 4 weeks**, the application will be suspended. A further letter will be sent to the applicant notifying them their application is suspended and should they not respond, within 14 days, their application will be cancelled.
- 9.12.3 Applicants who subsequently decide they wish to rejoin the Register will need to re-apply in the normal way and will have their current circumstances assessed. The application date will not be backdated under these circumstances.

10 How We Prioritise Applications

10.1 Bandings

10.1.1 There are 4 Bands, with Band 1 for those with the highest priority. Applicants are placed in the band in accordance with their housing needs assessment [APPENDIX B](#)

10.2 Reasonable Preference

10.2.1 The law states that certain groups of people have reasonable preference within any housing allocation scheme operated by a Local Housing Authority, these groups are:

- homeless (within Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 h); this includes people who are intentionally homeless, and those who are not in priority need;
- unintentionally homeless, or threatened with, and in priority need who are owed a duty by the housing authority under section 193 (2) or 195 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 (or under Section 65 (2) or 68 (2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by the housing authority under Section 192 (3);
- occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds;
- People who need to move to a particular locality in the area, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others).
- Those leaving the Armed Forces who are in housing need

10.3 Homelessness

10.3.1 In cases where a Partner, Local Authority, has accepted a main housing duty under homelessness, applicants will be placed into the appropriate band and are required to bid for suitable properties for which they are eligible. In such cases local connection will only be confirmed for the Partner area that has accepted the Homeless duty.

10.3.2 Homeless cases will be monitored, and if applicants fail to make bids, the Partnership will then bid on their behalf for the next suitable property they are eligible for. If an applicant refuses a successful bid that is considered suitable and reasonable, the homelessness duty to them may be discharged. In such cases the application will be re-assessed.

10.3.3 Partners reserve the right to make direct lets to homeless households, where they consider a property is suitable and reasonable for the household, in accordance with [Section 14.8](#)

10.4 Worsened Circumstances

10.4.1 Where a Partner determines that an applicant has deliberately worsened their circumstances and gained additional priority, they reserve the right to reduce the priority awarded for up to 6 months. Examples include, but not limited to:

- Giving up suitable accommodation that was available to them
- Moving into an unsatisfactory arrangement eg: sharing facilities or overcrowded

10.4.2 Partners will take into account the current needs of the household before reducing any priority. Where priority has changed applicants will always be informed in writing

stating the reasons, any time restrictions and their right to review of that decision. Once the period of reduced priority has expired the application and effective banding dates will revert to the original applicable dates.

10.5 Medical Need Bandings

10.5.1 The assessment determines medical priority based on the current housing circumstances in relation to the effect on the illness and/or disability of the applicant, or member of their household, and that a move to more appropriate accommodation will alleviate that effect.

10.6 Sheltered Housing (Older Person Schemes)

10.6.1 Sheltered accommodation and older persons schemes are normally allocated according to the following criteria:

- a) applicants in need of supported accommodation who fulfill any determined assessment criteria, this will be determined, where appropriate, by a *sheltered housing needs assessment*, to assess individual needs and independence and ability of the “sheltered” service to meet those needs, and
- b) applicants or their partner be 60 years of age or over, (this may vary between partners and/or landlords) taking into account the requirements of the scheme and community.

10.6.2 Such properties will be clearly advertised detailing who can bid and be considered for the vacancy

10.7 Unacceptable Behaviour

10.7.1 Partners will take into account any behaviour of the applicant or member of their household, which is not sufficiently serious to consider as Non-Qualifying Personas detailed in **Section 8** is not applicable. Such applications may, in consideration of this behaviour along with other housing needs, decide to reduce the priority given.

10.8 Housing Related Debt

10.8.1 Where an applicant(s) has any current/former rent arrears or other housing related debt, and **Section 8** is not applicable, they will be accepted onto the housing register and placed in the appropriate band. Partners will advise applicants when a housing related debt is made known to them, explaining the consequences and provide advice and information to make arrangements to clear the debt or to make a repayment plan.

10.8.2 If an applicant makes a bid and is successful, their application may be passed over, until an acceptable repayment agreement has been made and maintained for 13wks, having regard to the following criterion:

Current and/or former rent arrears:

- Reasons given for which the arrears have incurred
- the age of the debt

Other housing related debt:

- the amount of debt outstanding,
- the age of the debt

- reasons given for why monies owed
- the applicant's commitment to repay,
- current housing circumstances,

10.8.3 In the event that an application is passed over by a Partner for these reasons, applicant(s) would be notified in writing and informed of their right to review of that decision. Applicants must be aware that the letting of a property will not be delayed pending a review, the outcome of the review will only be applicable for future vacancies.

10.9 Disabled Facilities/Renovation Grants and Adaptations

10.9.1 Where an applicant(s), or member of the moving household has benefited from either a disabled facilities grant/adaptation or renovation grant they will be accepted onto the housing register and placed in the appropriate band. However, their application will be passed over, for a period of 5 years from when the work was undertaken, unless the household's circumstances have substantially changed to make the property unsuitable.

10.9.2 Applicants need to be aware that if they are subsequently re-housed within the 5 year grant period, the relevant grant conditions, as signed, may still apply along with any financial consequences.

10.9.3 In the event that an application is passed over by a Partner for these reasons, applicant(s) would be notified in writing and of their right to review of that decision. Applicants must be aware that the letting of a property will not be delayed pending a review, the outcome of the review will only be applicable for future vacancies.

10.9.4 This will not apply in exceptional circumstances, where it is considered that a households circumstances or housing needs have changed significantly since the completion of the relevant works.

10.10 Right to Buy

10.10.1 Where an applicant(s), or member of the moving household has benefited from a Right to Buy, they will be accepted onto the housing register and placed in the appropriate band. However, their application will be passed over, for a period of 3 years from purchase of the property, unless the household's circumstances have substantially changed to make the property unsuitable.

10.10.2 Applicants need to be aware that if they are subsequently re-housed within the 3 year period, the relevant discount conditions, as signed, may still apply along with any financial consequences.

10.10.3 In the event that an application is passed over by a Partner for these reasons, an applicant would be notified in writing and of their right to a review of that decision. Applicants must be aware that the letting of a property will not be delayed pending a review, the outcome of the review will only be applicable for future vacancies.

10.10.4 This will not apply in exceptional circumstances, where it is considered that a household's circumstances or housing needs have changed significantly since the completion of the purchase

11 Local Connection

11.1 A local connection with one of the partner authorities will prioritise bids over those from applicants who do not have a local connection. To qualify for a local connection to a partner area within this scheme the applicant must provide supporting evidence that demonstrates:

- Currently resident in any partner area and have been so for at least the last SIX months,
- Have previously lived in any partner district area for a continuous period of TWELVE months (whilst aged 18 or over) in the last FIVE YEARS,
- Immediate family members who are currently resident in any partner area. Family members are defined as parents or guardians, adult children or brothers or sisters who have lived in that area continuously for the last FIVE YEARS, (please note in accordance with [section 14.2](#) bids may be bypassed if the vacancy does not reduce the distance between those households)
- their current main place of permanent work in any partner area for a continuous period of TWELVE months

11.2 Other local connection circumstances

11.2.1 These circumstances include:

- applicants who have been accepted by one of the partner authorities under homeless legislation - only the local connection to that Partner area will apply even if applicants meet criteria for other local connections
- applicants who have been accepted for priority housing as a reciprocal arrangement with another housing organisation - only the local connection to that Partner area will apply even if applicants meet criteria for other local connections
- HM Armed Forces applicants through Section 315 of the Housing and Regeneration Act (2008) who have established a local connection with one of the partner areas during their service or before they joined the services
- Members of the Armed Forces, former service personnel applying within five years of discharge, bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces and serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move for medical reasons, who may have established a local connection with one of the partner areas before or during their service
- refugees who have been granted leave to remain and have been dispersed to a Partners area
- applicants who have been accepted from outside the Partner area as part of a Witness Protection recommendation - only the local connection to that Partner area will apply even if applicants meet criteria for other local connections
- applicants from outside the partner authorities who are victims of domestic abuse or fleeing other violence and/or harassment, who cannot return to the area where they were living for fear of harm
- Care leavers, whilst they may not meet the normal local connection criteria, if they have resided within Lincolnshire they will be awarded a local connection to all Partner areas

11.2.2 In other exceptional cases Partners have the discretion to award a local connection to their area, the Lincs Homefinder Panel can apply a local connection to another area or the Partnership as a whole.

11.3 What does not give you a local connection?

11.3.1 The following circumstances will not lead for a local connection be awarded to an application:

- People living in bail hostels or approved premises
- Occupying a mobile home, caravan or motor caravan which is not placed on an official mobile home or caravan park
- Hostel residents from outside the partner authorities who have not otherwise lived in one of the partner authorities for six months
- Those residing in supported accommodation
- Those occupying student accommodation – hall of residence and all other accommodation sourced in connection to education
- Those residing in prison within the area
- Those residing in hospital, in-patient care or residential care settings

11.4 Local Letting Policies

11.4.1 Local Lettings Policies are usually introduced to meet a particular local need and have an overall positive effect on estates. For example, if an estate had a high level of anti-social behaviour, applicants who bid for the advertised property may be subject to enhanced checks on their previous behaviour, or in areas of low employment status priority may be given to those in current employment, or households of a certain age or for some schemes a very specific local connection to an individual village not just partner area.

11.4.2 There are a number of Local Lettings Policies throughout the partnership area. 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 bypassed.

12 Property Eligibility

- 12.1 Applicants, upon acceptance to the Housing Register, will be notified in writing of the properties they are eligible to bid for. Property eligibility is based upon a household's composition and their needs, [See Appendices C and D](#). The Policy covers the letting of a range of property types throughout the area.
- 12.2 It is important to note that property eligibility may differ between landlords, as individual Housing Providers endeavour to make the best possible use of their stock in terms of size and suitability when setting the criteria for eligibility. For example, ground floor flats may be reserved for people with a physical disability. Housing Providers may also choose to exercise some discretion and invite bids from particular household compositions to contribute to sustainable communities. The advert will clearly state which applicants can bid for each property and which applicant will have priority for the vacancy.
- 12.3 The Partnership reserves the right, in exceptional circumstances, to offer applicants accommodation not usually considered for their household type or size, for example, but not limited to, where availability of properties in a certain area are scarce or those with no medical need may be considered for level floor accommodation.
- 12.4 The Partnership reserve the right to amend the bid criteria of previously advertised properties to widen the eligibility and enable successful bids to be made.

12.5 Access to children

- 12.5.1 For the purposes of this policy, we consider that access to children must be verified as regular and for at least three nights each week. Single people or couples with access to children only will normally only be considered for a one bedroom flat.
- 12.5.2 Some landlords may consider such applicants for a two bedroom flat opposed to a one bedroom flat, although landlords may continue to give preference to applicants who would fully occupy the vacancy on a permanent basis, eligibility will be included in adverts so must be checked carefully.
- 12.5.3 Single people or couples with children living with them permanently and with access to other children will not be granted priority for needing an additional bedroom but may be able to bid for properties with an extra bedroom. However, Partners may give preference to large families who would fully occupy the property permanently.

12.6 Carers, Prospective/Approved Adopters and Foster Carers

- 12.6.1 Applicants with a disability or other need who require an additional bedroom to accommodate a carer are required to provide an approved and detailed Care Plan. Such Care Plans will need to be shared with all providers so that appropriate accommodation can be considered. Partners will work closely with the relevant Children's Services departments, on an individual case basis to assist in meeting the needs of prospective and approved adopters and foster carers and duties under s22G of the Children's Act 1989.

13 Advertising Vacancies and Bidding

13.1 Advertising Cycle

13.1.1 Once applicants are registered they are able to start looking for a suitable vacancy across the Partnership area. Vacancies will be advertised on a weekly basis from midnight on Wednesday to 12noon on the following Monday (6days). Adverts will include key property attributes, local facilities and eligibility criteria.

13.1.2 Vacancies will be advertised in the following ways:

- **Lincs Homefinder Website** – www.lincshomefinder.co.uk All Partner websites direct users to this website to allow applicants to view available properties and apply 'on-line' for properties of their choice. Access to the website is available in some of the Partner's reception areas.
- **Reception Areas** – Partner may advertise vacancies in their reception areas.
- **Dispersed office locations** – some partners may circulated a list of vacancies to assist with access should any applicant approach them for information

13.2 Withdrawing Adverts

13.2.1 Occasionally, a Partner may be required to withdraw a property advert, for instance:

- if it becomes apparent that the property may be let through direct lets in accordance with this policy, *Section 14.8* or
- The current tenant of the property being advertised has withdrawn their notice terminating their tenancy of that property, so the property is no longer available,
- Significantly incorrect information had been advertised in respect of the property or applicants eligibility for that property.

13.3 Bidding for a Vacancy

13.3.1 Applicants are restricted to making 2 bids in each cycle. Where an applicant meets the property eligibility, bids can only be placed during the bidding cycle, and should be placed through the applicants individual online account by themselves or their advocates.

13.3.2 Where a vacancy has been advertised and no bids have been received, or been successful, the vacancy may be re-advertised and may be allocated on a first come first served basis subject to the usual eligibility criteria.

13.3.3 Bids for individual vacancies are ranked by banding and banding date, firstly those with a local connection to the partner area in which the vacancy occurs then those with a connection to the wider partnership area before those with no local connection to the partnership.

14 Shortlisting and Offers

14.1 At the end of the advertising cycle, applicants who have bid will be shortlisted according to their eligibility criteria and any local lettings criteria. Verification checks will be undertaken at this stage to ensure applicants still qualify and circumstances have not changed

14.2 Bypassing Bids

14.2.1 Bids may be bypassed for several reasons. It is not possible to provide an exhaustive list, but the following are common, an applicant or household member:

- doesn't require ground floor property and vacancy is ground floor
- does require ground floor property and vacancy is upper floor
- would not fully occupy the vacancy
- since the bid was placed, is now under offer or first nomination to another vacancy
- now considered to be non-qualifying, and application will be cancelled
- has experienced a change of circumstances or partner has identified information that affects eligibility, local connection and/or priority
- Unable to contact applicant(s) within 24hrs
- Does not meet specific criteria for the vacancy ie: additional local letting criteria
- If the Partner believes the vacancy would be unaffordable to the household from the onset
- Local connection does not apply – does not bring family closer together

14.2.2 Bids are updated to reflect the reason for being bypassed, so applicants are aware.

14.3 Making an Offer

14.3.1 The successful candidate will be contacted by an officer from the partner landlord whose vacancy they have bid for, to be offered a tenancy and to arrange an accompanied viewing of the property.

14.3.2 If an applicant cannot be contacted following three attempts over different advertising cycles, their application will be cancelled in accordance with [section 9.4](#), also failing to respond within 24hrs of contact regarding a specific vacancy, Partners reserve the right to move to the next eligible person on the shortlist. It is important that all applicants ensure they are contactable as their bid may be bypassed after reasonable attempts to contact them have been unsuccessful.

14.3.3 In exceptional circumstances a Partner may not make an offer or may withdraw an offer to a successful bidder, this may include but is not limited to :

- it is clear that an applicant is not capable of understanding the responsibilities associated with being a tenant or they do not understand what they are signing
- current tenant of the property being advertised has withdrawn their notice terminating their tenancy of that property, so the property is no longer available
- applicant has failed to respond to three contact attempts from a Partner
- Partner or landlord believes the property is unaffordable from the onset.
- Identifying information that affects the application

14.4 Tenancies

14.4.1 Joint tenancies will normally be offered to:

- Married couples, civil partnerships, unmarried couples and same sex partnerships, provided that both are named on the application form, unless both parties request the tenancy to be granted in a sole name, stating their reasons
- Adults wishing to live together as friends, both names have been included on the application form
- Applicants and their live-in carers, where the Partner considers it to be justified.

14.4.2 Joint tenancies are not usually given to a parent and adult child, unless there are formal caring responsibilities.

14.4.3 In all other circumstances sole tenancies will be offered to the eligible lead applicant. In cases relating to persons from abroad who are subject to immigration restrictions, the tenancy will only be granted to the individual who is eligible, whilst the ineligible person can still be taken into account in respect of size and type of accommodation offered.

14.5 Refusals

14.5.1 Generally, if an applicant refuses 2 offers, they will be contacted to discuss their housing needs and circumstances. With the exception to applications assessed with Band 1 priority (excluding Accepted Homeless housing duty), where Partners may review an application after the refusal of 1 reasonable offer. Once reviewed, if a Partner considers such refusals were unreasonable, Partners reserve the right to reduce their banding to a Band 4, for a period of 6 months from the date of the most recent unreasonable refusal.

14.6 Non-Bidding

14.6.1 All applicants will be monitored to establish if any suitable properties have been advertised. If suitable properties have been advertised the applicant may be contacted to establish why they have not bid. This will assist Partners in ascertaining if any additional assistance is required to participate in the scheme. Partners reserve the right to review such applications.

14.7 Vacancies excluded from the Scheme

14.7.1 The Partnership reserves the right to exclude certain properties and housing schemes from this Scheme, but a majority of social housing vacancies in the Partnership area will be advertised and let through this scheme. Examples of where this may occur include (but are not limited to) where a property is needed urgently to deal with an emergency. Specialist accommodation may also be let outside this Scheme for example extra care schemes for the elderly.

14.7.2 In exceptional circumstances properties may be withdrawn from an advertising cycle or scheme, those applicants who may have already expressed an interest in any such property will be notified of the reasons why.

14.8 Direct Lets

- 14.8.1 Each Partner lets the majority of their properties through this CBL Scheme. The Partnership reserves the right to exclude certain properties and housing schemes from the CBL scheme. An example of this may include, but is not limited to, where a property is needed urgently to deal with an emergency, the renewal of a flexible-secure tenancy. Specialist accommodation may also be let outside this Scheme.
- 14.8.2 In some circumstances it may be necessary to directly match an applicant to a suitable property. This means that the applicant may not be able to bid for properties such as Homeless applicants as detailed in *Section 9.3*. If this applies, we will notify the applicant direct.
- 14.8.3 Applicants subject to a direct letting will normally be made one offer of suitable accommodation. If they do not accept the property the relevant partner may decide to make no further offers to them, reduce their Banding or discharge a homeless duty. They will be able to request a review of any decision on the suitability of a property or a decision not to make a further offer.
- 14.8.4 Properties let through direct lettings may not be advertised through this scheme, but information will normally be made available to indicate that the letting took place. This may not be done if there is good reason, such as the need to re-house someone threatened with violence.

14.9 Allocations to Employees and Relations

- 14.9.1 The Scheme's application form requires applicants to declare if they or a member of their household are either a member of staff/Councillor/Board Member or related to a member of staff/Councillor/Board Member of any Partner within the Scheme.
- 14.9.2 In such cases there will be stringent procedures and checks in place to ensure the application is processed in accordance with this Policy and other applications. A Senior Officer will check the processing and assessment. Prior to any offer of accommodation being made to such an applicant the relevant Partner will notify their appropriate Director or Head of Service for approval.

15 Reviews and Complaints

15.1 Reviews of Decision

15.1.1 Initial decisions relating to an application will be made by the relevant Partner organisation.

15.1.2 All applicants have the right to request a review of a decision if they consider this policy has not been applied correctly, for example a decision about:

- Exclusion or removal from the Housing Register
- Type of property the applicant is eligible for
- Band awarded
- Application status and applicable dates
- Reasonableness of refusals

15.1.3 If an applicant wishes to request of a review of the initial decision, they should notify the partner that made that decision, of the issue they would like to be reviewed. This will be dealt with by an officer not involved in the original decision making process.

15.1.4 If the applicant still considers their case has not been dealt with in accordance with this policy, and they can provide evidence that relevant information has not been considered, they may request that the case is passed to Lincs Homefinder Panel. An officer, where there are exceptional circumstances not covered by this policy and that have implications across Partners, may make a referral to the same Panel for consideration

15.1.5 If an applicant wishes to continue to pursue the matter following a decision by the Lincs Homefinder Panel, they can approach the Ombudsman [Section 15.3](#)

15.1.6 Where an applicant wishes to provide new information that has not previously been available to the Partner organisation for consideration, this will be dealt with as a 'change of circumstances' and subject to a reassessment and not considered as a review.

15.2 Complaints

15.2.1 If an applicant is dissatisfied with how they have been dealt with, and feel they have been unfairly treated, discriminated against and/or a Partner has failed to do something they should have done, then the applicant can make a complaint.

15.2.2 Complaints will be dealt with by the Partner involved and in accordance with their own Corporate Complaints Policy:

City of Lincoln Council

Post: City of Lincoln Council, City Hall, Beaumont Fee, Lincoln, LN1 1DD

Email: housing@lincoln.gov.uk

Tel: 01522 873641

North Kesteven District Council
Post: Complaints Officer at FREEPOST NKDC
Email: Complaints@n-kesteven.gov.uk
Tel: 01529 414155 or 01522 699699

15.3 Ombudsman

- 15.3.1 The Local Government Ombudsman is independent of all government departments, councils and politicians. The Ombudsman examines complaints without taking sides. In most cases the complainant must have pursued the matter through the Council's own complaints procedure before a complaint can be considered by the Ombudsman

Contact details for the Local Government Ombudsman are

Email advice@lgo.org.uk
Telephone: 0300 061 0614
Text 'call back' on 0762 480 4299.
Fax us on 024 7682 0001.
Write to the **Local Government Ombudsman**, PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH.

Contact details for the Housing Ombudsman Service are

Email info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
Telephone : 0300 111 3000
Fax : 020 7831 1942
Write to: **Housing Ombudsman Service**, Exchange Tower, Harbour Exchange Square, London. E14 9GE

15.4 Homelessness Reviews

- 15.4.1 Requests for reviews of decisions made in respect of an applicant's homeless application are subject to review procedures outside this scheme. Applicants should contact the local Authority responsible for their homelessness application for further information and assistance.

15.5 Partnership Decisions

- 15.5.1 All Partners aim to deal with individual enquiries at the initial point of contact including correspondence from Members of Parliament. Where necessary the Partners may meet to agree an appropriate response or decision(s). The Lincs Homefinder Partnership will meet on a regular basis to consider the following:
- Requests for Reviews (once Partner has undertaken initial review)
 - To award a Local Connection to whole partnership area, in exceptional circumstances,
 - All other exceptional cases that warrant consideration.

15.6 Policy Review

- 15.6.1 This policy will be reviewed every 3yrs, or earlier if required, to ensure it:
- a) meets legal requirements and is consistent with of related policies and strategies
 - b) meets Partner's needs and addresses local housing needs
 - c) achieves its objectives

- 15.6.2 Each partner is responsible for ensuring all allocations within their organisation are made in accordance with this agreed Policy. The Partnership Board, consisting of senior managers and Members will monitor the overall partnership, performance and effectiveness.
- 15.6.3 The Partnership will consult with a wide range of stakeholders including existing and potential applicants on any proposed major changes to this Lettings Scheme and the implications of such changes.

Appendix A

Glossary of Terms

Term	Explanation
ADHAC	Agricultural Dwelling House Advisory Committee
ASBO	Anti-Social Behaviour Order
Adequately Housed	Living in a property that is suitable for your needs
Applicant(s)	A person(s), submitting an application, or member of household
Application	Form to be included in the scheme and considered for housing
Area	Within the district boundaries of City of Lincoln and North Kesteven
Banding	How applicants are prioritised in the scheme
Bid	Process stating which vacancy they are interested in
CBL	Choice Based Lettings
Complaints Procedure	What is a complaint, how to make a complaint and how it will be dealt with
Council	City of Lincoln Council or North Kesteven District Council
Household	Individuals with intention of living together
Housing Related Debt	Works for which tenants are responsible, current or former rent arrears, rent advance/deposits payments, all other repayable payments
No Fixed Abode (NFA)	You have no fixed accommodation. Applicants who claim that they are of no fixed abode have to satisfy the Partnership that they genuinely have no settled accommodation and are living at various locations for very short period of time.
Lincs Homefinder Panel	Group of representatives from each Partner organisation that consider exceptional cases with implications for all Partners
Lincs Homefinder Partnership	Group of senior Officers and Councillors/Board Members from each Partner organisation, to monitor the performance and effectiveness of the Lincs Homefinder Scheme
Partner	A member organisation of this Scheme
Partnership	Organisations listed at <i>Section 1.1</i>
Policy	This Lincs Homefinder Choice Based Lettings Policy
Registration	Method of applying for housing
Registered Provider	An organisation that lets social housing
Repayment Agreement	An agreement made between landlords and applicants to repay and reduce housing related debts
Rough Sleepers	Those sleeping, about to bed down or actually beeded down in the open air or those in buildings (or other places) not designed for habitation
Stakeholders	Other agencies/organisations with an interest or involvement in the scheme or individual applications

Appendix B

LINCS HOMEFINDER – PRIORITY BANDINGS

Ref	Band 1 Criteria	Assessment/Evidence
1.1	Immediate and Significant Medical – Permanent condition and unable to continue to reside in current home	Appropriate support from medical professional
1.2	Urgent Welfare Need - unable to remain in current accommodation	Support from appropriate agencies
1.3	Succeeded to a tenancy but current home not suitable	Confirmation from Partner Tenancy/Neighbourhood Services
1.4	Social housing tenants, within partnership area, under-occupying by 2 bedrooms, leaving vacant possession	Homevisit
1.5	Approved ADHAC cases	Determination from ADHAC (North Kesteven only)
1.6	Urgent Disrepair - inc. but not limited to compulsory purchase order, Prohibition Order or emergency prohibition order (not due to willful neglect/damage)	Determined by a housing standards officer or equivalent
1.7	Statutory overcrowding	Confirmation of household and property size, maybe homevisit
1.8	Homeless households – unintentionally homeless and in priority need (full housing duty)	S184 letter by Partner

Ref	Band 2 Criteria	Assessment/Evidence
2.1	Homeless relief Duty Accepted AND in temporary Accommodation, inc those homeless at home	Decision by Partner
2.2	Urgent Medical Need - urgent need associated with alleviating or significantly improving condition	Medical self assessment, supporting prescriptions, other support by medical professional
2.3	Formal discharge notice of leaving the Armed Forces	Applicants will have to have participated in Options Interview with Partner and provided notice
2.4	Family living separately - who have previously lived together but current housing circumstances do not enable	Evidence of previously living together
2.5	Serious disrepair – Category 1 hazard (not due to willful damage or neglect)	Determined by a housing standards officer or equivalent
2.6	Applicant(s) WITH dependant children/pregnant lacking access to essential facilities or sharing with a household not moving (if awarded 2.7 will not apply)	
2.7	Applicant(s) lacking a least 1 bedroom, with permanent residency of a child or medical need for additional bedroom (if awarded 2.6 nor 2.2 will not apply)	
2.8	Occupying supported accommodation, for more than 3months, with a notice and confirmation to move on to more independent living	Appropriate confirmation from supported accommodation provider
2.9	Financial Difficulties – that could be alleviated by moving, but not due to own deliberate act	Income and essential expenditure assessment
2.10	Applicants subject to NKDC Flexi-secure tenancy review – whilst adequately housed have a need to move to more suitable accommodation	Confirmation from Partner Tenancy/Neighbourhood Services
2.11	Social housing tenants under-occupying by 1 bedroom, leaving vacant possession	Confirmation from Partner Tenancy/Neighbourhood Services

Ref	Band 3 Criteria	Assessment/Evidence
3.1	Homeless relief Duty Accepted and Not in Temporary Accommodation	As determined by Partner
3.2	Households at risk of homelessness and subject to prevention duty by a Partner	As determined by Partner
3.3	Medical Need – confirmed medical condition that would be improved by move to alternative accommodation	Medical self assessment, supporting prescriptions, other support by medical professional
3.4	Households with NO dependant children lacking access to essential facilities or sharing them with household no moving (if awarded 3.6 will not apply)	Confirmation of household and property size, maybe homevisit
3.5	Welfare Need – to provide or receive support, for isolated due to lack of transport	Support from relevant agency
3.6	Lacking 1 bedroom – inc those with regular overnight access	Require confirmation of access from main guardian
3.7	Employment – to improve access to current permanent employment	Employment confirmation
3.8	Moderate disrepair - likely to be assessed as at least 1 Category 2 hazard by a Housing Standards officer (not due to willful damage/neglect)	Determined by a housing standards officer or equivalent

Ref	Band 4 Criteria	Assessment/Evidence
4.1	Adequately housed	No evidence of priority as detailed above
4.2	Intentionally Homeless – both priority and non-priority need, but otherwise meets eligibility criteria and not considered a non-qualifying person	As determined by Partner
4.3	In housing need but deliberately worsened their circumstances, time limited for 6months from effective banding date	As determined by Partner
4.4	In housing need but have made 2 unreasonable refusals of offer, time limited for 6months from last unreasonable refusal	As determined by Partner
4.5	In housing need but considered financially able to resolve their housing needs	As determined by Partner

Appendix C

Property Eligibility – City of Lincoln

Please note that eligibility WILL differ between partners and landlords, **please check** individual vacancy adverts for full eligibility criteria for individual properties. A child is 15 or under for the purposes of this Lettings Policy and whom permanently resides with the applicant on a full time basis.

If the household has no under 16s permanently full time living with the applicant they are not entitled to a house and instead normally only be considered for a flat

Property Types: Bedsits, Flats, Maisonette, and Houses	Bedsit	Flat	House	Flat	Maisonette	House	Flat	Maisonette	House	House	House	House
No of Bedrooms	1			2			3			4	5	6
Single person	Y	Y	Y									
couple		Y	Y									
Single/couple pregnant				Y	Y	Y						
Single/couple no children but access to children		Y	Y									
Household with 1 child				Y	Y	Y						
Household with 2 children same gender;												
• both under 18				Y	Y	Y						
• one under 18 and one over 18							Y	Y	Y			
• Both over 18							Y	Y				
Households with 2 children different genders;												
• both under 10				Y	Y	Y						
• one under 10 and one over 10							Y	Y	Y			
• both over 10							Y	Y	Y			
Households with 3 children							Y	Y	Y			
Households with 4 children							Y	Y	Y	Y		
Households with 5 children										Y	Y	
Households with 6 children or more										Y	Y	Y
Sharing adults (not partners) or families with adult children				Y	Y							
2 people (2 adults or single person +adult child)				Y	Y							
-3 people (couple + 1 adult child)				Y	Y							
-3 people (single person + 2 adult children)							Y	Y				
-4 people (couple + 2 adult children)							Y	Y				
-4 people (single person + 3 adult children)							Y	Y				

Bedroom	1		2		3	
Property Type	Bungalow	Ground floor flat	Bungalow	Ground floor flat	Bungalow	Ground floor flat
Single/couple aged 18-59 with medical need	Y	Y				
Couple with medical need for ground floor and a need for an extra bedroom			Y	Y		
Single/couple aged 18-59 with no medical need						
Single/couple aged 60+	Y	Y				
Families with medical needs			Y	Y	Y	Y

Appendix D

Property Eligibility – North Kesteven

Please note that eligibility WILL differ between partners and landlords, **please check** individual vacancy adverts for full eligibility criteria for individual properties. A child is 15 or under for the purposes of this Lettings Policy and whom permanently resides with the applicant on a full time basis.

If the household has no under 16s permanently full time living with the applicant they are not entitled to a house and instead normally only be considered for a flat.

Those households that are not permanently occupying all bedrooms will be subject to affordability assessments.

Property Types: Bedsits, Flats, Maisonette, and Houses	Bedsit	Flat	House	Flat	Maisonette	House	Flat	Maisonette	House	House	House	House
No of Bedrooms	1			2			3			4	5	6
Single person	Y	Y	Y	Y								
Couple		Y	Y	Y	Y							
Single/couple - pregnant				Y	Y	Y						
Single/couple - no children but access to children		Y	Y	Y	Y							
Household with 1 child				Y	Y	Y						
Household with 2 children same gender:												
• both under 18				Y	Y	Y						
• one under 18 and one over 18				Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			
• Both over 18				Y	Y	Y	Y	Y				
Households with 2 children different genders:												
• both under 10				Y	Y	Y						
• one under 10 and one over 10							Y	Y	Y			
• both over 10							Y	Y	Y			
Households with 3 children							Y	Y	Y			
Households with 4 children							Y	Y	Y	Y		
Households with 5 children										Y	Y	
Households with 6+ children										Y	Y	Y
Sharing adults (not partners) or families with adult children;				Y	Y							
2 people (2 adults or single person +adult child)				Y	Y							
-3 people (couple + 1 adult child)				Y	Y							
-3 people (single person + 2 adult children)							Y	Y				
-4 people (couple + 2 adult children)							Y	Y				
-4 people (single person + 3 adult children)							Y	Y				

Property Type	Bungalow	Ground floor flat	Bungalow	Ground floor flat	Bungalow	Ground floor flat
No of Bedrooms	1		2		3	
Single/couple aged 18-59 with medical need for Ground floor		Y				
Single/couple aged 18-59 with specific need for bungalow	Y	Y				
Couple with medical need for ground floor and a need for an extra bedroom				Y		
Couple with specific need for bungalow and a need for an extra bedroom			Y	Y		
Single/couple aged 18-59 with no medical need (but will rank lower than those who need ground floor)		Y				
Single/couple aged 60+	Y	Y				
Families with medical need for ground floor				Y		Y
Families with no ground floor need (but will rank lower than those who need ground floor)				Y		Y
Families with specific need for bungalow			Y	Y	Y	Y
Group with at least 1 aged 60+			Y	Y	Y	Y
Group all aged under 60 with ground floor need				Y		Y
Group all aged under 60 with specific need for bungalow			Y	Y	Y	Y
Group all aged under 60 with no ground floor need (but will rank lower than those who need ground floor)				Y		Y

Appendix F

PARTNER CONTACTS FOR COMPLAINTS

City of Lincoln Council

Post: City of Lincoln Council, City Hall, Beaumont Fee, Lincoln, LN1 1DD
Email: housing@lincoln.gov.uk
Tel: 01522 873641

North Kesteven District Council

Post: Complaints Officer at FREEPOST NKDC
Email: Complaints@n-kesteven.gov.uk
Tel: 01529 414155 or 01522 699699

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**SUBJECT: LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY
2017-2021**

DIRECTORATE: DIRECTORATE OF HOUSING AND REGENERATION

REPORT AUTHOR: ALISON TIMMINS

HOUSING SOLUTIONS AND SUPPORT MANAGER

CONSULTATION CONFIRMATION

DEPARTMENT	CONSULTEE NAME	CONSULTATION START	CONSULTATION COMPLETED
Legal	Becky Scott	18.10.17	27.10.17
Finance	Rob Baxter	18.10.17	27.10.17
HR	Claire Burroughs	18.10.17	27.10.17

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- provide an overview of the Lincolnshire County Homelessness Strategy 2017-2021; and
- seek approval of the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-2021

2. Executive Summary

2.1 The Lincolnshire County Homelessness Strategy Group has worked together to undertake a review of homelessness within the area and to produce the third countywide strategy. A range of stakeholders have been consulted throughout the process.

2.2 In line with the national picture, homelessness in Lincolnshire is increasing.

2.3 Five key themes have emerged:

- Partnership – developing and maintaining strategic partnerships
- Prevent – preventing homelessness wherever possible
- Protect – the most vulnerable from homelessness including rough sleeping
- Place – ensuring the right housing solutions for households
- Possibility – working towards a sustainable future for supported housing

2.4 A county wide delivery plan, which requires work from each local authority both individually and as a partnership, is under development to address the above themes. Progress against the action plan will be co-ordinated and monitored through the Lincolnshire County Homelessness Strategy Group and District Housing Network.

3. Background

3.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires that all Housing 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.

- 3.2 The Lincolnshire County Homelessness Strategy Group (LCHSG) consists of members from each local authority in Lincolnshire together with other statutory and voluntary organisations. The partnership basis of the Lincolnshire County Homelessness Strategy Group has been recognised as an example of best practice. This has enabled the successful development of two previous countywide Homelessness Strategies and given the group access to additional funding to support service provision across the county. The Strategy sets the direction for homelessness activity across Lincolnshire between 2017 and 2021 and has been developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and service users through a variety of consultation events and methods.
- 3.3 In line with the national picture, homelessness in Lincolnshire is increasing. It is predicted that increased unemployment combined with higher levels of personal debt, will lead to many more people in our area becoming at risk of losing their home. Compounded by welfare reform and policy change, limited supply of social housing and limited development of affordable housing, there has never been more need to work as a partnership in Lincolnshire. The complexity of homelessness requires innovative partnership working - sharing skills, expertise and supporting one another - to prevent and tackle homelessness for each person in need of our services.

4. Review

- 4.1 A homelessness review has been carried out by LCHSG across the seven local authority areas in Lincolnshire (Boston, Lincoln, East Lindsey, South Kesteven, North Kesteven, South Holland and West Lindsey). The purpose of the review is to:
- establish the current level of homelessness across the county,
 - project its likely growth (or decline) in future years,
 - identify what is currently being done and by whom, and
 - identify what level of resources are available to prevent and tackle homelessness in the future

5. Consultation

- 5.1 A range of stakeholders have been involved and consulted throughout the lifetime of the previous strategy. This level of consultation and engagement has continued throughout the review and preparation of this new draft strategy. Multi-agency workshops started in July 2015 and culminated in an action planning event held in March 2016. The events included Elected Members, Housing Advice Teams, voluntary and statutory agencies and current service providers, and will continue until final version.

6. Developing the Strategy

- 6.1 The Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-21 is a framework for all seven Lincolnshire authorities. It encourages partnership working with all stakeholders to deliver our priorities to prevent and tackle homelessness during a changing policy environment and challenging economic climate. Aligned with national and regional strategies, this document sets out our key priorities to ensure appropriate access and support to those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness across Lincolnshire.

7. Key Priorities

7.1 The following key themes have emerged:

- Partnership – developing and maintaining strategic partnerships
- Prevent – preventing homelessness wherever possible
- Protect – the most vulnerable from homelessness including rough sleeping
- Place – ensuring the right housing solutions for households
- Possibility – working towards a sustainable future for supported housing

7.2 The implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, has additional duties that will see a significant increase in case work, particularly for those previously considered non-priority, and in terms of general case management. The Government recognises there are additional burdens for local housing authorities as a result of this Act and their anticipated reporting requirements. We are already developing a specific response for the City of Lincoln to implement this Act.

7.3 A countywide delivery plan, which requires work from each local authority both individually and as a partnership, is under development to address the above themes. Progress against the action plan will be co-ordinated and monitored through the Lincolnshire County Homelessness Strategy Group and District Housing Network.

8. Funding

8.1 Local Authorities receive an annual grant from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to assist with the delivery of homelessness prevention services and it has been implied that this will continue to 2019/2020. The Council has also been awarded two more sets of short term funding, the Flexible Homeless Support Grant and New Burdens Funding, both of which are ring-fenced for homelessness activities and will be used to help implement the Homelessness Reduction Act.

8.2 Over the course of the previous strategy LCHSG successfully accessed other funding opportunities for specific activities including additional refuge provision, youth homelessness and rough sleeping. The group is looking to build on this and has recently been successful in its bid for Social Impact Bond funding (payments by results), where the partnership has commissioned P3 to work with entrenched rough sleepers or those at risk of returning to the street, with key health, training and employment outcomes. A further bid is proposed to access funding to work with Migrants who have no recourse to public funds.

9. Monitoring the Strategy

9.1 The Lincolnshire County Homelessness Strategy Group (LCHSG) is the body that brings together agencies across Lincolnshire supporting homeless and vulnerable people, and will deliver and monitor the actions of the strategy. This includes actions for the county as a whole to work together to enable the delivery of and actions where each authority must play its part to enable the successful delivery of the priorities. An annual review of the progress will be produced. The District Housing Network will receive regular updates and help inform future delivery.

10. City of Lincoln

- 10.1 There are many benefits to a joint strategy to address the common themes and challenges faced by all in Lincolnshire, but it is important that we maintain a local perspective for those issues specific to City of Lincoln and requiring a local solution. We will therefore continue to work with our partners to identify local issues and shape/improve our services at a district level.
- 10.2 The table below provides a summary of statutory homelessness in Lincoln, over recent years and in context of Lincolnshire as a whole:

Year	BBC	ELDC	COLC	NKDC	SHDC	SKDC	WLDC	Total
2010/11	79	151	95	34	59	198	60	676
2011/12	84	159	156	51	63	245	36	795
2012/13	71	204	240	42	53	219	31	860
2013/14	82	175	251	68	80	219	44	923
2014/15	98	134	347	80	78	263	62	1062
2015/16	91	103	242	99	76	238	33	929
2016/2017	94	127	242	89	95	268	101	1078

- 10.3 Emerging challenges for City of Lincoln are:

- access to affordable housing options for all client groups but especially single persons aged under 35, reliant on Housing Benefit or Local Housing Allowance
- increase in rough sleeping
- general private sector housing access
- implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act

11. Strategic Priorities

11.1 Let's reduce inequality

The County Homelessness Strategy will have a positive impact on this strategic priority by working some of the most disadvantaged households across the county.

12. Organisational Impacts

12.1 Finance

None as a direct result of this report. Majority of the content will be met within the DCLG homelessness grant received direct to individual local authorities and the recent Partnership Funding that was awarded to Lincolnshire as a whole. It should be noted that there are tasks within the action plan that may have financial implications but this will be considered as and when required. As with all partnership arrangements, there is an element of risk based upon co-operation and contribution to the strategy, however the LCHSG is an established group with proven success from three previous homelessness strategies and effective funding bids.

12.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules

As set out in the report, the Homelessness Act 2002 requires all local authorities to

complete a homelessness review and have a Homelessness Strategy

12.3 Human Resources

It is anticipated that commitment to progressing the strategy and action plan can be met within existing resources. Each Local Authority currently contributes to the post of Lincolnshire Homelessness Prevention Manager, which is hosted by West Lindsey District Council on behalf of the LCHSG as a whole, City of Lincoln's contribution is met from the DCLG Homelessness Grant.

12.4 Equality, Diversity & Human Rights

An Equality Impact Assessment has been produced. There is no evidence to show that this Strategy will have a detrimental impact on any group, rather the Strategy will positively impact disadvantaged groups.

13. Risk Implications

13.1 None identified.

14. Recommendation

14.1 It is recommended that Executive endorses the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2017 – 2021, and the intention to develop a detailed action plan.

Is this a key decision?

Yes/No

All key decisions require 28 days' public notice. If in doubt, please check with Democratic Services.

Do the exempt information categories apply?

No

Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply?

No

How many appendices does the report contain?

List of Background Papers:

None

Lead Officer:

Alison Timmins
Housing Solutions and Support Manager
Telephone (01522) 873402

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Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy

2017-2021



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welcome

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lincolnshire in context

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



5,921km²

743,400
Estimated population 2016



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

Boston

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

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

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

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

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



66,500
19.3% increase in
population since 2001

£411.20

Gross weekly full
time pay

Compared with an East
Midlands average of

£492

City of Lincoln

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

In 2015 Lincoln had ten areas that were in the highest 10% of deprived areas nationally. This has increased from seven areas in 2010 and five areas in 2007 according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation. The ten areas equate to 16,014 Lincoln residents and 16.5% of the total City of Lincoln population.

Although there is growth in the local housing market this is at levels significantly less than that assessed as needed in the local plan. The highest growth is in the number of flats with 2,110 being built in the last ten years.

There has been a significant increase in the number of private rented properties in the last fifteen years and this is partly due to the growth of the universities and consequent student numbers. A quarter of the City's total housing stock is now private rented and with estimates of non-decency at 36% and Category 1 Hazards, under the Housing and Health Rating System, at 21% the sector present significant challenges.

The City's age demographic is younger than the rest of the County, which is mainly driven by University growth, but this can mask the growing demand and need for support and care services from the permanently resident population.

In the five years from 2012/13 to 2016/17, the number of people formally approaching the City Council as homeless, with the exception of one year, stayed at a fairly consistent 240-250 households per annum. Within that though there has been a movement towards younger age levels presenting themselves as homeless. In line with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 the Council is targeting more resources on homelessness prevention activities in forthcoming years.

Rough sleeping in Lincoln is increasing, as evidenced by the formal annual rough sleeping count of 2017. A range of support and accommodation services are already operated by several agencies within the City. The short term focus in addressing rough sleeping is to develop closer partnerships between the third sector and statutory agencies to ensure consistency of both support and emergency accommodation.



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



97,065
Residents across approximately
44,600 households



2,110
flats being built



242
people as
homeless

East Lindsey

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

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

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

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

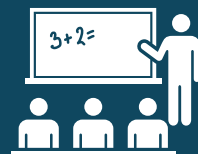
national average and this gap has widened. There are few major employers, and lots of self-employed and micro businesses.

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

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

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

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



Poor employment,
training and education
opportunities

11.6% Adults claim
key out of
work benefits



High levels
of seasonal
employment



28,000
static caravans bring
many challenges



1351
New affordable
homes

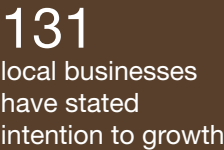
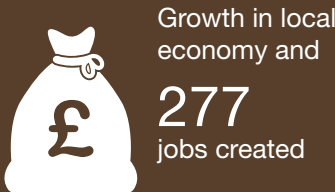
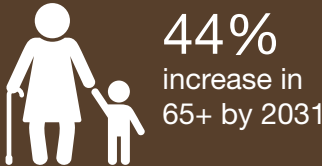
North Kesteven

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

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

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

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



South Holland

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

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



39.2%
own their own
home without a
mortgage



33.3%
home owners
with a mortgage



12.7%
privately rent/rent
within
social housing



6,250+
new homes
planned over 2
major sites



20%
population
increase since 2001

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



South Kesteven

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


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

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

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

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

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



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



Stamford
best place to live in Britain
Sunday Times 2013



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



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

West Lindsey

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The district is predominantly rural and has a diverse housing market



4.3% growth
in population
30% increase
by 2030



21%
of population in
the census was
of retirement age

Reflecting on the previous Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2012 – 2016

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

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

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

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

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

PREVENTION

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

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

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

- we enhanced our understanding of the links between homelessness and offending to achieve better risk management and enable more settled housing solutions
- Together with statutory and voluntary partners, we developed our Vulnerable Adult Panels across Lincolnshire to assist in meeting the needs of complex and chaotic households

WELFARE REFORM

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

YOUNG PEOPLE

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

other local authority areas across the country.

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

ROUGH SLEEPING

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

Strategy introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

NATIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT AND DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR STRATEGY?

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

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

Home ownership opportunities will be varied across

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

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

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

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR STRATEGY?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR STRATEGY?

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

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

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

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

Since the 2010 and 2015 General Elections, there has been

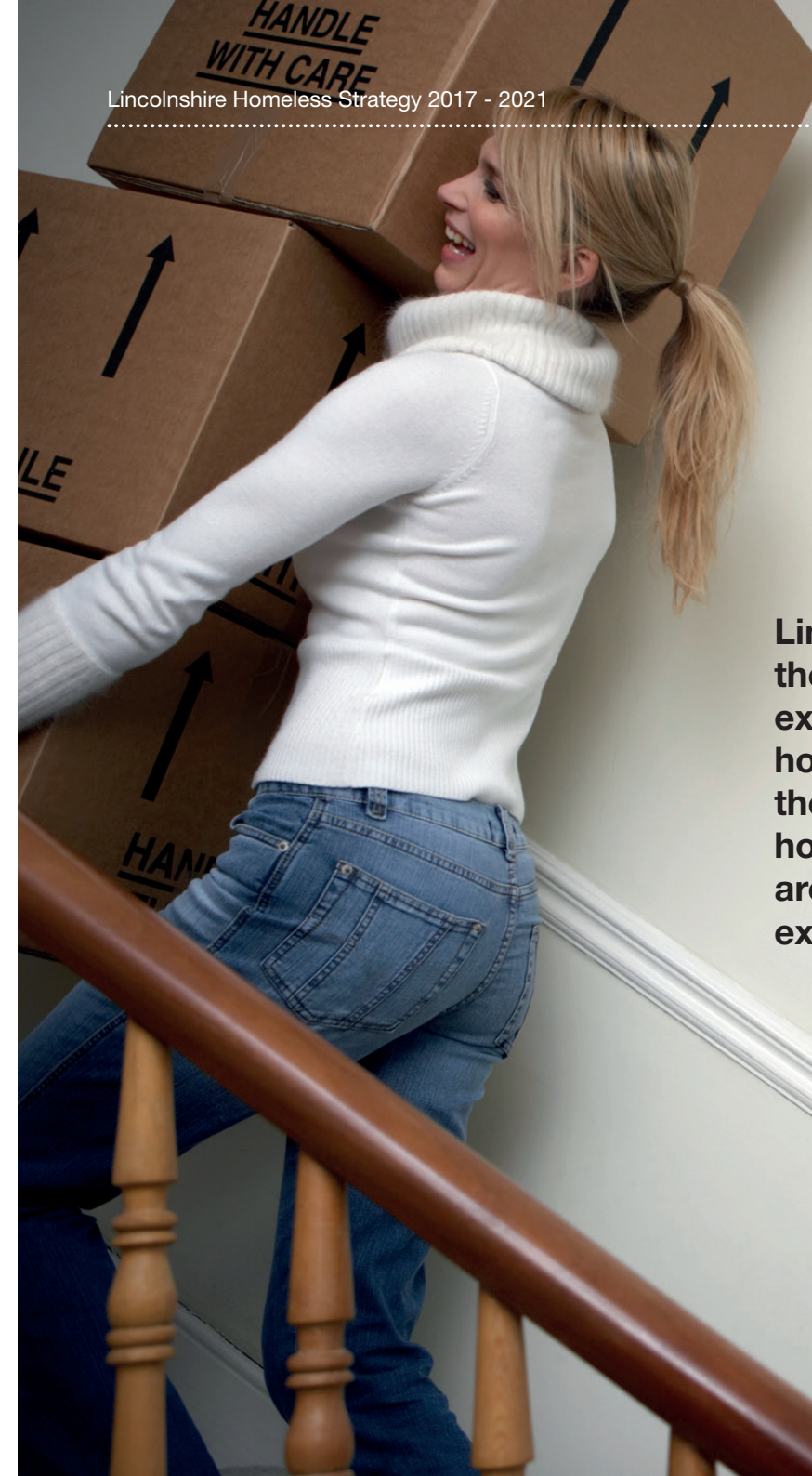
a strong government focus on reform to the Welfare Benefits system. There have been a number of national drivers for these reforms, including a tightening of government expenditure on welfare budgets and a policy focus on encouraging and supporting households to take up employment opportunities as opposed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

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

THE DESIGN OF KEY ASPECTS OF THE UNIVERSAL CREDIT SYSTEM

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

A large number of housing and homelessness charities



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO THE 'REMOVAL OF THE SPARE BEDROOM SUBSIDY'

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

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR STRATEGY?

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

The government's use of Universal Credit to encourage greater personal responsibility in relation to budgeting requires those working in the homelessness agenda across the county to consider the importance of budgeting advice and financial inclusion as a tool to protect and mitigate against vulnerable households experiencing debt and homelessness.

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

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

A shifting role for social housing in meeting housing need

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

subsidised accommodation.

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

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR STRATEGY?

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

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

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

In August 2016, the cross-party Communities and Local Government Committee published the findings of its



Debt



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

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

Key measures in the Act include:

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

fewer households reach a crisis situation.

- A new duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible homeless applicants, regardless of priority need. This help could be, for example, the provision of a rent deposit or debt advice. Those who have a priority need will be provided with interim accommodation whilst the Local Housing Authority carries out the reasonable steps.
- A new duty on public services to notify a local authority if they come into contact with someone they think may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. It is hoped that this measure will ensure that a person's housing situation is considered when they come into contact with wider public services, and encourage public services to build strong relationships based on local need and circumstances.

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

out a view that legislative change will only deliver ambitions to reduce homelessness if implemented as part of a coherent, workable, long-term national strategy for ending homelessness. The committee reported the view that a successful strategy would review the impact of national policy on homelessness trends and bring together local housing, health, justice and employment partners.

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

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR STRATEGY?

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

Proposed changes to the future funding of supported housing

A policy statement issued in October 2017 set out proposed changes to the funding of supported housing. These proposals are currently out to consultation but include changes to short term and transitional supported housing to be through a new ring fenced grant to local authorities in England.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR STRATEGY?

There remains a great deal of uncertainty at the time of drafting this document, however, partners across Lincolnshire remain committed to working together to

feed into the government consultation, undertake a needs analysis and develop a strategic supported housing plan. Throughout the life of this strategy we will need to continue to work together to ensure effective pathways for vulnerable people that rely on supported accommodation.

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

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



Homelessness in context in Lincolnshire

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Homelessness Decisions 2016/17

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

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

Homeless Duty Acceptances 2016/17

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Acceptances/1000 population 2016/17

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

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR STRATEGY?

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

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

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

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

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

Domestic abuse is a key driver of homelessness across Lincolnshire

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

Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate

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

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

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR STRATEGY?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Homeless People - Priority Needs

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

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

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

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR STRATEGY?

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

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

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

A continued challenge to tackle rough sleeping in Lincolnshire

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

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

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

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

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

The introduction of restrictions to the welfare entitlement for EEA nationals

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The challenges facing us include:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR STRATEGY?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR STRATEGY?

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

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

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

Priorities, Delivery Plan and Governance

We have used the sections above on ‘national and local context and drivers for change’ (pages 21 – 33) and ‘homelessness in context in Lincolnshire’ (pages 35 – 46) to formulate the following Key Priorities that we hope to focus on and achieve throughout the life of this strategy. We will meet these priorities through working to meet the actions set out in a Delivery Plan. Accompanying this strategy will be our first Delivery Plan which will run for the first two years following launch of the strategy. We will undertake a review of our Delivery Plan after 18 months and consider progress, whether it is still fit for purpose and whether other actions need to be added.

The Key Priorities are:

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

Effective governance arrangements are key to driving change and improvements across the sector. Coordination of our Delivery Plan and associated work programmes will be the responsibility of Lincolnshire’s Homelessness Prevention Programme Manager. This post will be accountable to the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy Partnership. Any further demands will be met from a combination of existing resource, partnership working and any future funding from Government.

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

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

South Holland District Council

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

North Kesteven District Council

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

West Lindsey District Council

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

East Lindsey District Council

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

Boston Borough Council

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

South Kesteven District Council

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

City of Lincoln Council

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



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