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FOREWORD

A home is one of our most fundamental needs. Without it, we find it difficult to secure work, our children can't attend school, gain access to health services and social support, we can't create that wider family of friends, neighbours and community so vital to our health and happiness. Homelessness lays waste to much of what we consider essential to a full and happy life. We recognise this and in this City of Lincoln Homelessness Strategy, we set out a bold vision to end homelessness altogether.

I know some people will feel it too ambitious given the challenges we continue to face in terms of lack of housing, high rents and the damage caused by years of austerity. But given how important a home is to all of us, aiming for anything less than ending homelessness seems much too cautious. We have faced down many problems over the last decade and made great progress in helping the most vulnerable of our city find a way into secure and settled housing. And this progress, with this Strategy will continue. We present a range of practical and realistic measures which, over the next five years, will move us closer to ending homelessness in our city.

I know this vision is challenging and ambitious. It is a challenge to my colleagues, your political leaders, to take a long-term view of the problems of homelessness facing our city. It is a challenge to Officers to find creative solutions to the day-to-day problems they face. To our partners, we need you to work closely to achieve this ambitious goal. But together, I believe we can do this. We can end homelessness. We will.

Councillor Donald Nannestad
Executive Member for Housing
City of Lincoln Council

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INTRODUCTION

Dominating the skyline, Lincoln's cathedral is a powerful reminder of the city's extraordinary history as a religious and administrative centre of great power and influence. It is now a modern, developing, and forward-looking city. It is an international centre for education with two universities, and over 18,000 home and international students arriving for study each year. Lincoln is a small city with a global reach.

For permanent residents this status brings both benefits and challenges. Its vibrancy is apparent in a young and active population, relatively high levels of economic activity in the city, and lower levels of involuntary worklessness than most English urban areas. The City of Lincoln wishes to build on its successes economically and continue to attract and sustain its youthful and ambitious population. In terms of homelessness, however, economic success and cultural vibrancy create a demand for housing that exceeds supply and drives house prices and rents to levels unaffordable for many local people. Problems of housing insecurity and homelessness are exacerbated by a mismatch between income and housing costs caused at least in part by Lincoln's economic success and academic reach.

The wider Housing Strategy now in preparation will take a broad view of what measures are needed to deliver enough good quality housing at all levels of affordability to meet the needs of future generations of Lincoln residents. It will recognise the economic prosperity and quality of life of all Lincoln citizens depends on the good quality housing to be available at all levels of affordability. This Homelessness Strategy focuses on the particular problems related to housing insecurity and homelessness, delving deeper into the level and causes of homelessness in the City. It provides a contextual and comparative analysis of Lincoln's housing market and characteristic, making connections between the wider demographic, economic and social factors framing homelessness in the city, and uses this analysis to locate possible solutions to the increasing problems faced by a substantial proportion of Lincoln residents in finding safe, secure, and pleasant homes. Perhaps most importantly, this analysis provides a solid, evidence-based foundation for an ambitious long-term vision to rid Lincoln of homelessness altogether.

The City of Lincoln

The City of Lincoln is one of seven district councils operating within a two-tier local authority area, delivering services alongside Lincolnshire County Council. Lincolnshire County Council maintains responsibility for strategic services such as public health, adult and children's services, and some aspects of planning and transportation. Responsibility for housing strategy and delivery lies solely with the City of Lincoln.

Within this two-tier administrative structure, partnerships are vital to

- Deliver seamless services to residents,
- Achieve economies of scale and
- Work across administrative boundaries in recognition of the geographical closeness and connectedness between the City of Lincoln and the rest of the county.

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There are a number of excellent examples of such partnerships in the delivery of waste and recycling through the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership, and the recent adoption of a local plan covering the City of Lincoln and adjoining areas of North Kesteven and West Lindsey.

In homelessness too, partnership is vital to the success of our strategies. We know homelessness is often a symptom of other problems, vulnerabilities, and disadvantages. For example, the City of Lincoln will provide accommodation for care leavers when they are ready for independent living after being in County Council care. When we provide housing to vulnerable adults, we will also work hand in hand with the County Council to provide seamless and holistic services in support of these vulnerable residents. Working closely with Lincolnshire County Council is vital to achieving our objectives, and through this strategy, we hope to cement our already excellent working relationships in strong joint commitments for the next five years.

A VISION FOR LINCOLN

Lincoln's Housing Strategy 2020-2025 identifies the prevention of homelessness and provision of sufficient suitable accommodation as its first objective. This Homelessness Strategy interrogates the background to homelessness in Lincoln and identifies the measures necessary to tackle the scourge of housing insecurity in the city. It goes further, however, in stating a bold vision:

To make homelessness a thing of the past in the City of Lincoln.

We know we will face enormous challenges along the way. There is a wider crisis of affordability across the UK driving increasing rates of homelessness in every urban location. Over the last ten years, national austerity measures have disproportionately affected the most vulnerable and least powerful residents in their struggle to find housing on reduced real incomes and benefit levels. In Lincoln, homeless people must compete with a large younger, student population for private sector housing. All of these difficult contextual factors have driven increases in homelessness in Lincoln, particularly amongst single applicants, who now have greater rights to assistance following implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act in 2018.

Our Objectives

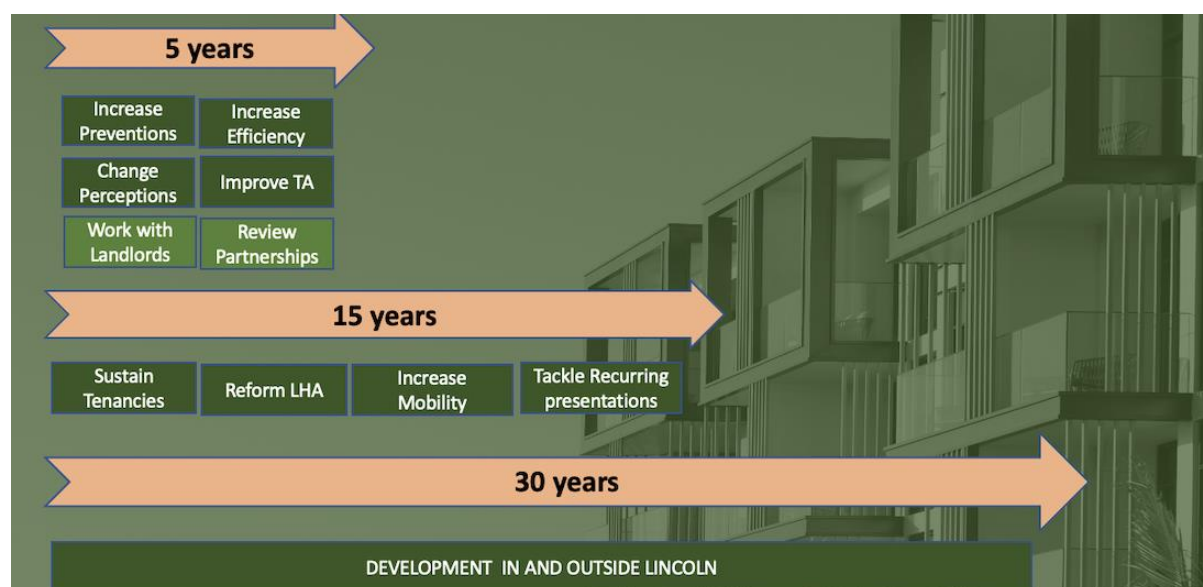
We are determined to use our powers as a Housing Authority to face these challenges directly and with resolve. Over the course of this Strategy period, we aim to make homelessness a rare, brief, and non-recurring life event. **We aim to:**

1. **Make homeless a *rare occurrence* by early intervention and timely homeless prevention.**
2. **Make homelessness *as brief* as possible by providing high quality temporary and supported accommodation at points of crisis.**

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3. Make the experience of homelessness a *one-off* occurrence by increasing access to secure and settled homes in Lincoln.

This strategy runs for five years to 2029, but our vision will take longer to achieve; eliminating homelessness will require actions in the short, medium, and long term. We will prioritise actions likely to deliver quick wins on supply and demand, and work with our partners to build a strong consensus for medium term actions, and with local politicians to encourage radical thinking and a long-term view.



Our Values

We understand homelessness as both a distressing state and, too often, as a symptom of other problems and vulnerabilities. Our values are firmly rooted in a belief that we can help those experiencing homelessness to move forward positively with their lives. We believe:

- **Everyone can find a way through homelessness to a settled and secure home.** This belief informs every interaction we have with our residents, we will always be committed to finding solutions to housing problems and offering chances to those who feel they have run out of options.
- **Everyone is entitled to fair and equal access to good housing.** We believe strongly in making sure every resident receives fair and equal treatment in the allocation of help and support, and temporary and permanent accommodation. This means recognising that each applicant has a unique history that must be recognised and accounted for when we provide advice and services.
- **Everyone should be treated with the same courtesy and respect we would expect to be shown to our families and ourselves.** Many people only approach homeless services in moments of crisis and distress. We will not add to this distress by offering anything less than the same treatment and compassion we would wish for ourselves and our families in our darker moments.

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Our Legal Duties

We believe we have a human and moral duty to eliminate homelessness in Lincoln, but we recognise our legal duties to address homelessness must frame all our activities.

Homelessness has a particular legal meaning now defined in the **Homelessness Reduction Act 2018**. The Act represents the most fundamental revision of homelessness legislation since the 1977 Homeless Persons Act first placed local authorities under a duty to provide both temporary and permanent accommodation to those found to be (legally) homeless. It introduced:

- *A duty to assess* all applicants regardless of their priority need and to agree a housing plan.
- *A new prevention duty*, which requires local authorities to actively support applicants for 56 days to prevent their homelessness and in some circumstances to provide temporary accommodation whilst in the process.
- *A new relief duty*, which requires local authorities to take actions to relieve homelessness where the applicant falls into this category.
- *A duty to refer* – placed on all agencies working with potential housing applicants, it requires the housing authority to receive and respond to those referrals constructively.

The Act widens the duties of local authorities to assist anybody whose housing is under threat, including large groups of single applicants who would not have received any assistance under the old legal regime. This facet of the legislation has accelerated demand for smaller units of accommodation and hostels nationally, and in Lincoln, might account for the rise in single applicants, in TA provision and in needs for housing support. The Homeless Reduction Act 2018 frames delivery of all homeless and temporary accommodation services in Lincoln.

The **Housing Act 1996**, as amended by the Localism Act 2011, requires each local authority to operate an Allocations Scheme that gives reasonable preference to certain categories of applicant, homeless people being one category. Explicitly, now, local authorities are empowered to offer private sector accommodation in discharge of their duties to homeless people. In practise, the availability of affordable private sector accommodation in many areas has led to the continued prioritisation of homeless people in social housing allocations.

The **Local Housing Allowance (LHA)** was introduced in 2008 to introduce some parity between private and social housing rent levels through introducing a benefit calculation linked to the cheapest 50% of rents in any administrative area. In 2011, austerity measures further restricted the housing benefit levels restricted by changing the method of calculation to use only the cheapest 30% of rents in any administrative area to calculate the LHA, with a four-year freeze on LHA introduced in April 2016. Pressures on public finances have seen the cap frozen and then reduced since 2011, increasing pressures on homeless services

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where private sector rents exceed benefit levels. The particularly severe local impact of restricted LHA is explored in the Private Housing Section.

In the course of this strategy period, it is likely **the Renters Reform Bill**, introduced to parliament in May 2023, will become law. The most significant elements of the Bill aim to offer greater protection to tenants against unfair landlord practises by:

- Abolishing section 21 'no fault' evictions and moving to a simpler tenancy structure where all assured tenancies are periodic – providing more security for tenants and empowering them to challenge poor practice and unfair rent increases without fear of eviction.
- Introduce more comprehensive possession grounds so landlords can still recover their property.
- Provide stronger protections against backdoor eviction by giving tenants the right to appeal excessive rents where those rents are designed to force them out of the property. As now, landlords will still be able to increase rents to market price for their properties and an independent tribunal will make a judgement on this.
- Introduce a new Private Rented Sector Ombudsman which will provide fair, impartial, and binding resolution to landlord/tenant problems.
- Give tenants the right to request a pet in the property, which the landlord must consider and cannot unreasonably refuse.

A positive impact might be expected in the short term as evictions are prevented in at least some cases, however the longer-term effect on private sector supply will not be known until the full provisions of the Act are confirmed. At the very least, the time it takes to evict any household is likely to be extended by the new laws, creating a longer window of opportunity for homeless prevention interventions. Responding to and capitalising on expected changes to tenancy law will be a key outcome of this strategy.

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PARTNERSHIP

The City of Lincoln is committed to close working with a range of local partners including other districts and the county council, our statutory partners and the charitable and Third Sector organisations who operate in the city. We recognise homelessness is often a symptom of wide disadvantage, addressing it in ways that will make it a condition which is uncommon, brief, and non-recurring will often involve inputs from a wide range of agencies and authorities. Working within a two-tier structure means some key services such as health, social care, and some rough sleeping services are delivered by the County Council, while others are greatly dependent on support from and consensus with neighbouring districts. We see these partnerships as a deep resource through the City of Lincoln can enhance, widen, and deepen services to our residents. Partnership is a key theme that cuts across all objectives of this strategy.

The 'duty to refer' came into operation in 2020, placing external agencies under a duty to identify potentially homeless households and bring them to the formal attention of homeless services. This has created an additional layer of formality to the layers of informal partnerships surrounding homeless services. Working relationships between services are good, and there are many examples of sophisticated multi-agency responses to the most difficult and pressing problems. There are challenges, however. The administrative complexity of working in a two-tier hierarchy and with districts of different socio-economic profiles and political complexions involves a significant investment of time and good will. One key outcome of our strategy is to identify areas where joint working could enhance delivery, focussing attention on the need for structures and investment to support them.



Lincolnshire County Council is a primary partner in the delivery of this strategy. We will work closely with the Council in the following key areas of strategy and service delivery.

Strategy and Planning

Homelessness is a condition that is neither generated entirely within the boundaries of the city, nor solvable within those boundaries. In the life of this strategy, we will work with the County to further develop a strong county-wide approach to tackling homelessness, which includes strategic and cross borough initiatives, and a more structural approach to tackling entrenched problems. We hope to:

- Contribute to review and revision of the Lincolnshire Homeless Strategy
- Contribute to funding of the county-wide data-collection and analysis team.
- Contribute constructively to the six-weekly meetings with Lincolnshire County Council to address strategic issues and resolve case-based problems.

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Over the five-year period of the strategy, we will also formalise our joint working arrangements wherever possible, creating shared protocols in key service areas.

Rough Sleeping

With health and social care services within the purview of the County Council, delivering seamless services to rough-sleepers and to vulnerable applicants with complex care needs is one of the most important areas of cooperation between city and county. A county-wide assessment, support and move-on service is funded by the County Council, commissioned, and delivered by Framework HA. This service is the primary source of housing support and specialist assessment for people with complex needs and/or a history of rough sleeping.

County funding of the assertive outreach element was withdrawn suddenly in 2020 and the City of Lincoln assumed direct responsibility and funding for this vital service to the most vulnerable rough sleepers. This service is now fully embedded in the wider homelessness service, but the change has created even greater impetus for seamless referral processes between County adult social care service and a clear, shared understanding of the different roles and remits of the two services. Developing and enhancing existing protocols is a key outcome for the life of this strategy, with a focus on making sure outreach is embedded within the processes of both the Framework HA support contract and statutory housing services.

In terms of strategy, there is a need for far better understanding of the pathways into rough sleeping and the need for accommodation both in terms of location and levels of support. Progress has already been made with the creation of a centralised data collection and analysis team within the County Council, and during the life of this strategy, the intention is to use better intelligence to inform a more strategic approach to service planning.

This is highly relevant to the need to coordinate funding applications across the County. The national framework for tackling rough sleeping is complex in requiring bids to separate funding pots for services and accommodation. In Lincolnshire, the two-tier administration adds to this complexity. Working together, we hope to better understand pathways into homelessness and service outcomes and use this intelligence to ground a more coordinated approach to funding bids.

Children

The homeless service already gives high priority to helping vulnerable families to settled and secure accommodation. There is an additional responsibility to cross refer to children's services in cases where intentionality has been established, or where there are concerns about the welfare of children identified during the homeless process. There are effective joint working arrangements in place where these concerns occur, and we intend to document and formalise these processes in the lifetime of this strategy. The enhanced homeless prevention and diversion measures identified in the body of this strategy are likely to offer additional housing options both to families and young people unable to access social housing.

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Care leavers

Services for care leavers are located within the County Council, with the City of Lincoln taking on a 'corporate parenting' role in locating and providing suitable accommodation either to meet emergency accommodation needs or to offer longer term accommodation to young people ready to live independently. This is complex relationship given the County Council is responsible for making sure young people are ready to maintain a tenancy before referral, and the City Council is responsible for finding the right tenancy and helping the young person settle in and prosper in their first independent home. Working relationships on individual rehousing cases are currently good, with both city and county committed to finding the best housing outcome for this particularly vulnerable group of young people. As evidence, of the 475 young people supported by the County Council it is estimated that over 97% are suitably accommodated. This suggests the need for emergency placements is confined to a tiny minority of very vulnerable young people, but when they arise, they can prove extremely difficult to manage at short notice. It is recognised that many care leavers will choose to live in the City of Lincoln above other districts when their time to move on comes.

Working arrangements are reliant on the excellent interpersonal arrangements built up between teams, and it is intended, in the course of this strategy, to document processes and formalise this relationship through a formal protocol. This is felt necessary to manage the small number of very complex cases that occur each year and to make sure there is continuity in the event of staff change. DLUHC has adopted the care leavers protocol developed by Barnardo's and St Basils, and one way of strengthening this area of joint working could be to review existing arrangements against national good practise guidelines. This review, however, will have a wider benefit in offering City and County Councils an opportunity to reflect on and review their shared duties to care leaves.



Working with the six rural Districts is necessary to deliver key housing outcomes in relation to new supply and rough sleeping.

Rough Sleeping

The need for closer working with the County is mirrored by the need to recognise and encompass the different perspectives on rough sleeping within other Lincolnshire districts. Moves to harmonise funding applications for rough sleeping grants are potentially difficult given the different perspectives of rural and urban districts, the distance between County Council and diverse district localities, and the need to negotiate different political outlooks and desires in relation to rough sleeping applications. The move towards a more intelligent and data driven foundation for funding applications provides an opportunity to confront these structural difficulties, and perhaps to address them through an agreed shared approach to bidding for future funds.

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Strategy

In 2022, the seven Lincolnshire Districts produced a County-wide homelessness strategy, which set out approaches to homeless reduction from all seven district councils and demonstrated a potential for the districts to work together on key initiatives of common interest despite their diversity. This is an example of joint working that should inform future joint strategic projects, like the current assessment of the accommodation needs of rough sleepers.

Development

Redressing the loss of social housing through development is necessary to realising the objective of making homelessness a one-off occurrence in the City of Lincoln. However, opportunities for development within the City of Lincoln are limited by its size, historic nature, infrastructure capacity and by site costs. This is recognised in the recently adopted (April 2023) Local Plan for central Lincolnshire which provides a framework for development across the three districts of the City of Lincoln, West Lindsey and North Kesteven, and a template for joint working in relation to necessary increases in the supply of housing.

Hospitals

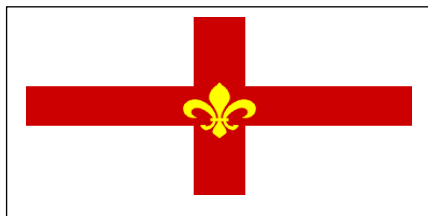
Lincoln County Hospital services the City of Lincoln in terms of acute health services and is the source of most discharges from hospital to the homeless service. There is a dedicated Hospital Discharge Officer working in the hospital, and the number of unplanned discharges is felt to be relatively low. Nonetheless, when there is an unplanned discharge, it will tend to be problematic, particularly when there are specific requirements for accommodation. The existing hospital discharge protocol has successfully reduced unplanned discharges and emergency presentations following a hospital stay. A review and evaluation of the Protocol will be programmed into the latter years of this strategy.

Prison and Probation

HMP Lincoln is located within City boundaries and is a category B prison for adult males serving the courts of Lincolnshire, Humberside, and Nottinghamshire. The City of Lincoln also hosts an office of the National Probation Service which delivers probation contact and services for the East Midlands Region. Both prison and probation have duty to refer responsibilities in relation to potentially homeless release prisoners.

Public health measures during the Covid 19 pandemic had the positive effect of focussing attention on unplanned discharges and created a more positive environment for joint working across prison, probation, and housing. The new protocol developed between probation, prison services and housing to meet pandemic challenges resolved many historic difficulties around unplanned discharges into Lincoln housing services. Measures set out in this strategy will sustain a coordinated approach to rehousing this particularly vulnerable group of applicants. One way of further developing this protocol will be to review existing arrangements against the prison lever pathway developed by the Welsh Government, a form of coordinated response to prison release that could form a model for further developments of this vital protocol.

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Internal Partnerships between Housing, planning and private sector services will be vital to delivering strategy objectives.

The most vital internal relationship for the homelessness service is with the Planning function. The first area of joint working is in the development of new housing in the city. The Central Lincolnshire Local Plan adopted in 2023 covers three districts' areas, City of Lincoln, West Lindsey and North Kesteven, in recognition of the intricate connections between these District areas around housing, jobs and travel to work areas and services. With the scope for new housing developments inside city boundaries limited by lack of space, the housing service is already working closely with planning colleagues on possible developments within the defined central Lincolnshire area. (Objective Three)

The development of new temporary accommodation in the City of Lincoln will require recognition of potential tensions between city-wide Article 4 Directive limiting the development of new HMOs and the urgent need for more commissioned TA within city boundaries. These tensions are explored in greater detail under Objective Three.

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LINCOLN PROFILE

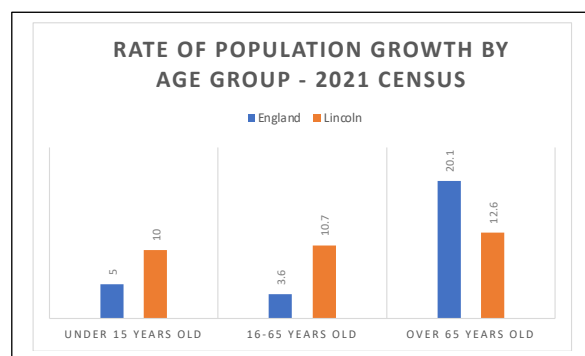
SUMMARY

- *Lincoln's population is growing at a faster rate than England generally, with a significantly higher rate of growth in the working age population.]*
- *The number of new households in Lincoln has also risen by nearly 4000 between 2011 and 2021.*
- *Population growth increases pressures on housing supply and contributes to rising prices in both house purchase and rental sectors.*
- *Lincoln has a greater proportion of economically active people than both England and the East Midlands and lower levels of worklessness.*
- *Lincoln has a higher proportion of single households than either the East Midlands or England as a whole.*
- *Lincoln contains areas of high deprivation contrasted with relatively affluent neighbourhoods.*
- ***Lincoln's economic profile reflects a vibrant university city with a mobile and youthful population. A large student population drives demand and therefore rent levels in the private housing sector.***

Population

Lincoln is the fourth most densely populated of the 35 local authority areas in the East Midlands. As at census, Lincoln City had a total population of 102,300, of which 50,700 male and 51,600 female. Lincoln is growing, its population increased from 93,500 to 103,900 between the 2011 and 2021 census, a higher rate of increase than both the East Midlands (7.7%) and England as a whole at 6.6%. Close neighbour North Kesteven saw an increase of 9.5% and Newark and Sherwood 7%, respectively, while the more remote and rural of Lincolnshire district West Lindsey seeing an increase broadly in line with the national average. The city and its neighbouring regions are the core of population growth in Lincolnshire.

The trend toward a comparatively young and more active population has also remained steady. Across England, there has been an increase of over 20% in people over the age of 65, a trend bucked in Lincolnshire where there is much more parity in the rates of population growth across age groups.



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A third of Lincoln's households are single person households, with single family households accounting for 57% of the total. Around 9%, some 4000 households live in other household types including houses of multiple occupation. Lincoln has a higher proportion of single person households than the East Midlands (29%) and England (30%).

Household composition	
Total: All households	42,507
One-person household	14,137
Single family household	24,269
Other household types	4,101

Economy

Census data confirms Lincoln as having a higher proportion of residents aged 16 years and over who were economically active and in employment than either the East Midlands or England as a whole. Latest labour market figures suggest an evening out of the proportions of economically active residents but confirms Lincoln as having a higher employment rate than either the region or England, and a lower unemployment rate than England as a whole.

Employment and unemployment (Jan 2022-Dec 2022)				
	Lincoln (Numbers)	Lincoln (%)	East Midlands (%)	England (%)
All People				
Economically Active†	48,600	77	77.4	78.7
In Employment†	48,100	76.2	75.2	75.8
Employee‡	40,900	64.6	66.4	66
Self Employed‡	6,400	10.3	8.6	9.5
Unemployed (Model-Based)	1,700	3.4	2.9	3.6

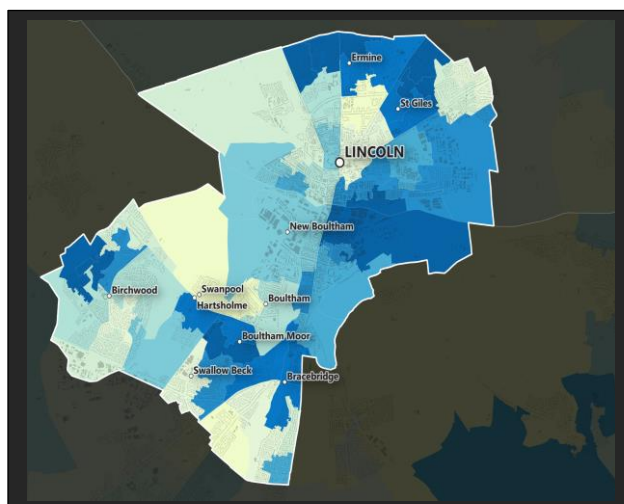
The main industries and employers in Lincoln are the retail sector, health, social services, and other public sector occupations. The City of Lincoln is served by a railway station with direct lines to Peterborough, Doncaster and Newark and Grimsby and infrequent direct connecting trains to London. However, local transport options are quite limited, and the majority of Lincoln residents either walk or use their cars to get to work. The lack of physical connection to other urban centres in Lincolnshire and between Lincoln and other locations makes out of city placements expensive and traumatic for those with employment, education, or service connections with the city.

Deprivation

In 2019 Lincoln was ranked as the 68th most deprived district in England out of 309 according to the IMD (Indices of Multiple Deprivation), a composite ranking of seven measures of deprivation. In the map below, the dark blue areas indicate the most deprived localities in Lincoln, and the lighter green the least deprived.

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Health is Lincoln's most deprived domain, with life expectancy significantly below the English average, and apparently reducing before the Covid 19 pandemic. Lincoln scores as less deprived in the lower weighted ranks of crime, living environment, and significantly, housing. Nonetheless, deprivation is extreme in some small areas of the city, with ten small areas in Lincoln are in the top 10% of most deprived areas in England.



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Housing Market Factors

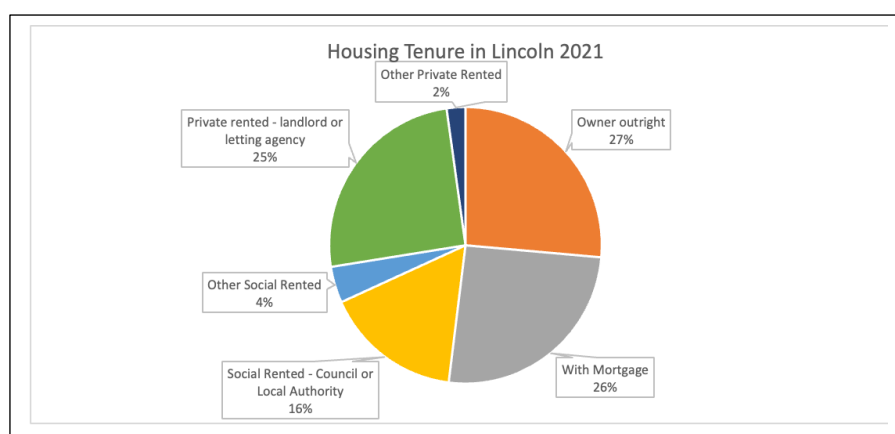
IMPACT

- The number of households in Lincoln grew by nearly 10% between 2021 and 2022.
- Over 50% of Lincoln residents are homeowners, 25% live in private rented housing and 16% live in social rented sector homes.
- House prices are significantly lower in Lincoln than in the East Midlands and England as a whole but.
- **The house price to earnings ratio is 5.5, making home ownership unaffordable to a large section of the population.**
- **Lincoln Local Housing Allowance is not enough to cover more than a tiny proportion of private rented properties.**

Tenure

The number of households in Lincoln increased from 39,825 in 2011 to 42,500 in 2021, a jump of 6.7% that represents a higher rate than England as a whole. The lower ranking in housing deprivation might be due to a stock profile in which 80% of Lincoln residents live in whole houses or bungalows and just under 20% in flatted accommodation. Lincoln also has a lower rate of overcrowding than both the East Midlands and England according to the latest census.

In terms of housing tenure, over 50% of Lincoln residents are owner occupiers, while 27% of live in private rented stock. The City of Lincoln retains its Council stock and is the main social landlord. 16% of the population live in local authority managed tenancies, and a small proportion in other social rented stock (4%).



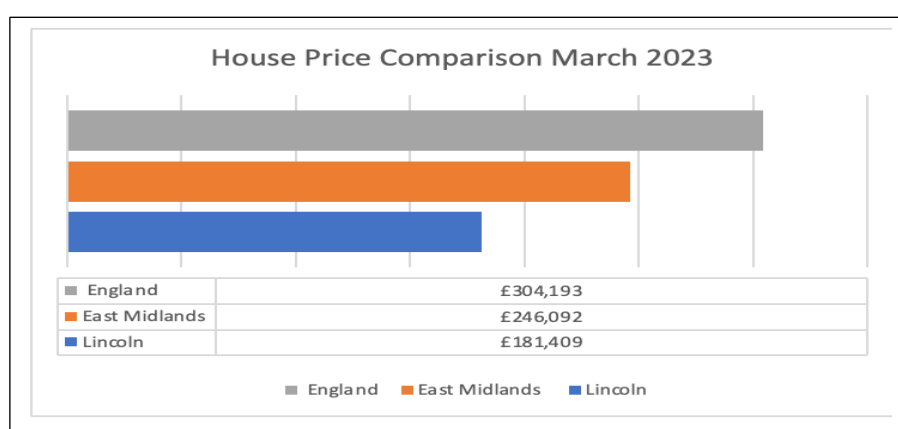
At the end of 2022, the City of Lincoln owned 7699 units of local authority housing, of which 7429 were social rented and the rest to let at affordable rents.

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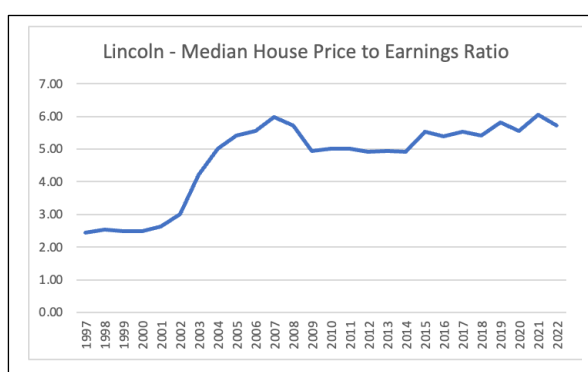
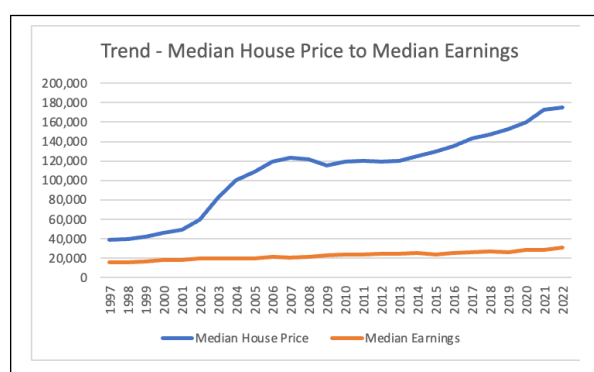
House Prices

The majority of homes sold in Lincoln over the year May 2022/2023 were terraced properties, selling for an average price of £170,133. Semi-detached properties sold for an average of £213,485, with detached properties fetching £314,522. Properties in Lincoln had an overall average price of £219,005. Sold prices in Lincoln over the last year were 3% up on the previous year and 11% up on the 2020 peak of £197,998.

House prices in Lincoln are generally lower than both national and regional levels. At the end of March 2023, the average price for a property sold in Lincoln was £181,409 compared to the national average of £304,193. Regional prices fell in-between at £246,092. The chart opposite illustrates the extent of differences between Lincoln and its comparators.



Lower property prices offer no comfort in terms of housing supply however, house prices increased by 450% from 1997 to 2022 from £39k to £175k. Median earnings have doubled from 15784 to just over 30560. The result is a widening affordability gap as illustrated by the charts below, in the first instance demonstrating the widening gap between house prices and earnings, and in the second expressing this as a house price to earnings ratio of over 5.5.



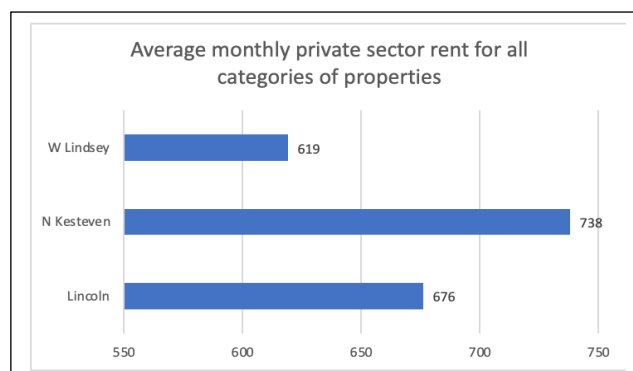
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Private Rented Housing

Since the financial collapse of 2008, private rented housing has assumed increasing importance in supplying housing across England. To that point both social and private rented housing were declining as a share of housing supply due to rapid and sustained increases in home ownership triggered by the Right to Buy policies of the 1980s and easy access to mortgage funds. In the last fifteen years, these trends have reversed, with private rented housing remaining the tenure of choice for transient populations such as students and the tenure of necessity for many young people who would formerly have considered buying a property. These structural shifts in the housing market have been accompanied by changes in the legal and policy framework for homelessness, making private sector accommodation a legitimate answer to local housing need. Provisions in the Localism Act 2011 and the Homeless Reduction Act 2018 cumulatively break the legal connection between homelessness and entitlement to social housing. The expectation is that private rentals will bridge the shortfall in affordable properties for homeless people.

In Lincoln, private rented accommodation accounts for around 25% of all housing tenures and forms a vital element of housing supply. However, social housing stock has decreased significantly over the 30-year period since the introduction of Right to Buy. Though stock levels are now stabilising due to new build initiatives, the number of available allocations each year continues to decline due to an increasingly stable population in Council stock. Social housing cannot meet the housing needs of all those who seek help from the Council. Data is not routinely collected on the number of private sector lettings made nationally or locally, but market data is available through local lettings agencies. In Lincoln, this market data confirms that most private rentals will not be affordable for those on benefits or low wages.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is the sum paid by the DWP to cover rent in England and is calculated based on local market rents and strictly limited by legislation. Rates are calculated on the basis of a Broad Rental Market Area, defined as an area an applicant might reasonably be expected to live in. In Lincolnshire the BRMA is widely drawn to include the City of Lincoln, and the second largest urban centre, Gainsborough. There are wide differentials between rental levels between the two areas, with average monthly rents in West Lindsey District Council being some £50 less than the City of Lincoln. The effect of this geographical grouping is to pull Lincoln's LHA down to the point where it covers only a very small number of properties in the city. The chart below illustrates the wide variations between the Lincoln, North Kesteven and West Lindsey area rent levels, despite their grouping in one LHA area. Note that North Kesteven rents are likely to be distorted by the very small number of properties for rent in the area.

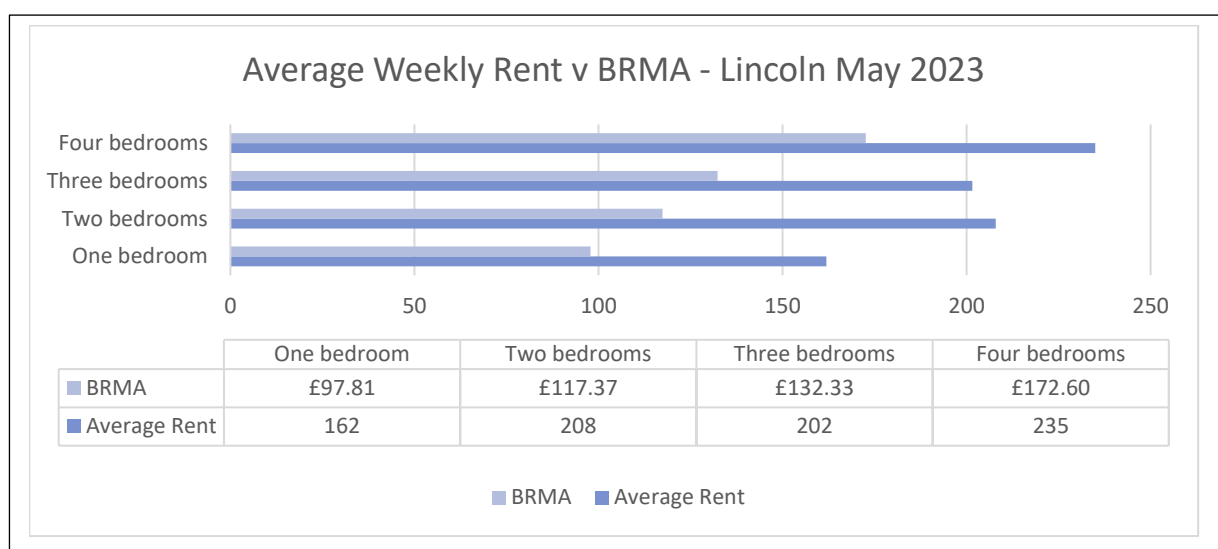


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Figures provided by local lettings agencies in Lincoln show a significantly higher average rent to median rent, suggesting the majority of properties are in higher rental brackets.

	No. of properties	Average rent	Median rent	LHA
One bedroom	43	£694 pcm	£650 pcm	£97.81 pw
Two bedrooms	46	£891 pcm	£813 pcm	£117.37 pw
Three bedrooms	42	£864 pcm	£810 pcm	£132.33 pw
Four bedrooms	58	£1,007 pcm	£437pcm	£172.60 pw

Translated into weekly rents, the chart below illustrates the extent of the LHA shortfall in Lincoln.



This represents a shortfall of £64 for a one-bedroom property, £112.63 for a two-bedroomed property, £69.67 for a three-bedroomed property and £62.40 for a four-bedroomed property.

Though all local authorities expect LHA to cover only a small proportion of private sector rents, the grouping of the City of Lincoln with such dissimilar areas has a hugely depressing effect on the ability of any homeless applicant to secure accommodation outside of the social rented sector. The LGA's calculation suggests a difference in shortfall between Lincoln and West Lindsey of £132 on a two-bedroom property.

Difference between maximum Local Housing Allowance and mean (average) private sector rent for a 2 bedroom property.	
Boston	51
E Lindsey	87
Lincoln	166
N Kesteven	122
S Holland	74
S Kesteven	146
W Lindsey	34

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The Local Housing Allowance in Lincoln is woefully inadequate in relation to properties of any size and represents a massively disproportionate loss of subsidy in comparison with all other Lincolnshire Districts. In terms of this strategy, the effect is to depress private sector supply as a route to tackling homelessness.

Summary

The population and number of households are growing at a faster rate than most areas in England. At the same time, house prices are rising at a significantly higher rate than local earnings pushing home ownership beyond the reach of many working households. For those on lower incomes, there is an apparently unbridgeable gap between local rent levels and the amount of benefit subsidy available to them. In short Lincoln has:

- Population and household formation are both growing at a faster rate than in the region or England as a whole.
- House prices rising at a significantly higher rate than local earnings pushing home ownership beyond the reach of many working households.
- An apparently unbridgeable gap between local rent levels and the amount of benefit subsidy available to people on lower incomes or benefits.

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LINCOLN'S HOUSING CONTEXT

In the previous section, we examined the contextual challenges for the City of Lincoln in realising its longer-term vision of eliminating homelessness. In this section we focus in more forensic detail on the impact of these market factors on homelessness in the City of Lincoln, starting from current numbers of homeless people in Lincoln and the demand and supply factors that determine these levels.

Housing Demand

Housing Demand Summary

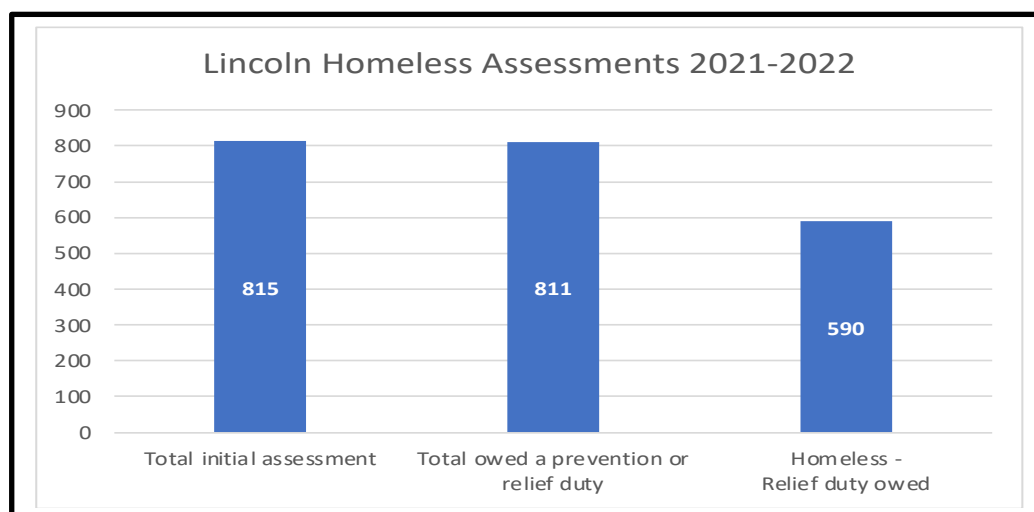
- *Lincoln is facing rising rates of homelessness in both prevention and relief duties.*
- *Roughly two thirds of all acceptances are of relief duties, creating a duty on the City of Lincoln to accommodate in both temporary and longer-term accommodation.*
- *The proportion of prevention v relief duties is strikingly low compared to national, regional, and best value comparators.*
- *Families with children account for 50% of the prevention duties accepted.*
- *Single applicants account for 70% of the relief duties accepted, with the number of applicants with support needs rising year on year.*
- *The nature of those support needs is also changing to more complex and multi-faceted needs.*
- *Rough sleeping remains a significant problem, with figures now back at pre-pandemic levels.*

Our legal duties require us to advise, support and in some instances, accommodate anyone falling within the homeless categories of the Homeless Reduction Act 2018. This analysis therefore focusses on housing applicants who are in danger of losing their accommodation or who have already lost it, the statutory homeless.

Numbers of statutory homeless people increased as a direct result of the new Act. Before April 2018, local authority duties to single applicants were limited to advice only, now more direct support and relief must be offered to this applicant group. This single factor has changed the profile and nature of homelessness in the city, numbers have increased generally, and the causes of homelessness and the range of possible solutions have shifted in recognition. Since 2018, however, the trend in homeless applications has been inexorably upwards, with homelessness increasing in significance as a social, political, and financial issue for the City of Lincoln.

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The most recent full year figures confirm rising homeless applications. There were 815 initial assessments, of which only 4 applicants were not defined as having a duty owed. This is consistent with the City of Lincoln's long-standing commitment to supporting and assisting any homeless person with a housing need. The majority of duties accepted were relief duties, meaning the City of Lincoln is accepting a responsibility to provide housing to this applicant group. Around 73% of all accepted applications were under the relief duty, and 27% under prevention.



These figures are subject to further comparative analysis below, but even at this early stage it is worth noting that the proportion of prevention duties accepted in the City of Lincoln (27%) is notably lower than in England as a whole (46%). It is also noteworthy that 14% of acceptances of both prevention and relief duties are from social housing tenancies. This suggests working with other local housing providers on prevention protocols might be one route to prevention worth exploring over the course of the strategy. Eviction protocols already exist between the homeless and housing management services.

In terms of household type, it is worth drawing attention to the significant difference in the proportion of single households accepted under the prevention and relief duties. Around 49% of households accepted under the prevention duty are single households, while over 70% of households accepted under the relief duty are single households. In both prevention and relief, the majority of applicants are male.

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Household type - proportion of applicants	Prevention Duty		Relief Duty	
Single parent with dependent children - Male	3	1.4%	19	3.2%
Female	42	19.0%	100	16.9%
Single adult - Male	71	32.1%	287	48.6%
Female	38	17.2%	131	22.2%
Other / gender not known	0	0.0%	3	0.5%
Couple with dependent children	32	14.5%	20	3.4%
Couple / two adults without dependent children	20	9.0%	25	4.2%
Three or more adults with dependent children	10	4.5%	4	0.7%
Three or more adults without dependent children	5	2.3%	1	0.2%

This initial analysis reflects a number of factors to be considered in the strategy. First, it is likely the profile of single applicants includes a large number of people needing support if they are to remain in any accommodation found for them, and this single factor might explain the high numbers accepted under the more expansive relief duty. Second, in terms of actual numbers, more families with children are accepted under the prevention duty than under the relief duty, meaning at the point of assessment there are opportunities for interventions to help them stay in their current accommodation and for the Council to avoid acceptance of a more expansive relief duty.

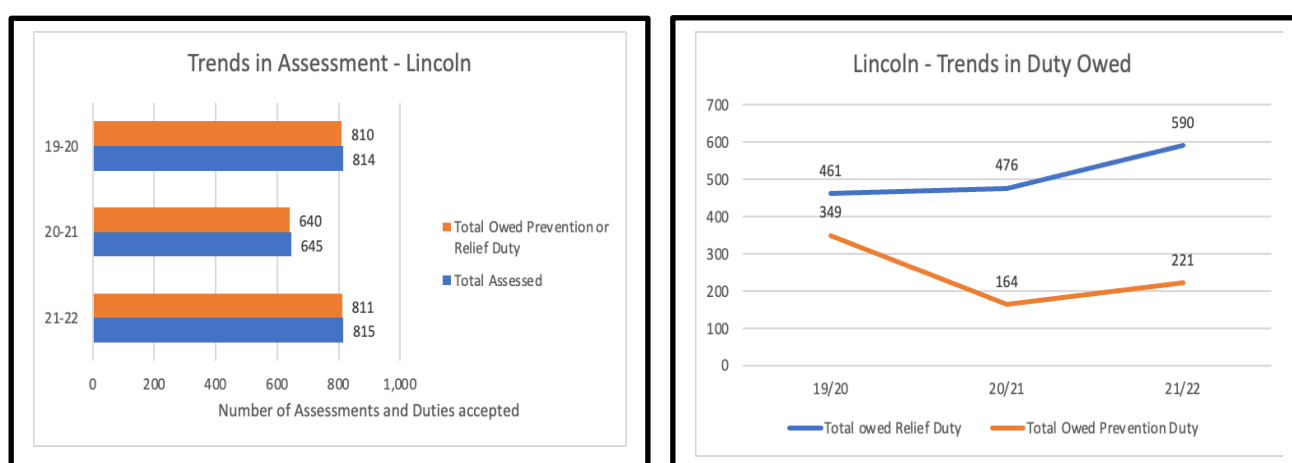
A snapshot of the roots of homelessness for the same time period shows nearly half of the 221 applicants accepted under the prevention duty present from private sector accommodation, This means the vast majority of private sector tenants present to the homeless service at a point where interventions might be able to sustain their tenancies or licences. Interventions at this point in the application point could either prevent or delay homelessness, with potentially positive impacts upon first accessions into temporary accommodation. Just under 15% of duties accepted under both relief and prevention duties were from the social rented sector.

	Accepted under Prevention Duty		Accepted under Relief Duty	
Private rented sector	106	48.0%	59	10.0%
Living with family	37	16.7%	138	23.4%
No fixed abode ³	0	0.0%	50	8.5%
Social rented sector	32	14.5%	88	14.9%
Living with friends	6	2.7%	73	12.4%
Homeless on departure from institution	33	14.9%	66	11.2%
Rough sleeping	0	0.0%	74	12.5%
Owner-occupier / shared ownership	1	0.5%	2	0.3%
Temporary accommodation	1	0.5%	18	3.1%
Refuge	0	0.0%	10	1.7%

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Trends in Homelessness

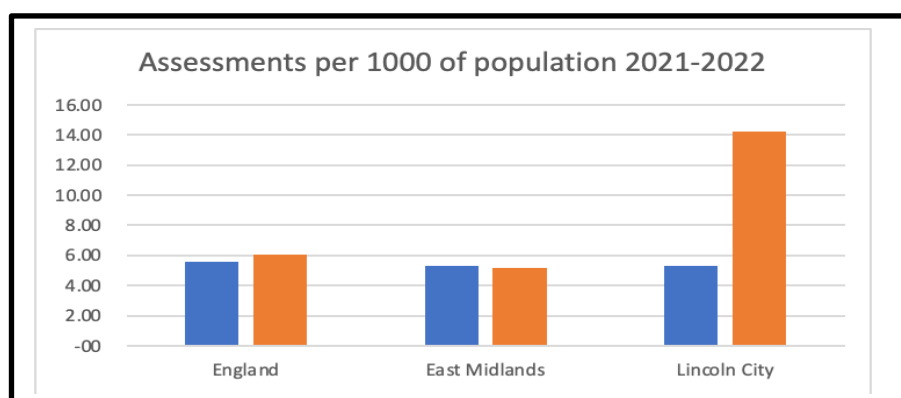
The Covid-19 pandemic led to a short-term drop in the number of people presenting as homeless, probably due to decreased mobility, increased short term investment in accommodation for rough sleepers, and a moratorium on evictions. In the years before and after lockdown and special measures, the number of assessments in the City of Lincoln was remarkably consistent. Within that figure, however, it appears there is a continuous upward trend in the number of applicants accepted under the relief duty compared to the prevention duty. In the Covid era, the number of acceptances under the relief duty was higher than the previous year, while the number of preventions dipped sharply, possibly due to the moratorium on private sector evictions. The following year, assessments return to pre-Covid levels, but the number of preventions did not recover.



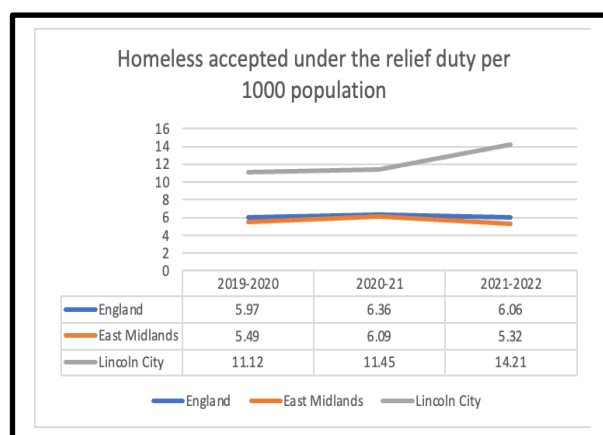
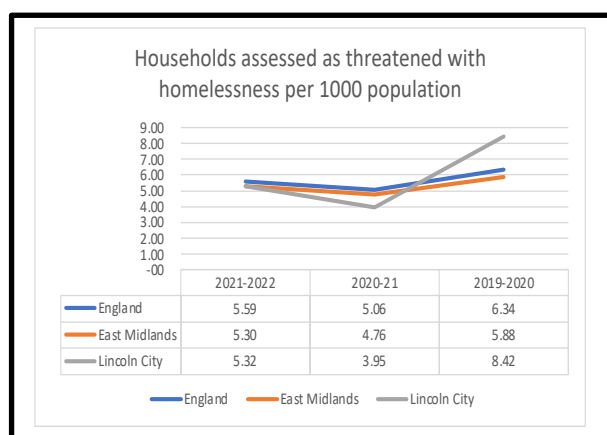
The most recent quarterly figures for homelessness in the City of Lincoln suggests an upward trend in both applications and acceptances. The number of people approaching the City Council at the end of the third quarter of 2022/23 stood at 641 households. As the fourth quarter of the year tends to see higher levels of presentations, this would suggest an increase on previous years should be forecast. This would be in line with increases across England, suggesting wider issues around cost of living, and LHA shortfalls continue to have a significant effect nationally and locally. Over the course of those three quarters, the proportion of prevention duties accepted continued to fall, from just over 30% in the first quarter to 26% in the last quarter. The full year trends set out above look set to continue.

Comparative analysis helps set this in some context. The chart below compares the rate of assessments per 1000 population between the City of Lincoln, the East Midlands as a whole and England, with the orange column being prevention duties and the blue relief duties. There is a striking difference in the rate of relief duties accepted in the City of Lincoln. Most applicants accepted under a relief duty will be accepted into temporary accommodation and will move on to social housing.

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Comparative analysis of the City of Lincoln against regional and national rates once again highlights this exceptional profile. The rate of prevention duties accepted has been on a par with those comparators but has seems to be rising. On relief duties, the rate of acceptance has been considerably higher for all of the last three years and is now rising again.



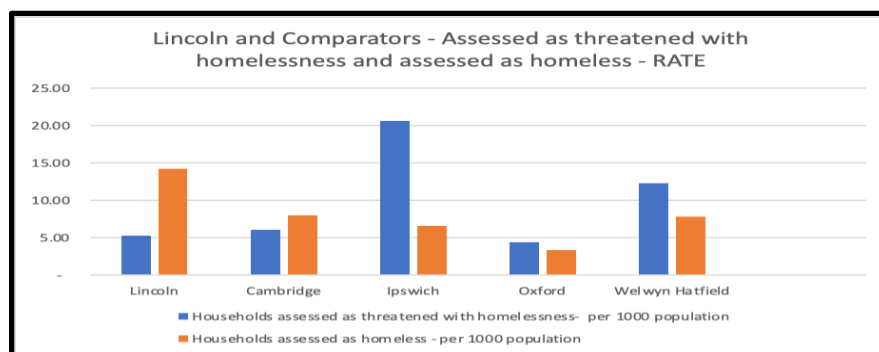
This characteristic also dominates the comparative profile of the City of Lincoln against a sample of comparable cities in England¹. These cities all share similar characteristics of high student populations, relatively vibrant economies, and a more youthful population profile. The table below provides a baseline of the number of assessments conducted in each City, against those accepted. Lincoln has the highest proportion of duties accepted.

	Total initial assessment	Total owed a prevention or relief duty
Lincoln	815	811
Cambridge	695	618
Ipswich	1,745	1,608
Oxford	469	410
Welwyn Hatfield	1,118	985

¹ Cities selected were Best Value comparators, selected for their similarity in socio-economic and housing profile.

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Though the numbers of homeless presentations varied significantly due to population and housing market factors, Lincoln stood out as the authority accepting the most relief duties.



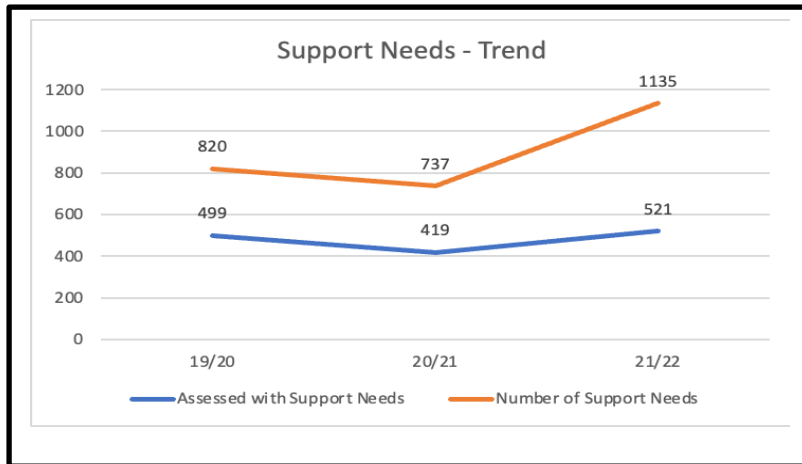
Support needs and Rough Sleeping – Demand issues

For a small city, Lincoln has a relatively large proportion of applications from single homeless people, with a considerable number of these applications from people who are sleeping rough. The next section focusses on this population group, to determine to what extent support services are needed to tackle the wider homeless issue. In 2021/2022 over 64% of applications accepted related to someone with a support need, a total of 521 households. The total number of support needs was 1135, suggesting that many of these households had presented with multiple, complex support needs. The need for support was most likely to be caused by mental health problems, drug dependency, physical ill health or disability, Mental ill-health, and drug addiction account for over 40% of all support needs, with just over 15% presenting with physical ill health and disability.

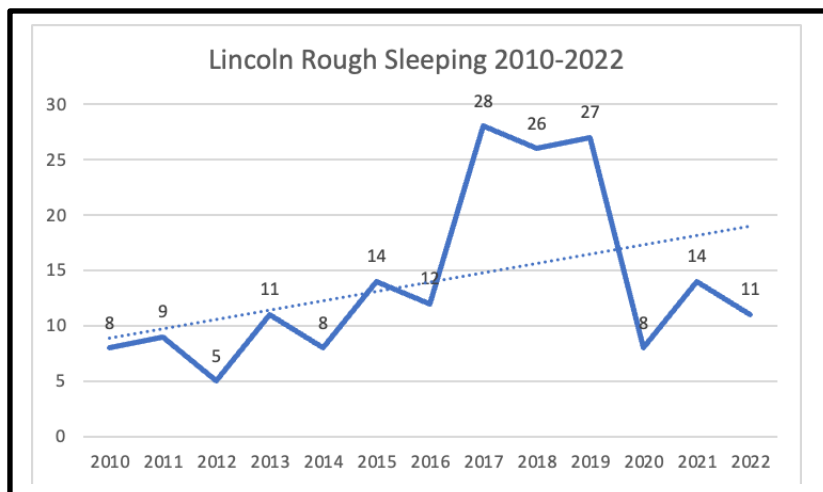
Support needs of households owed a prevention or relief duty ⁷ :		
History of mental health problems	215	26.5%
Physical ill health and disability	126	15.5%
At risk of / has experienced domestic abuse	113	13.9%
Offending history	151	18.6%
History of repeat homelessness	80	9.9%
Drug dependency needs	124	15.3%
History of rough sleeping	68	8.4%
Alcohol dependency needs	69	8.5%
Learning disability	60	7.4%
Young person aged 18-25 years requiring support to manage independently	36	4.4%
Access to education, employment or training	8	1.0%
At risk of / has experienced abuse (non-domestic abuse)	15	1.8%
At risk of / has experienced sexual abuse / exploitation	19	2.3%
Old age	3	0.4%
Care leaver aged 21+ years	10	1.2%
Care leaver aged 18-20 years	18	2.2%

In terms of the number of duties accepted to people with support needs, the trend follows that of homeless applications overall. The pandemic related dip is notable in 2021/2022, but duties accepted increase to above pre-pandemic levels in 2021/2022. At the same time, there is a striking increasing in the number of support needs among this group of applicants. This suggests the level of complex needs, and thus the need for housing and other support, has increased significantly.

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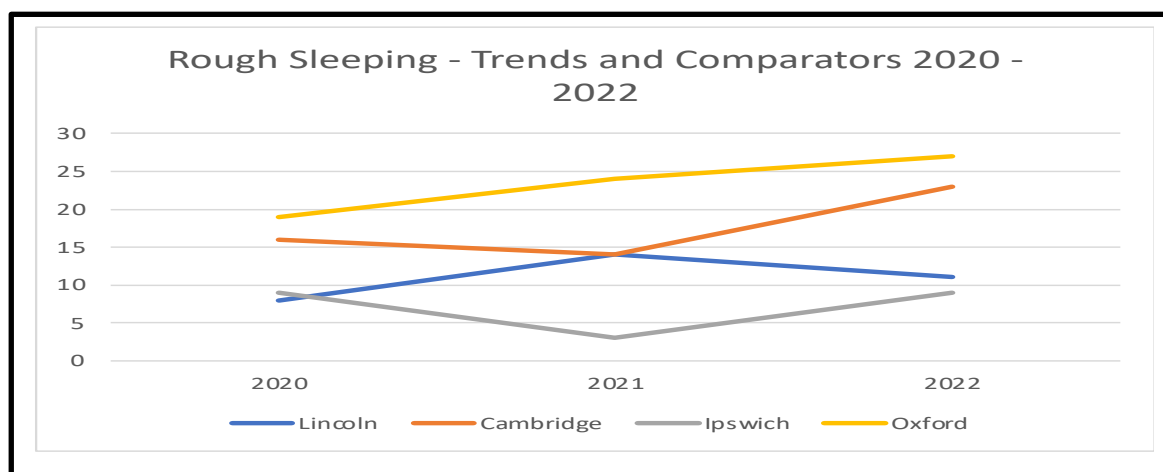


The rough sleeping population in Lincoln also appears to be gradually increasing. Sharp increases were observed in the pre-pandemic period, and sharp drops during the pandemic, attributable to the huge injection of resources to tackle rough sleeping as a public health issue. The return to relatively normal conditions in service provision has mirrored a return to similar levels of rough sleeping in the City of Lincoln.



There are early signs of a reversal in the upward trend in the numbers of people sleeping rough, a possible explanation being successful interventions during the pandemic period and the continued availability of support for applicants with complex support needs. This compares favourably with comparators in the best value group, who are experiencing an upward surge in rough sleeping.

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This suggests that the support and accommodation available to people with complex needs can meet current levels of demand. The challenges in eliminating rough sleeping are to avoid recurring presentations and make sure interventions are timely enough to avoid accommodation being lost.

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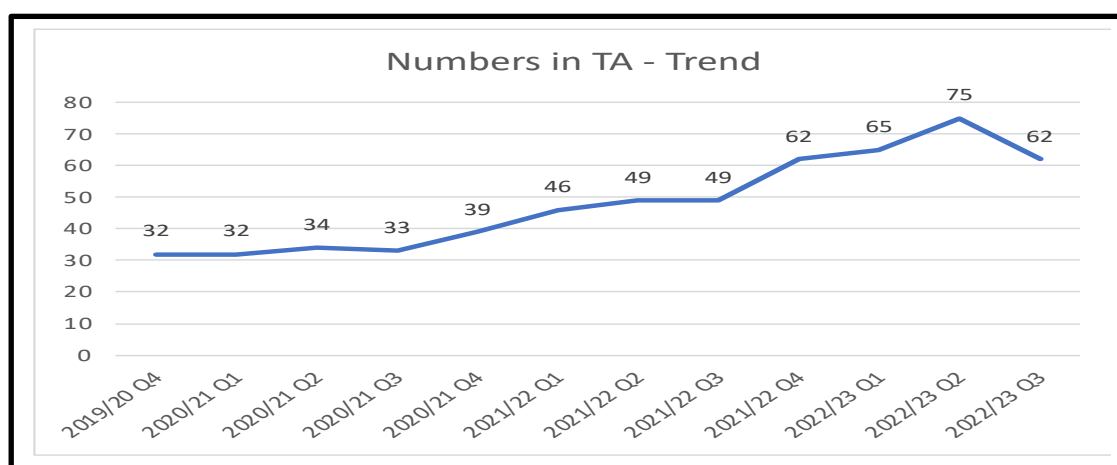
Temporary Accommodation

Temporary Accommodation Summary

- *The temporary accommodation population has doubled in the last three years.*
- *The upward trend is more extreme in the City of Lincoln than in the East Midlands as a whole.*
- *There are 35 units of commissioned temporary accommodation in Lincoln, set against a temporary accommodation population of over 60 households and rising.*

Temporary accommodation must be made available on an emergency basis while an applicant is being investigated, for the duration of the relief duty, and after acceptance of the relief duty while longer term accommodation is secured. The relatively high acceptance rate of relief duties therefore has a direct impact on numbers in temporary accommodation. It also has a direct impact on general fund spending as the difference between the cost of temporary accommodation and available subsidy is met directly by the City of Lincoln.

The number of households in temporary accommodation have nearly doubled since 2019/2020, the relatively sharp rise in temporary accommodation occupation during the pandemic has not reduced to pre-pandemic levels and seems unlikely to in the near future.

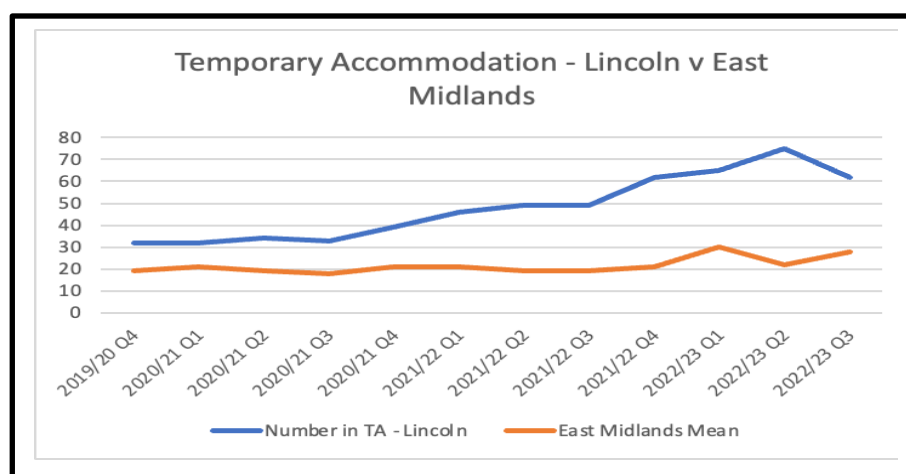


Numbers in temporary accommodation are affected by both the number of applications and the number of people who are moved on to more permanent accommodation either in the social rented or private sector. The fact the temporary accommodation rate is rising as well as the numbers could be explained by higher levels of need within the applicant group, applications made when it is too late to prevent homelessness, or prevention measures not being timely enough to delay accessions into temporary accommodation. Any reduction in lettings will also contribute to de-facto rise in numbers.

Incremental eases in the temporary accommodation population have been observed since 2011, linked most obviously to the rising homeless populations in general. However, there does appear some evidence that the population in Lincoln is rising at a higher rate than in

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the East Midlands, as demonstrated in the chart opposite, and at a higher rate than England as a whole. This increase appears to be demand-led, i.e., that higher acceptance rates for relief cases are reflected in the size of the temporary accommodation population.



Once admitted into temporary accommodation it is far less likely that any outcome other than an offer of permanent social rented sector housing will be considered for the housing applicant. Reducing accessions into temporary accommodation is, therefore, a key outcome of this homeless strategy.

The availability of high-quality temporary accommodation locally is a significant issue for the City of Lincoln. At there are 35 accommodation units specifically commissioned as temporary accommodation, of which 18 are reserved for single homeless people under the NSAP/LSAP regimes for addressing rough sleeping. Most of these units are within the Council's own stock of housing but are let under different legal conditions to meet the need for temporary accommodation. There is a mix of property size, with 9 one bedroomed flats, and the rest being a mix of 2, 3, and 5 bedroomed properties.

With 62 families currently in temporary accommodation this level of provision is clearly inadequate. Currently any shortfall in the number of temporary accommodation units is met by commercial bookings, either through local B&Bs, the Holiday Inn or the Travelodge. There has been some success in block booking local B&Bs, but these are now coming to an end and will not be renewed, leaving the City of Lincoln highly dependent on the commercial hotel sector. In service terms this is a matter of serious concern, with access to temporary accommodation in the City of Lincoln significantly reduced through seasonal tourism, and potentially affected by any incident of poor behaviour on the part of any placement. Commercial providers from further afield are often called upon to meet immediate demands, creating great pressure on applicants with school age children, or with need to access services in the City of Lincoln. These problems increase the financial volatility of the temporary accommodation budget, with room rates similarly affected by demand and supply factors outside of the City of Lincoln's control, and additional expenses incurred for transport to and from properties outside City borders.

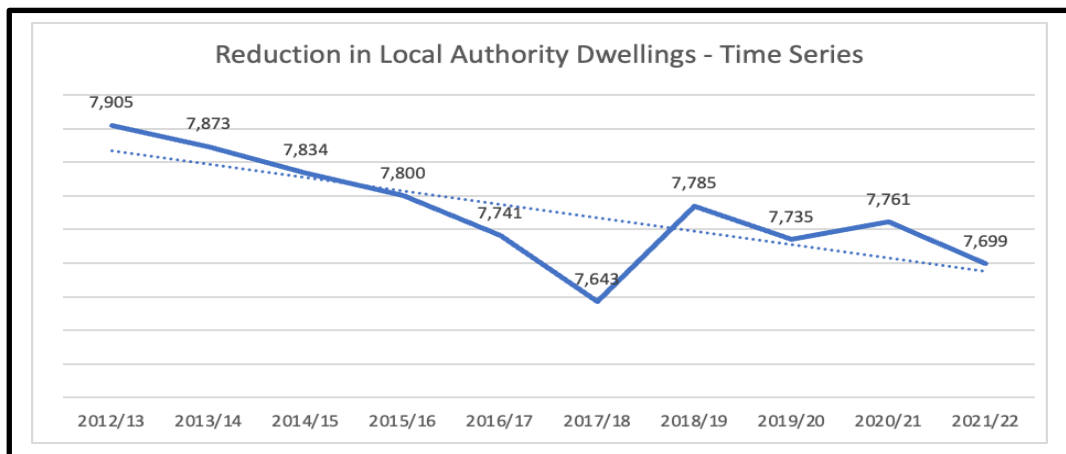
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Supply and Lettings

Supply and Lettings Summary

- *The number of Council housing units in the City of Lincoln is reducing incrementally, and new supply is not replacing lost units.*
- *The number of new applicants on the City of Lincoln waiting list has now increased beyond pre-pandemic levels.*
- *The majority of waiting list applicants are single, but there are particular problems rehousing larger families.*
- *When transfer applicants are added to the waiting list, there are over 1500 households waiting to be housed, an increase of nearly 9% in 2022/2023*
- *Around 60% of Council lettings are to homeless households.*

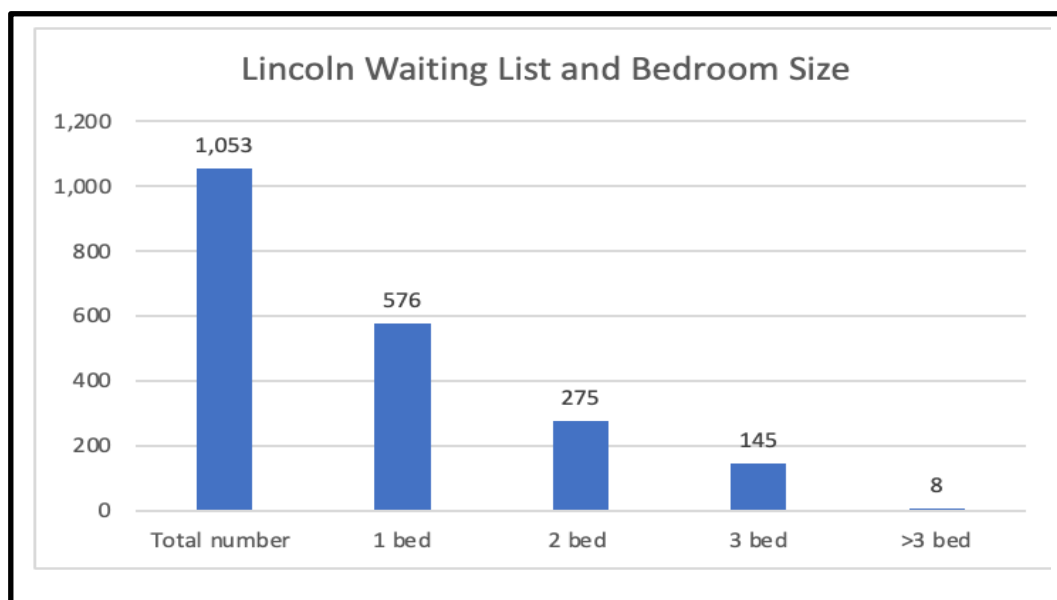
The final element of analysis is of social housing supply in the City of Lincoln. As a stock retained authority, nearly all social housing lettings are to Council-owned stock, which includes some supported housing for older people. In 2021/2022 there were 7699 units of Council-owned stock of which 7429 were for social rent and 270 for affordable rent. The City of Lincoln is experiencing the same incremental reduction in stock as England as a whole. The rate of decrease has slowed with austerity and changes to the Right to Buy offer, and there has been a slight recovery through new build and properties bought back into use. However, the net reduction over the last 10 years is expected to continue. New supply has not compensated, with only 27 new units of social housing completed in 2021/2022.



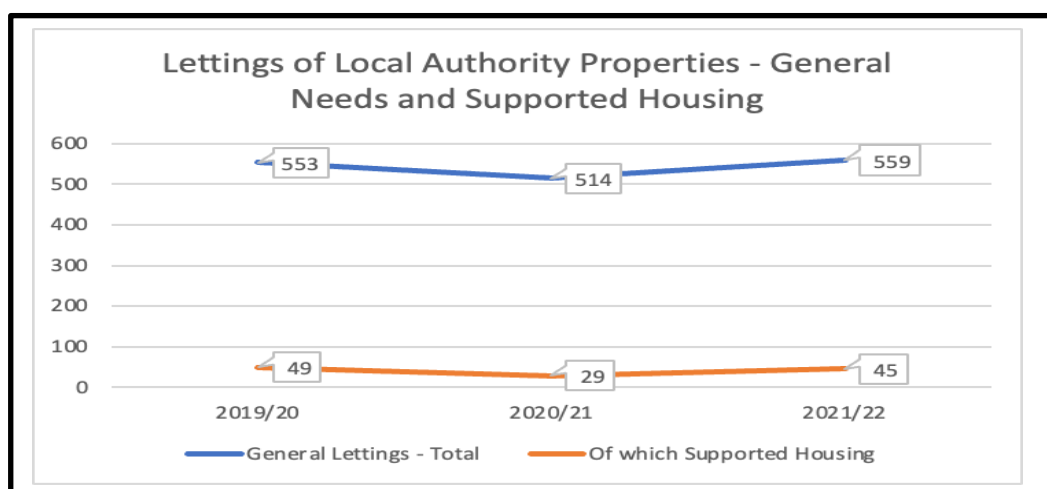
Applications for housing far outweigh its availability. The numbers of people on the waiting list, excluding transfer applicants, has remained stable over the past three years, with 1046 applicants waiting in 2019/2020 and 1053 waiting in 2021/2022. The reduction in waiting list numbers in 2020/2021(to 815) was caused by general drop in applications due to reduced movement and service levels resulting from the Covid 19 pandemic.

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Most applicants are waiting for one bedroomed property, but those in need of larger properties face often face extended waiting times due to the very low supply of larger units. While the waiting list among homeless and other waiting list applicants has been stable, a significant number of people are awaiting transfers from local authority stock, meaning the general waiting list for housing has increased over the same time period. The total number of people on the housing register at the end of December 2022 was 1,573 against 1,448 the previous year. This represents an increase of 8.6%.

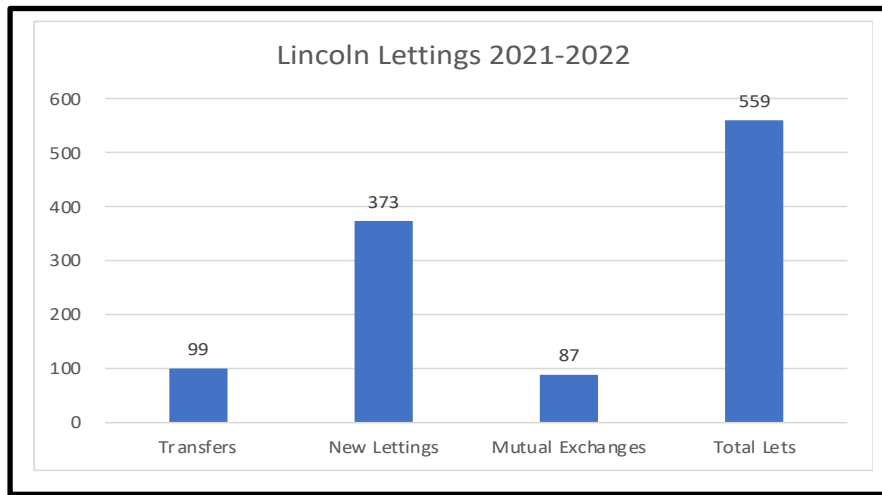


This apparent discrepancy can be explained by the application of lettings policy. A substantial portion of all social housing allocations are used to address homelessness, with considerable use of direct lettings as well as use of the choice-based system to maintain control over the numbers of people in temporary accommodation. The graphs below show a stable level of social housing lettings in both general needs and supported housing over a three-year time period.



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A more detailed analysis of 2022/2023 shows the City of Lincoln has allocated 570 properties, a small but welcome increase from the previous year. Homeless applicants account for nearly 60% of lettings already, general register applicants for 17.5% and transfer applicants for 24% of lettings. This most recent lettings outturn the housing authority is achieving a balanced approach to social housing lettings and has nearly realised the 2021 objective of reserving at least 25% of all lettings to transfer applicants. The general register group includes young people and families applying from rented housing and other less secure accommodations.



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STRATEGY OBJECTIVES IN CONTEXT

The combined analysis of Lincoln's socio-economic context, its housing market and drivers of homelessness suggests the following local characteristics and conditions as the platform for the Homelessness Strategy 2023 – 2028.

Demand

Homelessness appears to be rising in the City of Lincoln at a faster rate than either the East Midlands region or England as a whole. Moreover, there is a striking difference in the proportion of prevention and relief duties accepted under the new legislative regime, with Lincoln accepted a far higher proportion of relief duties. Once the full duty is accepted the City of Lincoln is under an obligation to provide accommodation in the short and medium term, until more permanent housing becomes available.

Housing market conditions place significant limits on the ability of the City of Lincoln to achieve a high level of preventions, but it is likely other factors play into this very high level of relief acceptances:

- First, the very serious constraints on homeless prevention created by the disparity between LHA rates and actual rents makes prevention extremely difficult. Once an applicant is in arrears, they might rapidly find themselves unable to cover both rent shortfall and debt.
- Second, there is a strong political commitment to address homelessness and its' causes in the City of Lincoln, with acceptance of a relief duty being the most efficient and effective route to addressing housing insecurity.
- Third, there are a lack of available and timely prevention options within the homelessness service, and operational practise is to move rapidly to the relief duty when prevention measures are exhausted.
- Fourth, there is a high proportion of housing applicants with support needs who cannot avail themselves of other housing options.
- Fifth, there is a strong belief among housing applicants that social housing is the most desirable outcome for a homeless application and an unwillingness to consider other routes to housing that might prove less secure over time.

All of these factors need to be considered and addressed in plans for developing homeless services over the next five years.

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Temporary Accommodation

The number of households in temporary accommodation is rising rapidly, while the supply of commissioned temporary accommodation reduces significantly when the current block bookings of Bed and Breakfast accommodation end in July 2023. This leaves the City of Lincoln with a significant shortfall in temporary accommodation even on current numbers, with nearly half of all households accommodated in TA being in commercial hotels. All indicators suggest that homelessness will continue to rise incrementally, leaving the City of Lincoln exposed to volatility in the cost and location of Temporary Accommodation

Supply and Lettings

The City of Lincoln has managed to sustain the level of social housing lettings at a stable level, notwithstanding a pandemic related reduction in 2020/2021. Around 60% of all social housing lettings go to homeless households, reflecting the Council's commitment to reducing homelessness and controlling the costs and impact of temporary accommodation. This measure is very effective given the challenges accessing private sector accommodation in Lincoln, however, the fact that social housing is more easily accessible through the homeless route creates a perverse incentive to use this route to housing, rather than the general waiting list. This will be one key issue for the homeless strategy to address.

The actions suggested in the following sections draw on this analysis to create a clear pathway over the next five years toward realising a vision of a city without homelessness, with housing options available to all residents regardless of their incomes and vulnerabilities.

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OBJECTIVE ONE: Make homeless a *rare occurrence* by early intervention and timely homeless prevention.

Our profile of the City of Lincoln suggests homelessness demand is entrenched for some citizen groups due to a complex interaction of demographic, social, economic, and housing market factors, creating a difficult context for the housing authority in which:

- Rates of statutory homelessness are rising across both prevention and relief duties.
- Rates of homeless prevention are significantly lower than in other comparable locations.
- Most homeless applications end with acceptance of a full relief duty, meaning the City of Lincoln must accommodate in both temporary and longer-term accommodation.
- Single person households account for a larger proportion of applications than households with children.
- High levels of complex support needs are evident among those single person households, which include people being supported to end rough sleeping.

In addition to these difficult housing market conditions, local factors play into the high level of homelessness identified in this strategy. These are:

- The disparity between LHA rates and actual rents makes prevention extremely difficult. Once an applicant is in arrears, they might rapidly find themselves unable to cover both rent shortfall and debt.
- A lack of available and timely prevention options within the homelessness service, meaning operational practise moves rapidly to acceptance of the relief duty even when prevention of homeless is possible.
- A high proportion of housing applicants with support needs who cannot avail themselves of other housing options.
- A strong belief among housing applicants that social housing is the most desirable outcome for a homeless application and an unwillingness to consider other routes to housing that might prove less secure over time.

All of these factors drive rising homelessness in the City of Lincoln and must be addressed if the long-term vision of eliminating homelessness is to be realised. Demand-focussed activities must be directed toward changing the conditions under which homelessness is defined and assessed in the City of Lincoln. These activities are grouped under:

- Early Intervention and Homeless Prevention
- Recognising Housing Market Conditions
- Supporting vulnerable applicants

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Early Intervention and Homeless Prevention

Assessments under the Homeless Reduction Act are conducted by a generic team of six Officers who are charged with intervening if there is a possibility of prevention, and of moving to a full legal assessment of a relief duty if prevention does not appear to be an option. Officers are responsible for onward referrals to more specialist services such as the private sector service, and to housing support. Officers are also responsible for securing a TA placement if there is a need for immediate accommodation under the relief duty. There are two TA Officers and another twelve Officers working on housing solutions and allocations. Prevention activities sit with the six officers responsible for homeless assessment. There are two specialist private sector officers dedicated to developing opportunities for housing applicants in the private rented sector.

There are significant strengths to the current approach to meeting the demand for housing in the City of Lincoln. There is a strong political commitment to reducing and eliminating homelessness, reflected in a commitment to funding and developing a range of appropriate responses to increasing demand for housing locally. This is reflected in an Allocation Policy which prioritises homeless applicants once accepted under the relief duty. There is a close and cohesive relationship between staff committed to homelessness and to addressing wider housing need.

Nonetheless, there are structural weaknesses in the current approach to managing homeless demand. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2018 encourages each local authority to focus resources on early interventions that prevent applicants from losing their homes, and on homeless prevention measures that divert housing applicants from accession into temporary accommodation and toward alternative housing options. Locally, analysis of the causes of homelessness suggests an opportunity in the case of many homeless presentations to intervene before actual rooflessness occurs. When a landlord has initiated a legal eviction through section 21, there is scope for negotiation to either delay or stay legal action. Landlord interventions might include settling rent arrears or providing tenancy support in instances of chaotic behaviour. Where relationships have broken down, a useful intervention might be persuading a family to continue accommodating the applicant for a short period until a suitable alternative has been found.

When the Renters Reform Bill becomes law in the life of this strategy, the length of time it will take a landlord to evict a tenant will increase and the legal grounds for those evictions will be restricted. This means opportunities to stay or delay evictions under the new legal regimes will increase significantly and gives further impetus to the need to address current low levels of prevention. A major objective of this strategy will be a transition from accepting full relief duties to early intervention and prevention which address both the prevailing market conditions and the more controllable local authority responses to them. Shifting the team toward a prevention 'culture' will involve both operational and strategic interventions in the five-year life of this strategy.

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1. Identifying candidates for early intervention

Before acceptance of the relief duty, any possibility of prevention and diversion must be ruled out. In the first year of this strategy, assessment processes will be reviewed to make sure direct contact with each private sector landlord is initiated before acceptance of a relief duty in every case. This will establish the potential for practical intervention. It is likely the following activities will be necessary as part of this review:

- i. **Training and development of staff** so that every front-line officer is aware of what preventions options exist and how to access them.
- ii. **Developing set procedures** so that interventions are mapped onto operational processes and are always considered and fully discounted before moving to a full relief duty.
- iii. **Upskilling of staff to** make sure they are able to identify potential candidates for homeless prevention and negotiate and persuade those candidates to engage constructively with Council/Landlord dialogue.
- iv. **Increasing specialisms**, splitting officers working on prevention and relief will allow Prevention focussed officers to develop specialisms and build constructive relationships with the landlord sector and with relevant internal partners.
- v. **Reducing prevention and homeless caseloads** so each Officer has time to discuss prevention options and invest time in direct engagement with landlords to sustain tenancies. To do so, the team must find a level of stability over the longer term, with less turnover and reliance on untrained temporary staff.
- vi. **Creating the optimum structure:** Increasing homelessness preventions and diversions are essential to controlling escalating TA costs. Investment in additional staff numbers, increased remuneration and career structures and training and development are all legitimate and possibly necessary '*invest to save*' measures that should be considered cyclically in the life of this strategy. Where any or all of the above measures are considered, cost should be evaluated in terms of its benefit in controlling GRFA expenditure on temporary accommodation.

2. Intervening to prevent homelessness.

Within an overheated housing market, there are currently substantial incentives for landlords to leave the social housing sector and pursue higher rents and lower costs elsewhere. Early interventions in the course of this strategy will recognise these constraining conditions by offering financial and in-kind incentives to Landlords to sustain the tenancies of applicants on benefits or in low paid jobs. At the homeless prevention stage, this should involve:

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- i. **Using Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) to reduce rent arrears.** DHPs are already used as a homeless prevention measure where there appears scope for landlord intervention and when the case is referred direction to the Housing Benefit Team. There are well defined referral channels, and a proactive approach to addressing evictions within the HB team, where guidance is to prioritise DHP payments to prevention evictions. With DHP being used extensively to prevent eviction, current DHP allocation is well below the level necessary to meet existing needs and has been topped up by the local authority in the last financial year. Even in times of financial constraint, it is investment worth making given the high and volatile costs of temporary accommodation both financially and emotionally. During the course of this strategy, the local authority will commit to concretising its current subsidy of DHP to lay a foundation for more creative measures to intervene early and prevent homelessness. An internal review of processes will ensure that wherever there is an intervention on the part of the Housing Benefit team this is counted as a prevention.
- ii. **Assessing the potential for cases to be moved to Direct Payments in prevention cases.** DWP policy is to migrate all claimants, except the most vulnerable, to the Universal Credit which is paid directly to the recipient and includes a housing element. Already, the number of clients on Universal Credit outnumber those on directly paid Housing Benefit, which is now directly paid only for temporary accommodation, and for vulnerable clients. Though desirable in terms of creating individual responsibility, the way UC is calculated creates a raft of new problems for those on lower incomes and benefits. For some applicants, the calculation of their Universal Credit is so low it accounts for most of their benefit payment, forcing them into arrears and homelessness. By the time such cases reach the homeless prevention team, it is possible landlords will not wish to take the risk of continuing with a tenancy where the risks of non-collection are so high.

It follows that a shift to direct payment, in some cases where homeless prevention or diversion is possible, could be a powerful incentive for landlords to engage. In the early years of this strategy, the potential to increase use direct payments to landlords as a targeted early intervention will be further explored with the in-house Housing Benefit service.

- iii. **Offering rent guarantees to Landlords for a 12-month period** where rent arrears are the reason for homelessness being threatened. Possible private sector interventions do not include ongoing rent guarantees to landlords, focussing instead on payments and incentives to attract landlords into the social housing market. With the gap between rents and benefits stark and growing, rent guarantees would provide the most powerful and effective intervention at the homeless prevention stage. In terms of the City of Lincoln's wider finances, the cost of such a scheme would be offset by savings in temporary accommodation. The potential for rent guarantee as a supply side initiative is explored more fully under Objective Three.
- iv. **Using the Homelessness Grant to fund creative early interventions.** A small fund already exists to commit to one-off homeless prevention activities, an example of its

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use was the recent purchase of an additional bed to allow a homeless young adult to remain in the family home. Currently, this fund is not fully utilised, and risks being reduced through underuse. In the early years of this strategy, the possible uses of one-off payments and purchases to prevent and delay homelessness will be fully explored and clearly linked to a newly embedded prevention process. Officers will be empowered to think laterally about how micro-interventions might assist in the wider objective of making homelessness a rare occurrence and delaying first accession into temporary accommodation.

- v. **Understanding the precursors to homeless presentation:** Evidence is emerging nationally of hidden homelessness as being a precursor to presentations into homelessness services. Collecting local data around pathways into homelessness might assist the prevention team in identifying groups of pre-application citizens who might be targeted for supportive interventions.
- vi. **Working with social landlords to prevent homelessness from existing social housing tenancies.** With 14% of prevention and relief duties being accepted from social landlords, there is a potential to eliminate one source of homelessness by strengthening existing joint working protocols. Further analysis of this source of presentations might reveal ways in which tenancies could be sustained rather than terminated. In year 1 of the strategy, a further investigation of presentations from social landlords will be completed to determine which landlords have evicted social housing tenants. A conversation will be initiated with the seven districts to explore the scope for a joint approach to housing association providers to encourage sign up to the National Housing Federation 'commitment to refer'.

Recognising housing market conditions

Our analysis of local housing market conditions suggests a major barrier to preventing homelessness and making private sector housing a viable option for local people on low incomes or benefits is the national constraint of a Local Housing Allowance far too low to cover rental levels in a vibrant, university city such as City of Lincoln. The effect of grouping the urban centre of Lincoln within a BRMA grouping that includes the radically different economy of Gainsborough has had a particularly detrimental effect on private sector supply side initiatives. Lobbying of DWP to address the inequitable consequences of this national policy has so far been unsuccessful.

Lincoln's status as a university hub brings hugely positive economic and reputational benefits to the city, but in terms of homelessness creates a powerful and wealthy competitor for cheaper housing in the city. University students are perceived as an easier tenant group, have greater means and as an itinerant population present no problems to landlords wishing to vacate or recover their properties. University accommodation services work quite independently to procure accommodation for their students, and in the case of the University of Lincoln, give guarantees to foreign students that accommodation will be provided for them and their families.

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These two local market factors create additional challenges for the City of Lincoln in reducing and addressing homelessness, though there are no clear-cut solutions to either issue, there is a need to recognise and accommodate these specifically Lincoln issues into the five-year strategy. It is suggested that:

- i. **DWP Lobbying:** Representations to the DWP as to the policy consequences of their BRMA grouping will continue at both an officer and political level. This in itself is challenging given the political complexion of Lincolnshire and the competing interests of the Districts in relation to the BRMA. However, there is reason to believe that the way the BRMA operates makes the City of Lincoln an outlier nationally in terms of the number of rental properties excluded by the LHA. Highlighting this anomaly through local MPS and regional organisations will remain high on the policy agenda until much needed changes are delivered.
- ii. **DLUHC Lobbying:** Homelessness Prevention Grant is calculated using variables of number of housing benefit claimants, lower quartile rents, and the number of single homeless applicants. The formula does not, therefore, specifically address issues raised by a disproportionate mismatch between LHA and local rents. HPG allocations will be reviewed at the mid-point of this strategy, providing an opportunity to argue for financial recognition of the particularly acute problems caused in the City of Lincoln and other affected areas.
- iii. **Engagement:** Greater understanding of the specific impact of university accommodation on the availability of private rented sector accommodation would assist in planning of private sector supply initiatives. It is suggested that engagement with the University around their plans for increasing student accommodation and the balance between bespoke accommodation and generally procured student units might assist understanding of the potential for private sector provision.

Supporting vulnerable applicants

There is room for cautious optimism in the way in which the City of Lincoln has addressed rough sleeping and tackled the housing requirements of applicants with complex support needs insofar as rough sleeping numbers in the City are falling to pre-pandemic rates. At the same time, homeless applications from single people are more numerous than from families, and support needs appear to be increasing in complexity. Delivering the objective of making homelessness a rare occurrence requires work to address vulnerability and to meet complex needs to continue, develop, and intensify over the five-year term of this strategy. In terms of rough sleeping, the City of Lincoln works in close proximity to Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) in delivering services for rough sleepers and those with complex care needs.

Lincolnshire County Council funds a county-wide housing support service provided under contract to Framework Housing Association. The service provides an initial triage of clients across the County and then a fuller assessment to lead to either floating support in TA or independent accommodation, or to Framework-provided supported housing. Framework make sure assessments are available to single homeless clients who have already been

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placed in temporary accommodation as well as those outside of the homeless system waiting for supported housing. Framework will also access their own supported accommodation to meet the complex needs of single homeless clients and rough sleepers.

In terms of the Framework supported housing service, the capacity for assessments of need is felt to be adequate, indeed, the new contract was let in 2020 on the basis of the previous five years of data on rough sleeping. A significant change was the decision of the County Council to cut funding of assertive outreach services to each of the District Councils, and to focus their resources on assessment and support. The initial shock to services has now been absorbed, and the City of Lincoln have integrated outreach into their front-line services. It is hoped a more local outreach team will drive better integration of single homeless provision into the wider homelessness service.

Support for single homeless applicants now includes outreach for rough sleepers, specialist support for rough sleepers accommodated by the City of Lincoln, and ongoing support for applicants in temporary accommodation. Two locally funded Temporary Accommodation Officers provide low-level housing support to residents, assisting with general management issues such as arranging payment of rent and accessing local services. This support can continue for the length of the TA stay and to support with resettlement.

There are currently six Rough Sleeping Support Workers within the homelessness service, funded variously through the NSAP programme, and a Housing First Grant allocation, and responsible for engaging with rough sleepers, sustaining their tenancies, and supporting them to link to other services.

Lincoln was allocated £974,307 of additional Capital funding to provide 18 units of temporary accommodation through the NSAP and RSAP programmes. The allocation of NSAP capital funding has been used to commission 15 units of move-on accommodation, while the related revenue grant under the same programme funds 2.5 officers to deliver wrap around support in these units. These are vital components of the current homelessness service, and future funding needs to be secured from national government programmes to continue this work. Prior to new rounds of grant funding, joint work on need and outcomes will be conducted with the County Council and districts to inform the next round of bidding applications.

The strengths of the current service arrangements are summarised as:

- Effective arrangements for assessing support needs among the single homeless population, and access to appropriately supported housing through the Framework contract. The contract capacity is felt to be at the right level to meet need.
- Assertive outreach for rough sleepers in the City of Lincoln, which is well embedded into mainstream services, meaning that support can be accessed when single clients are placed in temporary accommodation and can help with the transition to independent living where appropriate.
- Housing Support in Temporary Accommodation which identifies whether a tenancy can be sustained before the allocation stage.

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- Housing Stock being used appropriately and responsibly to minimise single homelessness.
- Supported housing is being used appropriately to address homelessness amongst the most vulnerable needs group.
- Established protocols between the City of Lincoln, the national probation service, and Lincoln Prison have already addressed historic problems of unplanned, chaotic presentations. A further protocol on hospital discharged frames positive working relationships between the housing service and Lincoln General Hospital.

Despite these significant strengths, there remain structural issues for the City of Lincoln to address within the life cycle of this strategy. The fragmentation of sources of central government funding for rough sleeper services already causes difficulties in planning service capacity and service user pathways. This is exacerbated by working within a two-tier administrative structure in which health and social services sit within different authorities with different political complexions. This complexity makes it difficult for the City of Lincoln and County colleagues to assess accurately what capacity is needed to tackle rough sleeping and meet complex needs in the longer term. The separation of support assessments from supportive outreach creates a further imperative for developing and sustaining seamless partnership working arrangements with the County Council and with other districts in Lincolnshire.

Additionally, a lack of appropriate move on accommodation for people with complex needs is already affecting capacity within the County led assessment and support contract. Accommodation provided by Framework is recommended for a six-month period, although this broad rule is applied flexibly given the complex circumstances of many single homeless applicants. Places are limited, however, and problems with securing appropriate move-on accommodation is effectively silting up capacity in Framework-commissioned supported accommodation. This need is particularly acute where applicants present specific risks to others through previous offending behaviour or fire risk. In this instance, the small number of such highly problematic applications means any bespoke solution would need to be cross-county rather than locally driven.

Services for rough sleepers and single applicants with complex care needs experience a significant number of repeat presentations due to the cyclical nature of mental health and substance misuse crises. This is a national problem rather than a local one but contributes to the complex nature of service planning for people with complex support needs. Once support is reduced or withdrawn it is all too possible for a crisis to lead to the loss of accommodation secured through previous service interventions. For homelessness to become a rare occurrence, a shift toward a lifetime approach to support for people with very complex support needs is necessary.

There are particular local issues in identifying accommodation and support solutions for people with dual diagnosis, that is with substance misuse problems and mental illnesses. All too often, this particularly vulnerable client group cannot access mental health services before there is treatment in place for substance abuse. For the City of Lincoln, the consequences can be serious in terms of disruptive and distressed applicants and TA residents without access to support.

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The seven Districts in Lincolnshire have also recognised the need for a better understanding of existing provision across the County, given the substantial movement of applicants across district boundaries, and worrying signs of increases in presentations from existing supported accommodation. North Kesteven District Council, on behalf of the Districts together, is commissioning a needs assessment and review of existing provision of supported accommodation, which will identify models and options for suitable move on and supported accommodation and will also identify examples of good practise in addressing accommodation and support needs of the rough sleeping cohort. This piece of work is likely to touch upon some of the most difficult and intractable problems facing the districts as individual authorities, e.g., the lack of accommodation for applicants with risky behaviours, for dual diagnosis and for those with chronic mental health problems. It will have the advantage of being a 'bottom up' review of needs assessment that draws on the specific operational experiences of local housing authorities.

Recognising these structural issues, the following proposed actions will consolidate and develop services for highly vulnerable people over the five years of the strategy.

1. Joint Working with County, District and Agency Partners

Working within a fragmented funding regime and a two-tier structure presents significant challenges in terms of planning for the most vulnerable client groups. During the course of this strategy, current mechanisms for joint working will be sustained and developed to make sure County-wide commissioned services are fully utilised by the City of Lincoln, and that clients identified through the City-based outreach service benefit appropriately from housing opportunities, with appropriate support, whether delivered through the homeless service or through the Framework contract.

A focus on data sharing and joint planning in the early years of this strategy is intended to facilitate a more coordinated approach to service planning around complex needs and supported housing in later years. Before any conversations are possible around coordinated funding and service delivery, the City of Lincoln, with its partners will establish a solid, formalised, and shared understanding of how homelessness and vulnerability manifest across the County, with an emphasis on pathways into homelessness, mobility, and repeat presentations.

Specific activities will include:

- i. **Centralised data collection and analysis** – the County now hosts a centralised data analysis team, of which one post is jointly funded by Lincolnshire District Councils in the expectation of developing a coordinated, evidence-based approach to planning homeless services. One current project is examining pathways into homelessness in the City of Lincoln, with a view to understanding better where single homeless applicants are coming from, how they have lost accommodation and whether this is their first engagement with services. This piece of work is an example of how centralised research might inform a more integrated approach to service planning. Over the life of this strategy, further research projects will focus on issues of specific

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local importance, offering the possibility to map and track the success of supportive interventions and homeless prevention. A further area of urgent analysis is around the prevalence of dual diagnosis cases and developing an understanding of the sources and nature of mental illness and mental ill health locally.

- ii. **Development of formal protocols for data sharing** - though data is shared on individual clients through 6 weekly meetings with County and district partners, there is no formal protocol in place to encourage the systematic sharing of strategic and individual client data. In the life of this strategy, the City of Lincoln will work with partners to develop a formal protocol to facilitate data-sharing as a basis for future service planning. Work will commence in 2023 on an initial county wide exercise mapping the provision of housing and support. Work on a data sharing protocol will follow.
- iii. **Completion of the Districts Assessment of Accommodation Needs** - Implementation of the findings of the imminent needs assessment of supported accommodation as set out above will be a priority for the first years of the strategy.
- iv. **Reviewing Inter-agency protocols** – Though unplanned discharges from prison and hospital have become a less pressing problem, they still create disproportionate problems for applicants and services when they occur. During the life cycle of this strategy, the new protocols for prison release and hospital discharge will be continually monitored and updated to deliver a seamless transition between key agency partners. These reviews will draw on national best practice wherever possible, for example, by referencing the Welsh Government's.
- v. **Examining options for lifetime/wrap around access to housing support for clients with complex needs.** When new bids are submitted for funding of rough sleeper services, the City of Lincoln will work with the Council and neighbouring districts on proposals for preventing the 'revolving door' into services experienced frequently by this extremely vulnerable client group.

2. Increasing Accommodation/Move on options for people with complex needs.

Lack of suitable move-on accommodation could undermine the effectiveness of the Framework support contract, making it increasingly difficult for homeless applicants to access either floating support or supported housing in the critical phase following either a homeless application or a period of sleeping rough. Timely interventions are very important to the most vulnerable applicant groups, so generating a move through supportive options is a key action for the life cycle of this strategy. The following actions are recommended.

- i. **Using the Private Sector to deliver move-on accommodation.** As part of the development and expansion of homeless prevention services and given the urgent need for more move-on accommodation, work has already commenced on creating a portfolio of landlords willing to work with the Council of providing shared accommodation, or single tenancies suitable for this client group. This will continue to be a key element of homelessness provision for the duration of the strategy and

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will be enhanced by the creation of a Rent Guarantee scheme as set out under Objective Three of this strategy.

ii. Developing a wider portfolio of move-on accommodation

The responsibility for providing move-on accommodation for people assessed and supported under the County Council contract lies with Framework HA as the provider. So far, they have been reasonably successful in finding suitable move on accommodation, but market conditions are making suitable accommodation increasingly difficult to procure. The demand side implications are that places in supported accommodation silt up, denying people with complex needs the opportunity for intensive support. On the supply side, it is possible that lack of move-on from supported accommodation will end in more direct referrals to the homeless service from supported accommodation. This is such an urgent requirement that a fuller assessment of move on needs in year one of the strategy will inform further procurement of move on accommodation for applicants in supported housing.

iii. Using Council Housing Stock as an appropriate move-on option and developing close links between tenancy sustainment and homeless services.

Council stock is already a major source of move-on accommodation for people presenting with complex needs and for single homeless applicants. If in temporary accommodation, it is more likely that homeless applicants will receive a Council offer, with some support being offered to help with resettlement after the offer is made. Over the course of the strategy, it is expected that this approach to housing allocations will continue, given the likelihood that single homeless applicants with support needs will continue to be accepted under the relief duty. At the same time, this strategy acknowledges the huge benefits of investing in tenancy sustainment for this client group as a means to ending the cycle of homelessness so common in people with complex support needs. This will be addressed first, by analysing tenancy sustainment outcomes and lost tenancies within the housing management service and making sure tenancies are not ended until all sustainment and support options are exhausted.

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OBJECTIVE TWO: Make homelessness *as brief* as possible by providing high quality temporary and supported accommodation at points of crisis.

A family or individual who has lost their home is by definition in crisis. In the City of Lincoln, we believe the experience of being in temporary accommodation should be as brief as possible. When prevention measures have been exhausted and a period of temporary accommodation is thus inevitable, accommodation should be of a high standard and in a location that allows clients, if possible, to sustain their engagement with local services and with their communities. This period of insecurity should also be a period of recovery, in which pathways to a more secure future are established. In the life of this strategy, we intend to build a broader portfolio of temporary accommodation properties and consider how best we can balance the need to make this experience a positive one, with the need to control costs and reduce the numbers of people in temporary accommodation (TA).

There are considerable strengths to the way temporary accommodation is procured and delivered in the City of Lincoln. Accepting the significant constraints created by an overheated housing market, the Council has used its own stock creatively to house families during the relief assessment process and while longer term housing options are considered. There are currently 35 units of commissioned accommodation ranging in size from 1 to 4 bedroomed properties, but with the majority being 2 bedroomed properties suited for smaller families. There are 18 units of NSAP funded temporary accommodation units for single homeless people, mostly one-bedroomed properties, but including two 2-bedroomed flats, one for shared placements and one suitable for people needing additional care.

Those applicants with vulnerabilities in temporary accommodation are provided with support and resettlement services through an in-house service of six officers in total. There are two officers working exclusively with TA residents to provide low level housing support, two funded by NSAP working with the rough sleeping cohort, and two further officers funded under the Housing First initiative. In addition, the Framework support contract can be called upon to provide support to former rough sleepers in temporary accommodation. Through these measures, the City of Lincoln aims to create an experience of temporary accommodation where homeless applicants are supported into appropriate accommodation, with the skills and capacity to maintain secure and settled accommodation.

There is clear recognition of the measures needed to maintain the quality of temporary accommodation. Licenced properties are inspected at each property turnaround, and remedial repairs ordered before the next household move in. While in situ, households can use the in-house service should repairs be needed. After an interregnum during the Covid pandemic, a regular inspection regime has been introduced to bed and breakfast properties used regularly for temporary accommodation. The City of Lincoln remains committed to regulation and monitoring of any property used to accommodation homeless people at their time of crisis.

Finally, there is already a five-year Action Plan for addressing some of the most pressing needs in terms of Temporary Accommodation, which reflects the City of Lincoln's ongoing

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commitment to improving the capacity of the TA service and the quality of the TA experience.

For all these strengths, the underlying structural weakness in the temporary accommodation service, is lack of specialist managed or commissioned properties to meet need. There were 62 households in temporary accommodation at the end of the third quarter of 2022/2023, against 53 commissioned units of accommodation, 18 of which are provided for rough sleepers. The gap between demand for and supply of temporary accommodation is largely met by the commercial hotel sector, both within the City and Lincoln and beyond, with severe consequences for the homeless applicants and for the wider service environment.

Commercial hotel placements are never suitable for homeless applicants, for families it means shared rooms and lack of space, for all households a lack cooking facilities creating financial pressures on people who are already vulnerable. Given the volatility of TA demand, recourse to the private sector means the Council inevitably resorts to out-of-city placements, in Loughborough, Sheffield, Boston, Peterborough and Grantham. This compounds the alienating effect of homelessness on families and single applicants alike, breaking ties with communities and family, and affecting their ability to engage with health and social services, and to attend school and college. Recourse to the commercial sector leaves the Council exposed to seasonal fluctuations in emergency TA availability due to seasonal factors such as tourism and university graduations, and to the financial risks of unpredictable unit costs and numbers.

The cumulative effect is a drive to reduce the numbers of people in temporary accommodation by recourse to a permanent allocation of social housing. The City of Lincoln Allocation policy rights gives preference to homeless applicants, and currently, as set out above, around 60% of all social housing allocations are allotted to homeless applicants. Pressures around TA supply and occupancy drive this high level of allocations as a means of mitigating service risks and controlling costs. In the wider context of social lettings, this might mean homeless applicants receiving much greater preference than is desirable, leading to perverse incentives to apply as homeless. The City of Lincoln will address these weaknesses over the life of the strategy by:

- Delaying accessions into Temporary Accommodation
- Increasing the number of managed or commissioned units of Temporary Accommodation
- Negotiating block booking agreements for emergency placements

Delaying accessions into Temporary Accommodation

Homeless prevention practises are inextricably linked to the TA population, in short, the sooner a relief duty is accepted, the earlier the Council is obliged to provide TA. The activities outlined above in terms of homelessness prevention should be conducted with this explicit connection in mind. Any delay to accession to TA reduces pressures on the service and creates space to find the most suitable temporary placement. Alongside a new focus on prevention, a new emphasis on preventing first accession into TA will be built into homeless processes in the life of this strategy.

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Increasing the number of managed or commissioned units of Temporary Accommodation

The mismatch between demand for and supply of appropriately located and managed accommodation is the most critical issue for the City of Lincoln in relation to temporary accommodation. For more units of directly managed or commissioned temporary accommodation to be made available for an increasing homeless population, with the most pressing need being greater availability of emergency accommodation to offset the need for commercial TA placements. This is already a priority for the City of Lincoln, with two initiatives identified for developing in the five-year TA Action Plan. These are:

- **Development of Temporary Accommodation Units:** The Council is already exploring a number of sites as possible locations for directly managed temporary accommodation within City boundaries, either as potential acquisitions or as a bid for Framework Housing to purchase using Homes England funding.
- **Use of general needs stock:** In the absence of agreement on the site for specialist units, the use of further units of general needs stock is also being considered as a source of emergency TA.
- **Developing a TA procurement and TA placement policy:** The objective in relation to TA over the course of this strategy will be to shift from reactive, emergency spot procurement to a planned and considered approach to meeting TA demand. The current TA Strategy has already been superseded by events and should be replaced by a comprehensive procurement policy. Similarly, a placement policy which sets out how applicants are matched to and moved between policies will be development in the early years of the strategy.

Achieving a political consensus around the number and location of units should be a priority for the first years of this strategy, given the service and financial pressures on the local authority to address homelessness and the human consequences of failing to do so. There is a clear and immediate imperative for an additional 10 and 15 units of emergency accommodation within City boundaries to address the current shortfall and mitigate the service and financial risks of ad-hoc TA placements.

Lincoln has a City-wide Article 4 Directive designed to limit the over-provision of HMOs in any particular area. The West End of the City contains more buildings likely to be convertible to TA but is already host to a concentration of multiple occupied houses.² Article 4 restrictions are based on the proximity of any proposed new HMO to other similar properties, thus creating conditions under which the legitimate needs of the housing authority are in direct conflict with the democratically agreed Article 4 directive. There is

² Under the Article 4 Directive, planning permission is required for a change of use from category 3 dwelling houses to category 4, house of multiple occupation. Amongst the criteria used to determine whether permission is given will be the concentration in any given area, ergo, if there are more than 10% HMOs in a 100-metre radius of the proposed development planning permission will not be given.

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some potential for TA development of buildings, such as offices, that do not require a change of use, however, given the need for such accommodation is likely to increase over the life of the strategy, a clear and common understanding of the tension between service areas is needed to frame future planning applications. For the early years of the strategy, it is suggested the Council consider a joint session involving political leaders, and Council Officers to present all options, opportunities, and costs, and to generate a clearer consensus on how to handle planning issues where new TA is concerned.

- Private Sector Stock:** Exploration of the potential for private sector accommodation to provide TA was identified in the five-year TA Action Plan. Under Objective 3, this strategy sets out measures to increase generally the supply of accommodation from the private rented sector. The additional measures to subsidise rent loss and create financial incentives to landlords could lead to additional TA units being delivered from the private sector. Realistically, however, it is likely that investment in private sector schemes will be more effective for homeless prevention and relief purposes, given the desire of landlords for relatively stable tenancies. The use of private sector options for TA will be more feasible after investment in these schemes has increased the number of landlords working with the City of Lincoln and to a closer understanding of the mutual needs of Council and the landlord sector.

Negotiating block booking agreements for emergency placements

The final recommendation relates to some regularisation of the relationships between the City of Lincoln and the commercial hotels it is currently using. At the moment there is heavy reliance on national hotel chains such as the Travelodge and Holiday Inn Express. Both restrict the number of rooms available for letting, do not offer any rate concessions, and are clear that in the event of problem bookings they will restrict access. There are three small local providers within city boundaries who have entered into block book agreements in the past, but which were full at the time of writing. One facility has indicated their wish to withdraw from this market. In the short term, shifting between commercial providers would be desirable, and an early assessment should be made as to whether enhanced rates to the smaller providers, or an increased number of smaller providers could increase access to local emergency provision.

Modelling TA Reduction

TA costs are rising more rapidly than TA numbers suggesting that unit costs of TA are being inflated by an over-reliance on B and B accommodation. A more sophisticated model of TA expenditure, that made visible the complex relationship between the numbers of households in TA and the cost of that accommodation should be considered a key element of good TA management. Ideally, a financial model should include the following key variables:

- Numbers of homelessness relief acceptances
- Number of homelessness relief discharges
- Number of TA accessions
- Weekly cost of each TA archetype e.g., hostel/B and B accommodation

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- Subsidy levels for each archetype bedroom size

Monitoring of these key variables by finance officers and operational managers on a monthly or bi-monthly basis would, over time, develop a more sophisticated understanding of the unit costs of each type of accommodation. Furthermore, such close monitoring can generate a more responsive approach to management decision making on TA, for example, informing supply side decisions on the need to reduce or increase lettings to homeless households. This should be considered in year one of the strategy.

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OBJECTIVE THREE: Make the experience of homelessness a *one-off* occurrence by increasing access to secure and settled homes in Lincoln.

To make homelessness a one-off occurrence, there must be a reasonable belief that any intervention by the Council will deliver housing that is suitable, safe, and settled. Eliminating homelessness over the long term requires a range of housing of varied tenures to be available for people at all income levels, particularly for those on lower incomes or benefits. Specialist housing must be available for those who either have particular physical needs for certain types of accommodation, or specific support needs that make independent accommodation difficult to manage. In this final objective of the strategy, the need for increasing access to secure and settled homes to tackle homeless is considered.

Analysis of supply side factors confirms the number of Council housing units is reducing incrementally mainly through national policy driver of Right to Buy. The City of Lincoln is committed to re-providing as many lost units as possible and has suffered a less sharp decline in social housing stock than many areas of high housing demand in England. Nonetheless, the number of social housing units is falling while demand for those units is rising due to the housing market conditions outlined in sections 1 and 2 of this strategy.

The City of Lincoln already recognises the central role social housing must play in tackling homelessness. The Allocations Policy, reviewed and agreed this year, gives the highest priority, Band One, to households requiring urgent accommodation where the Council has accepted a legal duty to consider them for accommodation. This banding will include most applicants who have been accepted under the relief duty and are compliant with their personalised housing plan. Band 2 consists of households who are in non-urgent need of housing but where the Council has a duty to consider them for rehousing. This will include most applicants accepted under the relief duty and complying with their personalised housing plan.

Within each band there is competition for rehousing with other applicant groups, for example, Band One includes applicant with urgent medical needs, serious disrepair issues and those with social or other urgent reasons for moving. Band Two gives priority to those with less urgent medical issues, overcrowding and non-urgent social and welfare issues. In balancing these different groups of applicants, the pressures on the Council to reduce the financial and service risks of a rising temporary accommodation population adds greater practical weight to homeless people even within the general banding system. At present around 60% of all lettings are to homeless households, with a high proportion being through direct offers rather than the Choice Based system.

The paradox for Lincoln is that this level of lettings is both not enough and too many to meet the longer-term objective of eliminating homelessness. It is not enough to meet demand given the number of relief duties accepted each year is running at around 600, and the number of lettings to homeless households at around 350 per annum. However, it is too many in that the high priority attached to statutory homelessness reduces access to social housing for other groups in need, and might, in some circumstances, lead to applicants

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pursuing a homeless application as the only avenue available to access a secure and settled home.

It follows that the City of Lincoln must consider how to create wider access to housing of all tenures, creating new pathways to secure and settled housing. This means tackling supply side issues laterally, both by increasing the overall number of social housing units and widening housing opportunities in other tenures. The City of Lincoln will maximise the supply of secure and settled housing during the life of this strategy by:

- Working with private sector landlords to deliver new supply.
- Exploring applicant behaviour and private sector stigma
- Making the best use of existing stock
- Redressing the loss of social housing units through new development of Council and housing association stock

Working with private sector landlords to deliver new supply.

Access to private sector housing is already a priority for the city, with a small, dedicated team in place to develop private sector housing initiatives. The Private Sector Officers work directly with Landlords who are prepared to let properties to homeless clients, building a portfolio of properties suitable for homeless prevention and diversion. At present, potential tenants for these properties are vetted so as to sustain the small but committed portfolio of landlords supplying properties to the Council. Most are small landlords rather than portfolio investors, who supply one or two properties only and expect the Council to facilitate and support tenants who are placed with them.

Financially that support is limited. The deposit scheme offers a cashless bond to landlords and lettings agents to cover the deposit required for new private lettings. In practise, take up of this scheme has reduced in recent years, especially since the introduction of the Government's Tenancy Deposit Scheme (TDS). Where landlords are working with the Council, the TDS offers some initial security around these lettings and is seen as an incentive for engaging directly with the Council. Nonetheless, the scope for growing this portfolio is currently limited by the very difficult market conditions in which private sector rents are, more often than not, far higher than lower income families and individuals can afford. Additionally, there is substantial competition for private housing from the university sector and young professionals, who not only have greater financial clout but are also perceived as easier and less risky tenants. The limited subsidy from the Council to work with the homeless group is clearly not enough to persuade the majority of private landlords to engage.

Reluctance among landlords to work with the Council is matched by resistance among homeless applicants to consider private sector housing as a viable option given the relatively insecure tenancies and high rents. A social housing letting is more secure and significantly cheaper, and once accepted under the prevention duty, an applicant can start bidding under Band 2, knowing their priority will increase if a full relief duty is accepted. There is much work to do in tackling both landlord and applicant resistance to private rented options.

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For landlords, the City of Lincoln will review financial incentives for private landlords in the first year of this strategy. If private rented accommodation is ever going to provide for more than a handful of applicants, the compensation for landlords must recognise the level of competition for rented properties, and the substantial incentives competing bodies offer to secure them.

- **Rent Guarantee scheme.**

The lack of any rent guarantee deters most landlord enquiries from progressing, suggesting a perceived stigma around homelessness and anxieties about financial risk are the reason for the limited level of private sector rehousings. This can be addressed with additional investment in more generous schemes, such as a rent guarantee scheme possibly aligned with some additional compensation for dilapidations at the end of each private sector tenancy. The costs associated with such a scheme have already been assessed in South Kesteven District Council, with the conclusion being that costs of such a scheme are containable and easily offset by savings on temporary accommodation. Their scheme provides an excellent template for balancing cost and risk; costs are capped by requiring the Landlord to inform the Council of rent arrears of more than two months, with the Council having the power to bump tenants onto direct payments of housing benefits if arrears are caused by money management problems. A City of Lincoln proposal based on the South Kesteven scheme would involve paying rent guarantees for all properties where landlords discontinue due to rent arrears caused by benefit shortfall. It is suggested the 69 properties could be retained on the scheme at a cost of £95k per annum.

This is recognised as an urgent measure given the need to boost preventions. An initial commitment of £75k has already been made to deliver rent guarantees to existing landlords. The cost/benefit of the scheme will be analysed in quarter 4 of the financial year 2023/ 2024 with a view to expanding capacity to at least 70 preventions, and more if an invest-to-save case can be made on the basis of reduced TA spend. This scheme will lay the foundation of future private sector options for temporary accommodation, vulnerable client groups and for the future discharge of relief duty.

Such a scheme would still involve some vetting of homeless clients to maximise the potential of a successful tenancy and to retain Landlords in the scheme. In so doing, the opportunities for using private rented schemes for discharge to more vulnerable applicants or as emergency TA are somewhat reduced. Whilst maximising PRS as a form of prevention is the early priority of this strategy, in later years, the potential of extending to leasing private sector properties from a growing portfolio of socially aware landlords will be explored. Where landlords are prepared to consider a wider pool of tenants, additional financial incentives will be considered and evaluated.

Exploring applicant behaviour and private sector stigma

Moving into private sector accommodation is attractive only to a minority of applicants for very good reasons. At present, with relatively insecure tenancies in the private sector and substantially higher rents it is not a rational choice when pitted against the early opportunity of a Council letting. Although those accepted under the homeless prevention duty retain a

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Band Two priority in the Allocations policy, Band One is bestowed on most homeless relief applicants once accepted. Those who engage with the Council's private sector scheme need to make a commitment to a private sector tenancy that will make it difficult for them to bid for properties, while their relative loss of priority will affect how quickly they receive a Council property and possibly even the desirability of that property.

The way the current Allocations Policy operates thus creates a disincentive for homeless applicants to consider other tenures. In the first year of this strategy, this proposition will be explored through a fuller analysis of the how long each applicant group waits for Council accommodation, to determine whether the very severe pressures on the homeless service and TA stock is reducing the chances of other groups to access social housing. This research work could be augmented by qualitative research into applicant perceptions and behaviours. If this is found to be true, the Council will explore how it can shift the pattern of lettings one that creates incentives to move through private sector accommodation to a social housing letting in the later years of this strategy.

Making the best use of existing stock

Supply can also be generated by maximising the use of existing housing stock. The Council is presently designing an under-occupation scheme, which will offer financial incentives to households who are under-utilising their accommodation. Though this scheme will not necessarily increase net supply, it has the potential to deliver much needed larger units to address particular supply side pinch-points. This scheme is already subject to political scrutiny and is intended to go live in the first year of this strategy.

Closer working between the homeless and allocations service will also be an early action in this strategy. Where larger family units apply for housing, a creative approach to housing allocations could reduce waiting times and increase the potential for homeless prevention. For example, where there are adult children in a large household, they could be diverted into private sector accommodation pending a social housing let, leaving a small household to be managed through the homeless route. When homeless prevention is considered, so will the potential for a more holistic approach to homelessness.

Finally, decommissioning of other Council facilities, be it sheltered housing or office accommodation is recognised as a good source of supply. The Council will continue to review its existing HRA and General Fund property portfolio with a view to identifying potential properties for conversion.

Redressing the loss of social housing units through new development

The full Lincoln Housing Strategy is currently in development with a proposed focus on increasing the number of social housing units available to the City of Lincoln through a range of development initiatives. It will build on the current commitment *'to maximise the delivery of affordable housing through both direct delivery and enabling including the remodelling and redevelopment of low demand local authority housing stock'*.

The problem facing Lincoln as a relatively small city is the availability of land and the capacity of infrastructure for larger developments. There is a strong political commitment

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to growing affordable housing options in Lincoln, and an ambition to reverse and redress the loss of social housing generated by government policy. This ambition cannot be entirely contained within city boundaries. Currently, the political leadership are considering developments that cross city boundaries as joint initiatives with neighbouring districts North Kesteven DC (Hykeham development) and West Lindsey DC (Ronangate). These developments will be multi-tenure and led by private developers. In the life of this strategy, the priority for the Council will be to negotiate a level of social housing reflective of the high levels of need for housing available to those on low incomes.

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RESOURCES

Homeless accommodation and services are funded through a patchwork of grant funding and core service funding. The total revenue budget committed to homelessness services in 2023/2024 was £1.83 million. This figure is composed of General Fund resources, the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) and specialist grants to support rough sleeping. The Council also received Housing Benefit subsidy from central government, through which a large proportion of expenditure on temporary accommodation is recovered.

Though much expenditure on homelessness is either grant-funded or recoverable through subsidy, a proportion of resources will always be funded directly from Council income. If grant funding and subsidy levels remain broadly static, the element funded by the Council necessarily increases, creating a risk for Lincoln for the term of this strategy. The biggest cost and risk relate to providing temporary accommodation. This budget is notoriously volatile, being dependent on the number of presentations and the unit cost of temporary accommodation. At present, homeless relief acceptances and TA accessions are on an upward trajectory as set out in the analysis of Lincoln's housing context. Temporary accommodation costs are rising at an even faster rate than the number of presentations,

This final section of the strategy highlights

- Resources committed to homelessness and sources of funding.
- Trends in Homelessness Prevention Grant allocation (HPG)
- Grant funding of Rough Sleeping services
- Trends and projection in temporary accommodation expenditure
- Potential areas of investment over the next five years.

The broad conclusion is if government grant funding remains broadly consistent the burden of funding increasing homelessness demand will fall exclusively in the City of Lincoln General Fund.

Homeless Prevention Grant

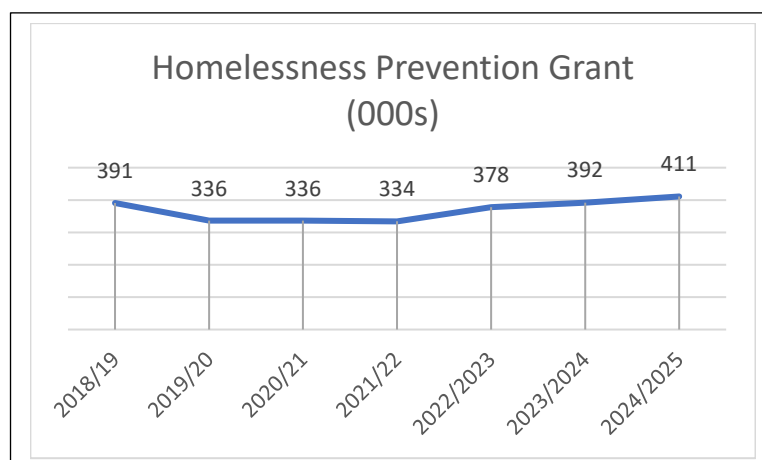
The main source of mainstream funding is the Homeless Prevention Grant (HPG). This is awarded to local authorities using a funding formula based on homeless and housing benefit claimant numbers, and rental levels. It is expected to fund:

- Implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act and its increased emphasis on preventing to prevent single homelessness.
- Programmes designed to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation.
- Elimination of the use of unsuitable bed and breakfast accommodation for families for longer than the statutory six-week limit.

The allocation of homeless prevention grant has been confirmed for the first two years of this strategy has been confirmed as £392k in the current year, and £411k in 2024/2025. The

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funding formula for the HPG draws on local needs data, e.g., deprivation levels, the number of housing benefit claimants and rental levels locally.



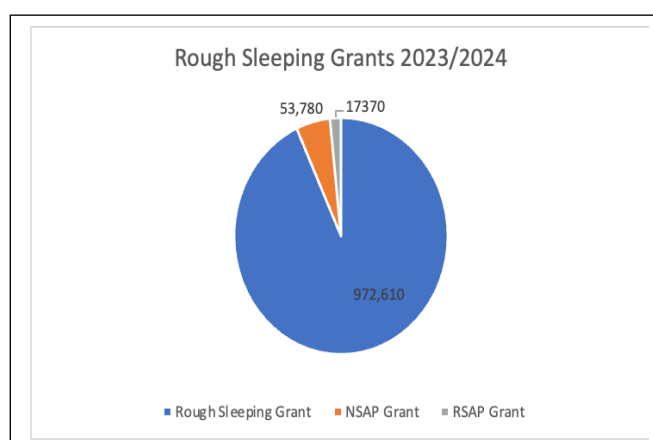
Austerity driven HB policy changes reduced LHA levels, broadly, to provide full subsidy for around 30% of properties in any given area. In the City of Lincoln, the proportion is much lower due to its BRMA grouping with the much cheaper rental area of Gainsborough. HPG does not include any uplift for areas where rental levels are significantly and disproportionately lower than the LHA. Thus, the level of HPG, without changes to the formula, is likely to broadly stable throughout the life of the strategy. In resource terms this means any increases in the costs of homelessness will be borne solely by the local authority GRFA.

Funding for Rough Sleeping

The problems facing the City of Lincoln in respect of rough sleeping are reflected in grant allocations of Rough Sleeping Grant, Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP), and Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP). Sustaining and if possible increasing grant funding in the next round(post 2025) will be a high priority for the strategy. The revenue allocation for 2023/2024 is.

Government Support for Rough Sleeping (£) 2023

RSG	972,610
NSAP Grant	53,780
RSAP Grant	17370
Total	1043760



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The largest proportion of funding for vulnerable clients is from the national Rough Sleeping Initiative, accounting for 93% of revenue resources committed to rough sleeping. Grant funding provides a major contribution toward addressing homelessness, funding:

- *1 Rough Sleeping Programme Manager*
- *2 Rough Sleeping Officers*
- *2 Tenancy Sustainment Officers*
- *2 NSAP/RSAP Officers (funded by separate grant streams)*
- *2 Housing First Officers*
- *2 Street Outreach Workers*
- *1 Mental Health Nurse*

In addition, grant funding supports the contract delivered through Framework HA of 15 units of accommodation for people with complex needs with revenue funding for support staff on site. These staff will assist with:

- *Personalised Budgets*
- *PRS access funding*
- *TA access funding.*

In Lincoln, the Homeless Prevention Grant is used to provide revenue funding for the mainstream homeless service, to enhance private sector prevention activities and to part fund support in TA to people with a rough sleeping background.

The RSI Grant is confirmed until the end of March 2025 though the expectation is that further tranches of funding will be made available. This is such a vital support to the most vulnerable applicants in the City of Lincoln that any reduction would seriously hinder the provision of basic services and would undermine some of the more ambitious actions identified in this strategy in relation to rough sleeping. It is suggested that work on understanding the true needs and capacity requirements of both accommodation and support services should remain a priority for the first years of the strategy to provide a robust basis for future funding bids.

The City of Lincoln also received a capital and revenue allocation from the DHULC NSAP and RSAP funds for the prevention of rough sleeping. NSAP and RSAP funding has provided for the purchase of 18 units of temporary accommodation for rough sleepers currently.

	Purchase	Oncosts
NSAP	1,336,500	117,132
RSAP	260000	20338
	1,596,500	137,470

It is expected the new Grant round will see further allocations of capital funding, directed toward appropriately supported temporary accommodation.

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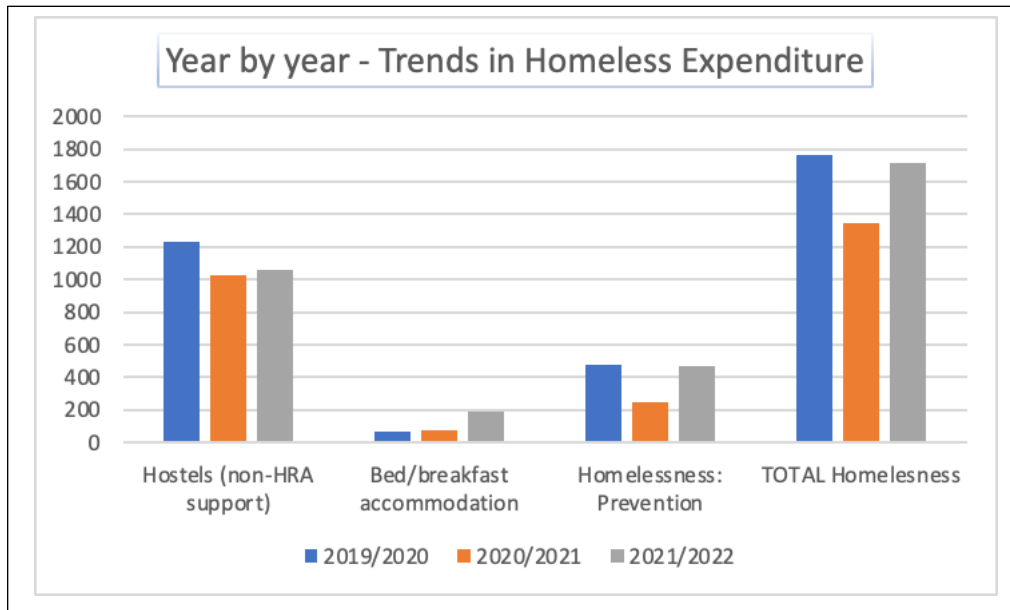
General Fund contribution to Homelessness

General Fund housing expenditure in the City of Lincoln includes private sector service and renewal, but homelessness comprises the greater part of all GFRA funding. The table below shows how GRFA homelessness expenditure was broken down to the last set of published outturns in 2022. Note that all HB Administration costs are recoverable. These outturn figures confirm the proportion of spending on homelessness is consistently around 84% of all GRFA expenditure on housing.

GF Revenue Account Outturn	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022
Administration of financial support for repairs and improvements	103	76	83
Other private sector housing renewal	-66	130	99
Hostels (non-HRA support)	1231	1025	1062
Bed/breakfast accommodation	64	74	187
Homelessness: Prevention	473	249	467
TOTAL Temporary Accommodation	1295	1099	1249
Homelessness Prevention, Administration and Support	473	249	467
	1768	1348	1716
Rent rebates to HRA tenants - discretionary payments	20	17	
Housing benefits administration	940	960	
Supporting People	59	129	119
Other welfare services	463	139	169
TOTAL HOUSING SERVICES (GFRA only)	3294	2803	3122

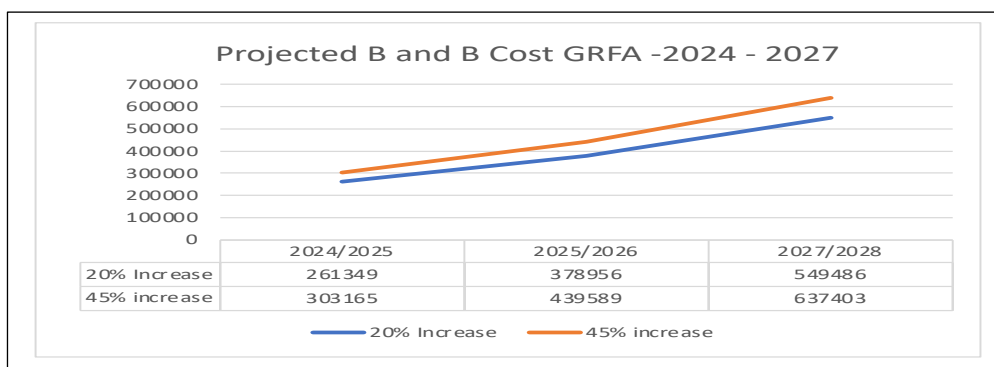
The costs of homelessness reduced in 2020 only because the exceptional conditions generated by the Covid 19 pandemic led to a much lower presentation rates, and funded interventions by central government to eliminate rough sleeping on public health grounds. Despite this reduction over 2020 in the overall levels of expenditure, and the return to stability in 2021/2022, the cost of Bed and Breakfast accommodation as a proportion of expenditure continue to rise.

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When additional demand is diverted into Bed and Breakfast, this is met by recourse to expensive commercial hotel placements. For example, the increase in TA numbers between 2021 and 2022 was 19%, and the rate of increase in costs was 22%. Bed and Breakfast costs have risen at a higher rate than the numbers of homeless people accommodated in temporary accommodation because the unit cost of each placement is considerably higher than in previous year. The rate of increase in numbers between 2022/2023 is expected to remain at around 20% but the budget outturn, already shows rate of increase in costs of 45%. In 2022/2023 the budget outturn was £209, 089 higher than the actual revenue allocation, meaning over 30% of costs were unforeseen and unbudgeted.

The graph below visualises the potential increase in B and B costs over the term of this strategy, the lower cost being a projection based on the likely potential rate of increase in TA numbers, the higher cost being the likely potential rate of cost increase based on the rate of unit cost increase. As TA unit costs are currently linked to the commercial hotel sector, it is likely that the cost of TA will continue to rise at closer to 45% per annum, with a projected net outturn in 2027/2028 of £637 403.



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This level of increasing in the costs of homelessness will have increasingly detrimental effects not only on other areas of housing general fund expenditure, but on the wider ability of the City of Lincoln to fund other vital services.

Additional Investment

The current default to the commercial hotel sector is both undesirable in human and service terms. This analysis suggests it is also unsustainable financially. In light of this volatile situation caused by a lack of suitable TA and rising homelessness numbers, it is suggested that investment in the homeless strategy is directed towards areas likely to reduce these costs. This means investing in prevention, particularly private sector measures, and in making sure the staffing structure is fit for purpose, with adequate resources committed to building and sustaining a specialist prevention team. This investment is likely to pay off but controlling the number of relief duties accepted and the resultant number of accessions into TA. Over the longer term a change in the culture and perception of the homelessness service will also help to curtail demand for directly provided accommodation.

In this homelessness strategy, the following areas are suggested as requiring additional funding or a redirection of funding over the next five years:

- The provision of a Rent Guarantee Scheme to support prevention activities and to mitigate the pressures on Council stock. Investment in a RGS is likely to be cost neutral over the term of the Strategy, and given the urgency, it is suggested that work commences immediately on an outline scheme, with a view to making placements in private sector accommodation in the current financial year. The proposal under current review would involve paying rent guarantees for all properties where landlords discontinue due to rent arrears caused by benefit shortfall. It is suggested up to 80 properties could be retained on the scheme at a cost of £95k per annum. It is suggested this scheme is adopted immediately using HPG to fund, with a full review to be conducted simultaneously.
- New acquisitions of TA: A commitment to fund a new acquisition or repurpose project for new temporary accommodation has already been made. This capital allocation will be rolled over until a suitable site becomes available.
- New TA provision within Council Stock: The strategy has identified a need for at 10-15 additional units of temporary accommodation stock, and the possibility of this being sourced in Council stock, either where that stock is being decanted for redevelopment or from mainstream units. A full cost/benefit analysis of this source of acquisition will be conducted prior to the 25/26 budget setting process.
- Revenue Funding of homeless services: Strategy delivery, particularly in relation to key prevention measures, depends on a highly skilled and stable homeless team. Staff turnover and instability within the team is currently undermining its operational effectiveness, with some evidence that the structure and salary levels are undermining recruitment and retention. A comparative analysis of structures and salaries will be conducted prior to the 24/25 budget setting process to ascertain

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whether there is a need for more resources to fund salaries and career progression in the homeless service.

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HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

Objective One Make homeless a rare occurrence by early intervention and timely homeless prevention.						
ACTIONS	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Comment
Review of operations, training, development, retention, upskilling, developing specialisms, develop processes/prevention procedures	✓ Review structure and resources	✓	✓ evaluate structure	✓	✓	Homeless operations will be kept under constant review in light of the direct relationship between front line performance and TA costs. In year one, an examination of the existing structure will take place to tackle problems in staff retention and recruitment, and to create the specialisms needed to deliver a service properly focussed on prevention.
Use of Discretionary Housing Payments to deliver homeless preventions.	✓. Review	✓ Deliver	✓ Deliver	✓ Deliver	✓ Deliver	Immediate actions will include the introduction of better systems for counting DHP as prevention, and consideration of additional GRFA to subsidise DHP payments.
Investigate the use of Direct Payments where applicants have failed to manage Rent Payments under Universal Credit.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Continuation of current work to make sure benefit recipients have the capacity to pay their rent, and if not, that the client is shifted, if eligible, from UC to HB
Introduction of a Rent Guarantee Scheme to expand homelessness prevention and extend private sector options as move on and to discharge relief duties.	✓ Introduce	✓ Implement	✓ Deliver	✓ Deliver	✓ Deliver	The highest of priorities, immediate action will be taken to set up a scheme in the year 2023/2024 with a view to expanding in later years.
Deliver Creative Interventions to prevent homelessness	✓ Deliver	✓ Deliver	✓ Deliver	✓ Deliver	✓ Deliver	This represents continued investment in micro interventions at the homeless prevention stage.
Investigating the precursors of homeless applications			✓			A Year 2 research project looking at the precursors to homelessness with a view to identifying earlier interventions. This is likely to involve joint working with the County, Districts and Referring Agencies to establish which agencies might be in contact with applicants prior to presentation,

CITY OF LINCOLN HOMELESS STRATEGY

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Identify the causes of homelessness from social housing landlords.	✓					<i>A year one informal investigation to identify the roots of the apparently high numbers of presentations from existing social housing landlords.</i>
Lobby DWP over LHA/BRMA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<i>Efforts to change the BRMA grouping will continue through officer, political and regional routes.</i>
Lobby DHLUC over HPG		✓				<i>Lobbying prior to new HPG allocation?</i>
Engage with University to create shared understanding of housing market	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<i>City wide engagement with University should include reference to housing issues</i>
Research projects with CC/centralise data collection and planning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<i>Full use will be made of the CC research and data team to ground evidence-based responses to service needs. Projects will include pathways into homelessness, prevalence of dual diagnosis, roots of mental ill health and housing</i>
Complete and respond to the District Councils review of the need for and efficiency of supported housing	✓ Complete	✓ Respond				<i>A critical joint initiative that should ground collaborations between the districts on the most difficult placement and service issues.</i>
Introduce enhanced protocols for data sharing between the District Council and the County Council		✓	✓			<i>Relationships with the County over rough sleeping should focus on establishing an evidence-based foundation for local commissioning.</i>
Review Interagency protocols			✓			<i>Existing inter-agency protocols around prison release, care leavers and hospital discharge should be formally reviewed in year 3, considering national best practise.</i>
Examine options for lifetime wrap around options			✓	✓	✓	<i>A joint initiative necessary for all Districts and the County, examine whether there is scope for addressing repeat presentations/tenancy failures</i>
Expand Move on Options in the Private Sector	✓ Implement	✓ Implement	✓ Deliver	✓ Deliver	✓ Deliver	
Expand Portfolio of move on accommodation through commissioning new accommodation options	✓ Procure	✓ Procure	✓ Review	✓ Procure	✓ Procure	<i>Increasing the supply of move-on accommodation is already a priority for years 1 and 2. A review of success should inform whether General Needs accommodation is needed to supplement new commissioning in year 3</i>

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Use of general needs stock for move on		✓ Investigate	✓	✓	✓	Use of general needs stock should not be the default position as it removes units from the Allocations pool. Use of general needs stock for TA will be considered as part of review of allocations policy in year three.
Objective Two - Make homelessness as brief as possible by providing high quality temporary and supported accommodation at points of crisis.						
Delay accessions into Temporary Accommodation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Work to delay accession into TA will be incorporated into all prevention initiatives
Develop New Temporary Accommodation Units and reduce reliance on spot purchases B and B	✓ Procure	✓ Procure				The need for more TA is urgent given the demand and finance projection. Work on possible sites, especially those not requiring planning permission is an urgent priority.
Use of private sector stock for TA			✓ Review	✓ Implement	✓ Implement	Linked to wider development of a RGS. Use as TA will be considered in later years when a portfolio of social aware landlords has been established.
Use of general needs stock for TA			✓ Review	✓ Implement	✓ Implement	Use of general needs stock should not be the default position as it removes units from the Allocations pool. This will be considered only if attempts to commission new TA are unsuccessful
Develop Procurement Policy and Placement Policy	✓					Formal policies for the procurement of TA and the placement of applicants will be completed in year 1
Develop integrated financial model to better manage TA placements	✓					This will inform the more efficient management of TA and costs and will be prioritised
Joint housing and planning event on Art 4 Dev.	✓					Event will include political leaders and officers in a workshop around planning issues, and the tension between necessary TA development and Article 4
Negotiate block bookings	✓	✓				Work is ongoing into establishing long term bookings of local B and B
OBJECTIVE THREE: Make the experience of homelessness a one-off occurrence by increasing access to secure and settled homes in Lincoln.						

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Develop rent guarantee scheme for prevention, TA, and discharge of relief duties	✓ Introduce	✓ Implement	✓ Deliver	✓ Deliver	✓ Deliver	<i>This key initiative cuts across all three objectives. Success should be regularly reviewed and investment increased subject to TA modelling.</i>
Explore Applicant behaviour - review of waiting times	✓					Investigation of the effect of homeless priority in the Allocations policy to review year 3 review of Allocations policy
Review Allocation Policy			✓			To address issues raised by review of waiting times
Communications Strategy to highlight shift to prevention	✓ Introduce	✓ Implement	✓ Deliver	✓ Deliver	✓ Deliver	Over the course of the strategy the intention is to change attitudes toward homelessness so that social housing is not seen as an inevitable outcome of an application. Communicating this to applicants, citizens and agencies will run throughout the strategy period. In year 1, a communication strategy will be developed to drive public discourse
Making Best use of existing stock by introducing stock management initiatives such as under-occupation policy.	✓ Introduce	✓ Implement	✓ Deliver	✓ Deliver	✓ Deliver	
Ensure new developments include the highest possible proportion of social housing.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	This homelessness strategy will link to the Housing Strategy under development in 2023/2024.